

# **On the Possible Future Orientation of China's Foreign Policy Opinions and the Issue of "Peace Rising" Doctrine**

**SHI Yinhong**

Professor of International Relations, Renmin University of China

## **A New Fundamental Assumption for China's Foreign Policy Posture**

Roughly from China's 1996 "Missile Test" targeting on somewhere in the east offshore water near Taiwan island, four years after Deng Xiaoping's very famous South China inspection tour which launching the accelerated economic reform and China's sustained rapid economic growth up to now, the circles of foreign policy elite opinion in the United States and even the American government have been always taking the prospect of China developing into a real great power of East Asia or even a future world power in a relatively quick pace as a fundamental framework or primary starting point for considering and conceiving American grand strategy toward China and East Asia, and in effect almost always conducting a strategic debate on what should be the primary aspect of the U.S. approach toward China: being on guard and "containment", or co-option and "remolding by soft means".

However, on the part of China's foreign policy opinion, the situation had been quite different from that in the United State in the same period. Because the development of China's economic strength was perceived (and in fact) far from sufficient for it, because the self-confidence and willingness for carrying out an active out-forward foreign policy (or "power policy", to borrow not so fitly a word in the traditional European international politics) were still quite limited, and also because the "stimulants" came from the situation of the Taiwan problem as well as from the certain social transformation and psychological change within China had not reached a corresponding point, the prospect of China tending to become a real great power through rapid peaceful development had, for a long time, not been taken as a fundamental starting point for the general thinking of China's foreign policy opinion. What had been prevailing as an overwhelming main-stream was the very moderate, highly prudent, and sometimes even rather conservative foreign policy ideas and conceptions, including the belief in "lying low" ("*tao guang yang hui*"), the absolute No. 1 priority of domestic economic development, and limited participating in international regimes, together with a kind of threatened feeling of a weaker who regard bearable compromise and patience or self-restraint as the main approach in dealing with external hard restraints.

However, the very rapid growth of China's economy and foreign trade that has been sustaining for many years has finally reached to such a point: that primarily under the strong situational and psychological "shock" from the danger of Taiwanese independence with an unprecedented high degree of seriousness marked first of all by the result of the 2004 presidential election in Taiwan, combined with the effects of the remarkable partial decline or reverse of American power, especially resulted and demonstrated by the postwar Iraqi situation, as well as of some social factors within China in recent one or two years, the probable future prospect that China developed into a real great power with an accelerating pace in a general peaceful way, and

the willingness to protect and promote this development vigorously by employing economic resources, diplomatic instruments and (in a very few possible cases strictly selected and defined) military means, has just begun in its first step to function as one of the most important elements in deciding China's foreign policy opinion. This newly emerged (or emerging) development would probably be a first-rate significant factor, among a few other internal and external ones, to shape the future posture of China toward the outside world. This might have exhibited an epoch-making great hope which China should have, but it also contains a possibility to develop into different direction.

### **Several Widely Prevailing Consciousness Newly Emerged**

At the same time, a large part of China's foreign policy opinion in 2004 or so makes one have to begin to pay significant attention to several widely prevailing important senses or consciousness newly emerged. They also contain different possibilities as mentioned above. First, the Chinese opinion finds almost suddenly, as it like, that China has had a quite huge economic strength resulted from the very rapid and sustained economic growth, that this strength is an available major strategic instrument of national power in many cases (and at the present almost the only really available one besides diplomacy in its strict sense). Secondly, the Chinese opinion finds almost suddenly that there is need for active out-forward foreign policy, especially for out-forward foreign economic strategy, to obtain or maintain the supply of external resources and foreign markets and the related political influence, thereby promoting further the domestic development and contributing to the management of certain domestic economic and social tensions at the present and in the future. Thirdly, the Chinese opinion has suddenly developed a sense of urgency for "energy security" (in the cases of some mass media it may even be called as "energy obsession"), together with a remarkably stronger sense for sea power among some opinions.

And fourthly, China almost suddenly finds that the Taiwan problem has deteriorated in an unprecedented degree because of first of all the result of the March 20<sup>th</sup> presidential election in that Island, and this dramatic consciousness has greatly stimulated the sense of urgency for a really accelerated military build-up and preparation for use of force to crush the Taiwanese independence, and in a great degree made the whole national "strategic culture" focusing on "solving" the Taiwan problem. Fifthly, largely because of Taiwan, the Chinese opinion (or at least a large part of it) almost suddenly finds that, fundamentally speaking, the United States is primarily a strategic rival of China, and begins to feel unambiguously at the first time that there may be a military conflict or limited war in the future with the U.S. over the Taiwan issue (Some people even regard this as an inevitability). Finally, as to a quite large part of "elite opinion", it seems that its sense of urgency for external problems has in general surpassed that for developing domestic reform; On the part of many, the conception or conviction of "influencing the world by reforming ourselves" that almost represented a consensus of foreign policy elite opinion in many years has seemed to retired from the mind.

A development which does not began in 2004 but still remarkably aggravates on this year is also worthy to be closely attended. That is the rapid growth of popular nationalism promoted by the social transformation and the economic growth. Related to it can be found another one: the rise of "public opinion" and the relative decline of "elite opinion". Moreover, China now has a new

generation of “opinion makers” belong to unofficial and semi-official media, the driving forces of which includes commercial motivation and popular nationalism. China thus has certain important new forces or resources in positive sense in her management of foreign affairs, but the complexities and difficulties of her policy making and policy implementation also increased correspondingly. It could be said therefore that China’s foreign policy begins to face a newly added dialectic.

### **Of the “Peaceful Rising” as a Fundamental Foreign Policy Doctrine**

China is in her ‘peaceful rising’, as world opinion very widely and increasingly recognizes, especially in the most recent years. But the above observation indicates that “peaceful rise” is still not (or even far from) an undoubted and unchangeable national orientation based on a minimum national consensus, whether it is this primarily due to the external or internal causes or dynamics. Therefore, China does need a fundamental doctrine of “Peaceful Rising” and the related systematic elaboration. In the major part of the last one year and several months more, “Peaceful Rising” was developing into such a doctrine or foreign policy “philosophical” program, and received wide and largely reasonably good response from the international community and world opinion. Moreover, a few imaginable short-term or middle-term “un-peaceful” or not so peaceful tactics, strategy, or policy options (chiefly over the Taiwan issue) are very much compatible with “Peaceful Rising” as a general national orientation for a whole historical period or epoch, just as the doctrine of “independent peaceful diplomacy” used by China for many years up to now.

However, “Peaceful Rising” doctrine had been suddenly withdrawn, disappearing in effect totally from China’s official statements and domestic “formal” discussions, after the Head of State and Premier of China publicly declared it several times, after it was elaborated and discussed with very great frequency by the scholarly circles and medias in China. Although the fundamental rationales for raising this doctrine in the first place have not been denied or refuted, and the original basic needs for it still exist, requiring corresponding “philosophy” and ideas to meet them.

A concept for long-term foreign policy program which generally or at least roughly fits to the new historical period and new grand requirements (and also in the same degree fits to a changing China in a changing international environment) has been withdrawn. An imaginable result could be aggravation of certain major “vacuum” in foreign policy idea and opinion, possibly producing some profound intellectual confusion and mental self-contradiction, and increasing irrelevance of some older and traditional tenets or slogans. Among what a rapidly developing China requires at the present and in the future are certainly a new fundamental conception that is required for shaping the elite and public opinions in China according to the basic requirements of a new period or epoch in her modern history, and something which could be expected to “command” the management of various particular issues in her foreign affairs, providing to them a kind of unified “strategic logic” and “philosophical rationale”. Without it, China’s “peaceful rising” will be somewhat negatively influenced, even substantially.

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