

A Lecture at Luxembourg for European and International Studies

16th July, 20

Humiliation, Realpolitik, Globalization and China's Taiwan Policy

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To understand China's Taiwan policy, one has to understand the modern and contemporary Chinese history and Beijing's current perspective of the global political and economic situation as well. This lecture is to discuss very briefly the humiliation China experienced during the modern and contemporary history and to explore the conceptual dimensions in China's views to the current world and their implications for China's foreign policy in general and its Taiwan policy in particular.

1. History and Humiliation

It is quite obvious to Chinese elite as well as to common Chinese people that the Taiwan issue exhibits all of the worst elements of international power politics and national humiliations for China. From the First Opium War Chinese experienced a serious humiliation from the West Power as well as Japan. In April 1895, after defeating China, Japan forced the Qing government to sign the unequal Treaty of Shimonoseki and forcibly occupied Taiwan. The unequal treaty was one of the unequal treaties imposed on China since the Opium War of 1840-42, all of which were results of international power politics. At the end of the Second World War Japan surrendered and promised in its instrument of surrender that it would faithfully fulfil the obligations laid down in the Potsdam Proclamation. On October 25, 1945, the Chinese Government recovered Taiwan, resuming the sovereignty over the island. But after the government of People's Republic of China replacing the government of the Republic of China on October 1, 1949, the KMT ruling clique retreated to Taiwan. When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, the United States sent its forces to the Taiwan Strait to protect KMT regime, thus starting the Taiwan issue which actually is the result of the civil war.

Both Japan's occupation of Taiwan between 1895 to 1945 and America's willingness to protect Taiwan since 1950 presented a vivid picture of power politics to China's policy makers. To a certain degree this vision causes a very strong sense in China's top leaders circle that the independence of Taiwan means China will once again be humiliated and be deprived of power in the new era in which China should play an important role as one pole.

Just because of the experience of more than hundred years humiliation China is so sensitive to its status as a big power, because China wishes to gain respect and prevent the replay of the national humiliations it suffered between 1840 and 1949. China's historical memory and related bitterness toward the world's great powers cause Chinese political elite as well as common people to believe that the most important way for China's survival in the international community is to build and maintain its big power status. So the realpolitik elements in China's multi-polarity view are in part rooted in the modern Chinese history. This also explains the less aggressive character in Chinese realist thinking and behavior, since aggression is deemed negative behavior in Chinese values informed by the Chinese historical memory as well as the Confucian tradition.

2. China's current view of multi-polar world

Besides history China's current perspective of the global political and economic situation is also playing a very important role in China's Taiwan policy. According to Chinese official viewpoint, since the end of the Cold War, the world has moved towards multi-polarity (*duojihua*), and the international relations on the whole have become more relaxed. Beijing also stresses that the trend toward multi-polarity is an objective course independent of anyone's will, reflecting the trend of the development of the present era.

Obviously, the China's multi-polarity view of the world reflects a Chinese perception of the international relationship in light of "realism" or "realpolitik". The underlying assumption of this view is that the international system is an anarchic system, the structure of which is shaped by the selfish interests, behavior, and actions of sovereign nation-states (especially big ones). Since the early 1980s Chinese policy

makers and Chinese government IR scholars have been quite familiar with the Western realist theory from Hans Morgenthau to Kenneth Waltz. Those Chinese elites seem to prefer to use the realist or neo-realist theory to explain the current international relations for several reasons. First, authors such as Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and Robert Gilpin are the standard-bearers of their respective generations of international relations scholarship in the West. Second, these authors propose theories that take no clear ideological position and even reject ideology as a basis for foreign policy making, which are easily accepted by Chinese Communist elite. Third, after the end of the Cold War the American realist or neo-realist scholars whom Chinese elite especially favors seem to be playing lesser roles in American foreign policy decision making at the moment. This reinforces the perception of the neutral nature of the theory.

Traditionally, national interests and big power complex played very important roles in realpolitik in the world history. Influenced by Western traditional realist analysis, many Chinese officials and IR scholars hold that national interests are the embodiment of the nation as a whole, and their pursuit is the natural and “inalienable right” of the nation-state. They also argue that the foreign policies of Western countries are determined by their national interests and that Western human rights diplomacy is driven by power politics. The Chinese political elite believe that national interests are “objectively existence” and it is the first thing first for all countries especially those big powers, whether labeled as democracy or anything else, to further their national interests in the international system. As an emerging big power China of course has to pay primary attention to its national interests and try its best to play as one pole in the post Cold War international system.

The more important factor is that from the multi-polarity view China regarded itself as a big power or a pole, as Deng Xiaoping once said that China should be considered as one pole in the world. To Chinese political elite it seems reasonable to consider China as a big power or a pole. From 1979 to 1997 China’s GDP grew at an average annual rate of 9.8% and even under the background of Southeast Asia financial crisis, China’s GDP grew in 1998 was 7.8% and in 1999 even above 8%. According to Chinese official

prediction the growth of China's GDP in 2000 will once again over 8% and may be reach 8.3%. The total GDP will be over \$1,000billion. China's GDP is now the seventh largest in the world and China (except Hong Kong) is now the tenth-ranked international trader. China's foreign currency reserve is the second largest in the world after only Japan. China's rapidly economic growth has caused some Westerners to predict that China is becoming a world-class power. All of these have led Chinese policy makers and government IR scholars to talk about a larger Chinese role in the international community with confidence.

But if one only notes the realist characteristic of China's view of multi-polarity world without considering its other features, one cannot fully understand the Chinese foreign policy in the post Cold War international community, and its Taiwan policy in particular. In fact, there are some liberal elements in China's multi-polarity view that soften the reapolitik elements. The liberal elements resulted mainly from an acceptance of the globalization argument regarding a global economy.

According to China's official statement, the economic globalization is an objective trend of the economic development of the contemporary world. Chinese government openly admits, "Since the beginning of the 1990s, along with the conclusion of the Cold War, science and technology have developed rapidly and transnational companies have continuously expanded their scale. Because of this view, some liberal elements have been merged into China's view of multi-polarity that originally seems only based on the traditional realist assumption. Those liberal elements include an attention to the importance of international rules and institutions that affect relations between countries, an emphasis on the trend of the interdependence in international relations, and the willingness to abide by international law and current norms in the international community.

The recognition of the legitimacy of world capitalist system, in connection with the globalization argument, is yet another liberal aspect in China's multi-polarity view. During the Maoist period Mao had never really recognized the legitimacy of global capitalism, let alone that Communist China be a part in the capitalist world system. On the contrary, Mao always educated Chinese people that "we should let the capitalism

become extinct, let the capitalism become the historical relic, this is a meaningful action and is a good thing.” From early 1980s Deng Xiaoping changed Mao’s revolutionary ideology and initiated the policy of reforming and opening up to the world. In accordance with the multi-polarity view, China’s policy makers no longer share Mao’s view that China is a revolutionary country with the holy communist mission to end the capitalist system. Chinese political elite today has discarded the idea of destroying the world capital system, which in the multi-polarity view is an objective entity on the basis of global market. In fact they have tried hard to make China enter the (capitalist) world market in order to for China to become a modernized big power (one of the poles in the multi-polarity structure) in this system.

This fundamental change in Chinese foreign policy orientation in part came from the post-Mao economic reforms that amount to a retreat from Maoist socialism to Deng’s socialism with Chinese characteristic (“quasi-capitalism”). With considerable speed Chinese economy has been moving into global capitalist market system while extensive economic and cultural ties have already developed between China and the West. It has been estimated that since the beginning of the 1990s’ as much as 20-40 percent of China’s gross national product has come from foreign trade. This development is symbolized and culminated in China’s efforts at and success in entering the WTO.

3. China’s Taiwan policy

It is quite clear that China’s Taiwan Policy is influenced directly by both China’s modern history and China’s current view of multi-polar world. First of all the One-China Principle is the foundation of China’s Taiwan policy. It is the basis and prerequisite for achieving reunification. The history of humiliation and the realistic nature of the multi-polarity view have determined that China would never give up its sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is quite clearly expressed in the Chinese government’s white paper entitled "The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue" that the One-China Principle has evolved in the course of the Chinese people's legitimate struggle to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. That is

why Chinese government reacted furiously when Taiwan's former "president" Lee Teng-hui openly stated that cross-Straits relations should be conducted on a "state-to-state" basis, or at least on a "special state-to-state" basis during an interview with a German radio program. This is also why China repeatedly issued stern warnings against moves toward independence before and during Taiwan's 2000 presidential election in which Taiwan's pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party leader Chen Shui-bian won.

According to the realist theory, in the multi-polarity system one pole's loss of power means another poles' gain. With the multi-polarity view Chinese policy makers perceive that the Taiwan issue involves the power politics in the international relations and China's vital national interests. If Taiwan is separated from China, then evidently China's status in the post-Cold War international system will be severely weakened. An independent Taiwan could also mean that Taiwan would form military alliance with a power or powers such as Japan, the United States, and even Russia, thus gravely threatening China's national security and upsetting strategic balance in East Asia. More dangerous to China is that if China dose not firmly assert and pursue the One-China policy on the Taiwan issue, separatists on the mainland, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang, will be encouraged to seek separation from China. That is why Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji stated: "We must be crystal clear that no matter who comes to power, Taiwan will never be allowed to be independent. And Taiwan independence in whatever form should be unacceptable. This is our bottom line and also the will of 1.25 billion Chinese people."

Secondly, the liberal elements in China's multi-polarity view, such as giving attention to international rules, norms, and cooperation, cause China to choose peaceful negotiation as the first choice in its Taiwan policy. For Beijing the current multi-polarization of the world helps weaken and curb hegemonism and power politics, serves to bring about a just and equitable new international political and economic order, and contributes to world peace and development. When China's political elite began to adopt the view of multi-polarity in the early 1980s, their perception of the international situation changed. Mao's prediction of inevitability of world war was

abandoned. Deng's prediction of the world trend of peace and development was adopted. Since then Deng's prediction has been the premise of China's policy of reform and opening up. China's policy makers understand that if the world trend is peace and development, the best way to deal with international affairs should be abiding by international law, following the norms in the international community, and insisting on peaceful negotiations in resolving differences and conflict. China's Taiwan policy should also be adjusted in a similar fashion.

Thirdly the acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the capitalist world system in China's view of multi-polarity causes the Chinese government to accept not only Taiwan's capitalist economic system but also Taiwan's democratic political system in the reunification of China. During the Mao era "liberation of Taiwan" meant that Taiwan's economic as well as political system must be converted into Chinese Communist system. In the early 1980s China changed its Taiwan policy from Mao's "liberation" model to Deng's famous formula of "one country, two systems." According to the formula, Communist China will not try to change Taiwan's capitalist system, but will reunify China with socialism on the mainland and capitalism on Taiwan (how much the system on the mainland is still socialist is another matter not to be addressed here). This new formula is based on the newly revised perspective of the world—a multi-polarity world on the part of Chinese leaders.

Fourth, nevertheless the realistic elements in the view of multi-polarity still dictate that China clearly declares its right to reserve the use of force as the last resort in preserving China's territorial integrity. In the recently published White Paper on Defense Policies entitled "China's National Defense in 2000", Chinese government states: "if a grave turn of events occurs leading to the separation of Taiwan from China in any name, or if Taiwan is invaded and occupied by foreign countries, or if the Taiwan authorities refuse, sine die, the peaceful settlement of cross-Straits reunification through negotiations, then the Chinese Government will have no choice but to adopt all drastic measures possible, including the use of force, to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and achieve the great cause of reunification."

Conclusion

The above analysis has shown that China's modern history and the view of a multi-polarity world with realistic and liberal elements have shaped China's Taiwan policy. Guided by this view China's Taiwan policy contains four major policy components. The first is the One-China principle, which means the separation of Taiwan from China can never be tolerated. The second is the approach of peaceful negotiations as the first choice in reunification and the promotion of economic and cultural exchanges as the forerunner of political reunification. The third is "one country two systems" principle which accepts the legitimacy of the capitalist system in Taiwan. The fourth is to reserve the use of force as the last resort in China's reunification. Obviously the first and the fourth policy components are generated from the realistic aspect in China's view of multi-polarity, while the second and the third from the liberal aspect.

At the time of Taiwan's 2000 presidential election and after Chen Shui-bian was elected, there were and still are some talks about a timetable of the reunification in China's government scholars' speeches. But the fact is that Chinese government acted and is still acting very cautiously in dealing with the so-called timetable. To date there is no official statement from Chinese government on a specific timetable of the reunification, even though Chinese premier Zhu expressed that the Taiwan issue will not be allowed to "drag on indefinitely." One will grasp the meaning of Zhu's words if one is reminded of what Deng Xiaoping said. Deng Xiaoping once in January 1980 defined China's national reunification as one of three major tasks to be accomplished during the 1980s. But when the decade was over, Deng said he could wait another hundred years. As long as China maintains the view of multi-polarity with both realistic and liberal elements in it, as long as China really wants to host 2008 Olympic Game in Beijing, China's Taiwan policy will not change and the maintenance of status quo will remain. But for the reason of humiliation and real politic as well, if Taiwan declares independence, China will not hesitate to resort to force to re-united China.