

From Partnership to Alliance? The Development of Sino-Russian Relations

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INTRODUCTION

The situation in Northeast Asia has recently undergone rapid change, seen especially in the historic inter-Korean summit in June 2000. As a dramatic shift in the relationship between the two Koreas has alleviated the military tension in Northeast Asia that lasted over fifty years, it raises hopes for the establishment of a new era of peace in the region. Along with the U.S., China, Russia, and Japan have shown active support for a peace settlement on the Korean peninsula, in stark contrast to the past when the foreign policy of the United States toward North Korea on nuclear and missile issues had shaped the political climate of the peninsula.

It is, however, premature to assume that relief of military tensions on the Korean peninsula will lead to the alleviation of overall military tensions in Northeast Asia. Setting aside the problems between the two Koreas, principal countries of Northeast Asia are talking about peace and cooperation; yet, at the same time, a new tension is forming among the countries. Particularly notable is the progress in the relationship between China and Russia. This is in

sharp contrast to Sino-American relations whose strategic alliance of the past have deteriorated, with repeated friction since the beginning of 1990s. In fact, some are predicting that China and Russia will form an alliance in opposition to the U.S. If the prediction were ever actualized, it would have a decisive impact, beyond Northeast Asia, on the post-Cold-War world order.

The purpose of this article is to examine the significance of the development in Sino-Russian relations on the reorganization of the world order. If the changes taking place in Sino-Russian relations are motivated by the establishment of a balance of power, it is highly possible that a new alliance may emerge from it. However, others place a greater significance on domestic and other factors as the moving force behind the development in Sino-Russian Relations.¹⁾ In order to establish the decisive factor behind that development, this article will focus on how changes in China's foreign policy will affect Sino-Russian relations. With rapid economic development in China, and the attendant increase in the political and military influence, China's foreign policy will have a deep impact, not only on Sino-Russian relations, but also on any future developments. Accordingly, the changes in China's policy will be examined first, followed by the process of change and the main characteristics of Sino-Russian relations. Finally, the effect of the development in Sino-Russian relations on the Northeast Asian order will be analyzed.

CHANGES IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY AFTER REFORM AND LIBERALIZATION

While China's foreign policy was not completely free from the influence of foreign relations, it was even more greatly influenced by

1) Samuel S. Kim, "Chinese Foreign Policy in Theory and Practice," in Samuel S. Kim (ed.), *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Policy Faces the Millennium* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), p. 19.

the priorities in domestic policies. For example, the Sino-Soviet conflict, one of major foreign affairs during the Mao Zedong era, was an outcome of domestic political considerations, in particular of Mao's characteristic political inclination, rather than of international strategic considerations.²⁾

However, post-Mao China has sought reform and liberalization, revising the overall existing national policies as well as making drastic changes in its foreign policies. Here, the article will look at the differences between China's foreign policy during the reform and liberalization era and that of the past, as well as the type of changes taking place now, when international and domestic circumstances are far different from those of the early days of reform and liberalization.

The Basic Direction of China's Foreign Policy during the Period of Reform and Liberalization: Development-oriented Foreign Policy

The period of reform and liberalization marks a transition from Mao's era, one that focused on class struggle, to Deng Xiaoping's era, one that emphasized economic development. Of course, for a large country like China, political concerns could not be treated as secondary. However, in contrast to Mao, Deng placed economic development as the first priority on his political agenda, seeing it as a primary factor for enhancing overall national strength.

Consequently, the ultimate goal of China's foreign policy was creating favorable conditions for economic development and, ultimately, for the enhancement of national strength. With the shift in the basic aim of foreign policy, China's foreign policy exhibited major changes in the following three fields: First of all, China's perception of international affairs changed. Regarding

2) Chi Su, "The Strategic Triangle and China's Soviet Policy," in Robert S. Ross (ed.), *China, the United States, and the Soviet Union: Tripolarity and Policy Making in the Cold War* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), p. 44.

international affairs, China, during Mao's time, held a confrontational perspective, in which the Soviet Union and the United States, particularly the hegemonism of the Soviet Union, were considered to be potential sources for the outbreak of war, thus the issue of national security was considered an important policy matter. After the beginning of the reform and liberalization policy, China, however, began to place emphasis on the gradual reduction of war threats in world affairs. In short, China's perception of world affairs changed to a more amicable one. The shift in China's perception owes, in part, to the U.S.-Soviet *détente* that began in the mid-1980s; but, more importantly, it was motivated by the purpose of finding a justification to push forward a new foreign policy. In a conference with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce delegation in 1985, Deng Xiaoping presented "peace" and "development" as the main tasks for today's international community and said, "China, for many years in the past, placed emphasis on the threat of war; however, there's been a small change in our perspective. While the threat of war still exists, the power to restrict the outbreak of war has been much enhanced."³ Peace, in the past, was itself the end; however, in the era of reform and liberalization, peace has also become a condition of development. By revising its understanding of the international situation, China justified the aim of its foreign policy the promotion of favorable conditions for development.

Secondly, in pursuit of the new aim, the actual content of Chinese foreign policy, particularly that of the security strategy, underwent a drastic change. China improved its relations with Japan, Europe, and the West and maintained a strategic cooperative relationship with the United States, while continuing its efforts to establish an amicable relationship with the Soviet Union. Although anti-hegemonism remained the

3) *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Vol. 3* (in Chinese) (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1993), p. 106.

principal direction for China's foreign policy, it no longer targeted only the Soviet Union. At the same time, China became active in seeking stability in the region by taking a relatively moderate position on territorial disputes with its neighboring countries, suggesting that they resolve the dispute in accordance with the principles of the "maintenance of *status quo*" and "co-prosperity" until a complete resolution of the issue could be reached. Lastly, China began to actively participate in international organizations, in such areas as economy, culture, disarmament and environment. Swaine and Tellis define China's security strategy in the 1980s as a "calculative" security policy. According to them, the "calculative" strategy consists of three main characteristics: 1) a practical and non-ideological approach and maintenance of friendly international relations, 2) restraining the use of armed force while modernizing the military, and 3) active participation in the international community with a practical purpose.⁴ With the implementation of the new foreign policy, it helped to normalize China's relations with most of the countries with which it had military and political confrontations from the 1950s to the 1970s, making it possible to create an international environment in which energies could be focused on economic development.

The third area of change was the relation between foreign policy and economic policy. At the time, the introduction of foreign technology and capital, especially those from advanced capitalist countries, had become important factors in China's economic development. Towards the mid-1990s, the proportion of foreign trade and direct investment in Chinese economy grew to a proportion that would have been unthinkable before reform and liberalization.⁵ However, coordination of domestic policy alone is

4) Micheal D. Swaine, and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2000), pp. 113-114.

5) According to 1997 statistics, foreign capital enterprises were responsible for 12.7%

not sufficient to lay the ground for the introduction of foreign technology and capital, but requires arbitration in trade conflict, formulation of trade standard, and also resolution of matters related to international relations, such as trade regulations on high-technology. Such issues were also raised in the negotiations relating to China's admission to WTO. China's foreign policy, in other words, is not just a policy with the purpose of creating a favorable condition for economic development but also an economic policy. The above-mentioned changes related to China's foreign policy after reform and liberalization are likely to continue for a considerable period in the future. China's foreign policy after reform and liberalization can be said to have taken the cooperative approach rather than an assertive one.

A New Task for China's Foreign Policy after the Cold War: Reemergence of Security Issues

Renewed questions regarding China, despite its cooperative inclinations in recent years, are coming to the fore in the international community, owing to the following two uncertainties. One issue is the impact of the growth in China's comprehensive national power due to its successful drive of the reform and liberalization policy. The other issue is related to how China would understand and cope with the reorganization of the world order in progress since the end of the Cold War. The former is an issue posed by China, and the latter, one posed by the world.

The issues posed by China to the world are related to the uncertainties in the wake of China's continued economic growth and modernization of its military. Some camps advance the argument of "the China peril," based on their interpretation of China's current

of China's total industrial production volume and 47.0% of China's trade volume. Economic Research Institute, Social Science Institute of China, *China's Industrial Development Report* (in Chinese) (Beijing: Jinjiguanli Chubanshe, 1999), p. 397.

foreign policy as having shifted its direction to a more aggressive one.⁶⁾ However, the essence of the issue is not in China's current intentions. Considering its enormous population, land, and natural resources, China's growth would have profound repercussions—beyond its national boundaries—on the international order. In other words, regardless of its current intentions, China's growth itself would heighten the anxieties of neighboring countries on security issues, and it would appear to be a threat to current dominant powers, such as the United States. China is trying to alleviate outside anxieties by expressing repeatedly that its policy would never be oriented towards gaining hegemony, and by assuring that its national strength has not reached the level that would pose a threat to surrounding countries. However, the world is likely to rely on the historical experience, that of emergence of new conflicts and clashes attending a new powerful nation, rather than on China's words of assurance. Accordingly, the reformulation of new China policies taking place around the world, one that includes provisions for the anticipated elements of anxiety, is an understandable reaction.⁷⁾ However, such a move would appear as a new element of anxiety for China.

The issue posed by the world to China, regarding the opening of China to the outside and the reorganization of world order in progress since the end of the Cold War, has generated a new security issue for the latter. The troubles in Sino-American relationships amidst a drastic increase in the United States' sphere of influence in the international community after the end of the Cold War, when the U.S. became the sole superpower, are becoming new threat factors to China's security. One factor responsible for the growing conflict in Sino-U.S. relations has to do with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which nullified the strategic importance of cooperation between

6) The most widely-read source representative of this perspective is Richard Bernstein, and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Alfred A. Knof, 1997).

7) Swaine and Tellis, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

China and the United States. Other factors include the emergence of China's human rights issue as an international issue, China's rapid growth surpassing all expectations, Taiwan's aggressive diplomacy for sovereignty, and the increase in the influence of China's domestic politics on decisions regarding its foreign policy.⁸⁾ Regardless of the reasons, the worsening China-U.S. relations are expected to cause concern in the defense of China proper by making its coastal region vulnerable to hostile aggressions, as well as increasing the possibility of placing China at a disadvantage in its territorial disputes with the surrounding countries, including the Taiwan question. Moreover, with a policy aimed at opening up its economy to the outside, the nation has made a conversion to a more liberal economic system, and, related to admission to the WTO, the Chinese market is moving beyond the capitalist market system to that of a service-oriented market. Consequently, China is becoming more anxious about the fate of its own economy falling under the sway of outside factors. In particular, the financial crisis of 1997 that hit hard in East Asia has made it even more anxious. As a result, "economic security" has emerged as an important policy issue in China.⁹⁾ These circumstances demanded a revision in China's amicable understanding of the international community and made security concerns again an important issue for China.¹⁰⁾

This conflicts with the existing line of Chinese foreign policy based on the idea of development through internationalism. In fact,

8) David M. Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams: Managing U.S.-China Relations 1989-2000* (LA., CA.: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 3-4.

9) At the 15th Chinese communist party convention, Jiang Ze-in, general secretary of the Chinese communist party, emphasized the importance of rejuvenation of national strength and independent sovereignty, while still maintaining the standpoint of openness to the outside, to guarantee economic security.

10) One slightly different study argued that rather than seeking "peace" and "development," as in the past, China should seek "security" and "development" in the international stage. Chu Shulong, "National Interests, National Power and National Strategy of China," (in Chinese), *Zhanlue yu Guanli*, No. 4, 1999, pp. 13-14.

China, now and then, has taken a firm stance on foreign policies, such as the armed demonstration against Taiwan between 1996 and 1997. However, as for short- and intermediate-term policy plans, it is unlikely that China would go outside the frame of the “calculative security strategy.” The nation’s active efforts for admission to the WTO, despite the friction in Sino-American relations after the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999, indicates that openness to the outside world remains China’s basic policy. While it has recently assumed a wary position on world affairs, development as the principal goal of its foreign policy has not changed. Presently, China has made it clear that it has neither the capacity nor the intention to compete for hegemony against the United States. However, China, while maintaining the general framework of its foreign policy, will likely assume, according to the changes in circumstances, an aggressive posture on real security issues, particularly the issues related to its sovereignty and territorial security. And the development in Sino-Russian relations is a pivotal point of China’s new aggressive stance.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STRATEGIC COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CHINA AND RUSSIA

Despite the fact that they share a communist ideology, the Sino-Soviet relationship during the Cold War era, rather than being cooperative, was tinged by suspicion and confrontation. Since the late 1950s, China and the Soviet Union were engaged in fierce mudslinging, and in 1969, Sino-Soviet disputes developed into armed conflict. Although the Sino-Soviet confrontation came to a lull in 1970s, China felt threatened by Soviet nuclear capabilities, and hence sought improvement in its relationship with the U.S., leading to Nixon’s historic state visit in 1972. During this process, China and the U.S. sustained strategic cooperative relationship as a countermeasure against Soviet expansionism. With the beginning of

reform and liberalization of China, however, the triangular relations among China, the United States, and the Soviet Union were reshuffled. Especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Sino-American relationship is gradually becoming confrontational while the Sino-Russian relationship is developing into a strategic ally cooperative one, leading to profound changes in the balance of power between the major powers. One of the major concerns coming out of these changes is whether the Sino-Russian relationship would develop into a new alliance against the United States.

Development in the Sino-Russian Relationship after Reform and Liberalization: Establishment of a Strategic Cooperative Partnership

Starting from the 1980s, China and the Soviet Union have been trying to bury the state of tension of the past and to seek normalization in their relationship. When the Soviet Union requested dialogue to establish *détente* with China in the 1970s, the latter adhered to the position that it would only agree to dialogue on the issue of territorial disputes. The dialogue for normalization of Sino-Soviet relations commenced after 1979, when China changed its position, expanding the scope of negotiation with the Soviet on matters beyond the territorial. The first stage in the process of normalization of relations culminated in Mikhail Gorbachev's state visit to China in May of 1989 and the summit meeting with Deng Xiaoping. The shift in China's position was a part of the new foreign policy that sought to create an international environment favorable for China's economic development.¹¹⁾

In the 1990s, however, Sino-Russian relations developed beyond the goal of normalization. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, for a time, tensions formed between the emerging Russia and

11) Su contests that the Sino-Soviet *détente* was pushed forward by Chinese initiative with the domestic motive of economic modernization. Su, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

China. The issues that led to the momentary tension were 1) the Chinese government's positive attitude on the August 1991 coup of the conservative powers; 2) Russia's criticism, induced by pro-Western position, of China's violation of human rights; and 3) Russia's move to establish normalization with Taiwan. However, when China swiftly proclaimed diplomatic recognition of Russia and expressed its will to improve relations with Russia, Russia became more cautious about the human rights issue and Taiwan, and soon after, Sino-Russian relations normalized.¹²⁾ At the 1992 summit meeting in China between Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin, a joint statement was issued, stating that neither would intervene in the domestic affairs of the other, that both would stand against hegemonism, that neither would strike the other first with nuclear weapons. Furthermore, progress would include the expansion of economic, scientific, cultural and military exchanges.¹³⁾ With vigorous interchanges between the two countries in areas such as military and economy since the summit, the trade volume between China and Russia increased to some 4.2 billion dollars in 1992 and 7.7 billion in 1994. At the summit meeting in September 1994, Jiang and Yeltsin proclaimed, "a constructive partnership for the twenty-first century." After implementing various measures for the recovery of military confidence, such as the prohibition against striking first with nuclear weapon, reduction of military force in the border regions, joint control of borders, the two leaders, in April of 1996, declared, "a strategic cooperative partnership directed to the twenty-first century."¹⁴⁾ As was explicitly expressed in the declaration, neither Beijing nor Moscow had any intentions of advancing their "strategic partnership" into an alliance against a third party.

12) Fengjun Chen (ed.), *International Relationship of Asian-Pacific in the Post-Cold War Era* (in Chinese) (Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 1999), pp. 187-188.

13) *Renmin Ribao*, December 19, 1992.

14) *Renmin Ribao*, April 25, 1996.

The declaration can be interpreted as an expression of the two countries' commitment to a long-term and comprehensive cooperative partnership. However, the call for multipolarization and anti-hegemonism in the Sino-Russian joint declaration clearly expressed their opposition to the U.S.-led unipolar world order since the end of the Cold War. China and Russia elucidated their position to the U.S. without provoking the latter.¹⁵⁾ This position was reconfirmed in April 1997, when the leaders of both countries called in a joint declaration for the "construction of multipolar world and of new world order."

Owing to the deterioration of relations with the U.S. after the end of the Cold War, China and Russia were able to assume the same position. In the process, China grew suspicious that the United States, in order to sustain its hegemony, was pushing for a blockade against China and a policy of interference on Chinese domestic affairs. In the case of Russia, it adopted pro-Western policy in efforts to gain support from the West in the initial stage of its transition to market economy. However, the United States did not recognize Russia's geopolitical vested rights, and weakened Russia's influence through NATO's eastward policy. At the Paris Conference in May 1997, although Russia recognized the NATO membership of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and other Eastern European countries, in return for economic support, it was not pleased with having to make the concession. Consequently, after 1996, Russia sought an aggressive foreign policy in order to counter the blockade policy of the West, and this was an important factor in its active interest in improving Sino-Russian relations.¹⁶⁾ Accordingly, since the mid-1990s, China and Russia, while

15) John W. Garver, "Sino-Russian Relations," in Samuel S. Kim (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 119.

16) However, this change in policy need not be interpreted as anti-West but as a more balanced policy from the previous pro-Western one. According to Bazanov, since 1996, a balanced liberal strategy has taken the initiative in foreign affairs over westernizers and the anti-western camp. Evgeni Bazanov, "Russian Perspective on China's Foreign Policy and Military Development," in Jonathan D. Pollack, and

being discreet, began to use each other as bargaining chips in their dealings with the United States.

From Partnership to Alliance?

However, things took a more serious turn than anticipated. Two events played an important role in the shifting of circumstances: The first, NATO military operations in Kosovo in 1999; the second, Washington's move toward actual deployment of the theater missile defense (TMD) and national missile defense (NMD) systems. The NATO bombing of Kosovo intensified the sense of crisis in both China and Russia for the following reasons: The armed intervention was carried out under a new doctrine in which humanitarian reasons took precedence over sovereignty. Moreover, the incident reconfirmed the overwhelming supremacy of American military power. Lastly, the military intervention was carried out on the basis of an arbitrary decision of the U.S. and Britain, bypassing the United Nations. China and Russia feared that if they overlooked the matter, it would provide justification for outside intervention in Chechnya, Taiwan, and Tibet, and even the issue of their own sovereignty. They were also anxious over the fact that the U.S. had the military capability to intervene in these matters. Furthermore, with the full-scale efforts of the U.S. in deploying American NMD/TMD systems, China and Russia were in danger of exposing their strategic inferiority, and the U.S. taking the lead in military power. In particular, China had misgivings that both NMD and TMD systems were targeted against it.

Confronted with these circumstances, both China and Russia began to voice harsher criticism against the new American world strategy. In December of 1999, Yeltsin and Jiang clearly stated, in a joint statement, the support for Russia's military measures on

Richard H. Yang (ed.), *In China's Shadow: Regional Perspectives on Chinese Foreign Policy and Military Development* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1998), p. 76.

Chechnya, and on China's firm stand on the Taiwan issue. Also in July 2000, Jiang and the new Russian President, Vladimir Putin, declared in a joint statement their support for goals for peace, stability, development, and cooperation on the international stage, and their opposition to hegemonism, coercive politics, collective politics, and attempts to revise the standing rules of international law, as well as any act of intervention in the domestic affairs of a sovereign nation, either by armed force or pressure.¹⁷⁾ In the conference between the two ministries of foreign affairs in April 1999, China and Russia confirmed their mutual opposition to the American attempts to redefine the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. In short, the United States gradually became the target of the cooperative relationship between China and Russia, and this provided the basis for concern that the relationship may develop into that of an alliance.

Considering the dynamics of international politics, it is highly likely that the principal nations under the restraint of existing hegemonic camp will form an alliance against the dominant powers.¹⁸⁾ However, the present cooperative partnership between China and Russia is not likely to follow a course that would risk their relationships with other countries.¹⁹⁾ First of all, the cooperative relationship between China and Russia is a defensive measure against domestic and peripheral issues and is oriented to expanding the sphere of influence of the former communist camp, and not towards competing for dominance against the United States on a global scale. More importantly, both China and Russia consider strengthening their relationships with the United States a principal task of their foreign policy. This reflects the situation of both countries in which strengthening internal capability is a primary goal. Even regarding threats to national security, China and Russia consider threats from

17) *Renmin Ribao*, July 19, 1999.

18) Garver, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

19) Bazanov, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

domestic and peripheral sources to be greater than those from the Western powers or strategic competition.²⁰⁾ Accordingly, some observe that Chinese opposition to American dominance is all talk and no action, and that formation of an anti-hegemonic alliance is unlikely.²¹⁾ In other words, while both China and Russia advocate anti-hegemonism, there is a tendency for each to want a free ride, while the other leads the crusade against the United States.²²⁾

While the Sino-Russian cooperative partnership may not have an immediate effect on the global pattern of power, it is important to note its growing influence locally, particularly on Northeast Asia.

DEVELOPMENT OF SINO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS AND NORTHEAST ASIA

The development in Sino-Russian relations amidst deteriorating Sino-American relations has some speculating that it would evolve into a continental Russo-Chinese bloc, an alliance that would act as a counterpart to the American-Japanese maritime bloc.²³⁾ Globally, the possible emergence of such an alliance is looked upon critically.²⁴⁾ The Sino-Russian cooperative partnership, nevertheless, would have a deep impact on the

20) Yizhou Wang (ed.), *International Security in Globalization Era* (in Chinese) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1999), p. 451.

21) Zaibang Wang, and Junwei Ma, "China's International Strategy Environment and Its Foreign Strategy in the Upcoming 5-10 Years," (in Chinese) in Modern International Relationship Research Center of China (ed.), *Global Strategic Structure: China's international Environment in the New Century* (Beijing: Shishi Chubanshe, 2000), pp. 150-151.

22) Yimin Song, "Kua Shiji Daguo Guanxi Tedian," in [www.peopledaily.com.GB/guoji/209/2337/index.html] (December 13, 2000).

23) Garner, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

24) Swaine and Tellis, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

balance of power in the Northeast Asian region.

Changes in Political Ties

Politically, improvements in Sino-North Korean and Russo-North Korean relations, along with Sino-Russo relations, also bear important implications. The traditional alliance between China and North Korea became sluggish with the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992. Since then, North Korea has been engaged in a military standoff with the United States, characterized by nuclear and missile threats. Meanwhile, with China's active pursuit of economic reform based on a socialist market economy, the gap between China and North Korea has become even wider. However, China continued to supply North Korea with food and oil and maintained its opposition to United States military sanctions against North Korea. Its support for North Korea did not stem from its support for North Korean policy, however, but from the fear of the disastrous consequences that would arise with the sudden collapse of the North Korean regime. In June of 1996, however, with the first official visit by a top North Korean official, Kim Young-nam, since 1992, Sino-North Korean relations rapidly recovered. The bilateral relations between China and North Korea seemed on the way to full recovery, with Kim Jong-il's visit to China in May 2000, just before the historic summit between South and North Korea, and in January 2001, followed by regular and frequent contacts by high-level officials. The bilateral relations between Russia and North Korea also rapidly improved with the conclusion of a mutual amity and cooperation treaty in February 2000, and with Putin's visit to Pyongyang in July, the first visit by a Russian president. In a joint statement, the leaders declared their mutual opposition to outside intervention in domestic affairs for humanitarian reasons and their support for independence, sovereignty and territorial stability.

These changes stem from a positive shift in attitude. North

Korea, with its stubborn adherence to a planned economy which ultimately led to an economic crisis and a rigid foreign policy toward United States, thus heightening military tension in Northeast Asia, has been considered by both China and Russia, though in varying degrees, as a problematic regime. Matters became worse in August 1998, when North Korea launched a satellite, lending justification for the U.S. to deploy the TMD and NMD systems. Recently, however, Chinese and Russian perceptions of North Korea have taken a favorable turn. First, because of rising conflicts with the U.S., joining forces with North Korea has become an important factor in securing Chinese and Russian dominance in Northeast Asia. In addition, there is increasing belief that North Korea has used its nuclear and missile cards effectively to counter American intervention and to achieve practical gains, and that it is not seeking a risky military course of action.²⁵⁾ Around the same time, North Korea's attitude towards Chinese reform changed. Kim Jong-il reacted positively to the Chinese reform and liberalization policy when he visited China in May 2000. During Kim's 2001 visit to China, he selected Shanghai as a stop on the itinerary and witnessed the achievements of Chinese reform. Furthermore, development in Shanghai and achievements of Chinese reform were extensively publicized within North Korea.

One result of the improvements in Sino-North Korea and Russo-North Korea relations was the consolidation of forces against the deployment of U.S.-led TMD and NMD systems. The three countries confirmed their mutual position on the issue, and, with improvement in the relationship between two Koreas, justification for the deployment of the TMD and NMD systems based on North Korean missile threat was invalidated. After confirming Kim Jong-il's willingness to halt rocket development, provided that North Korea is supplied with facilities and money for satellite capabilities, Putin took an offensive position against the United States's TMD policy at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

25) Fengjun Chen, "Korean Peninsula," *Study on North East Asia* No. 4 (1997), pp. 7-8.

The new developments illustrate that China, Russia, and North Korea see the need to join forces in light of the U.S. move to strengthen of the military alliance with Japan and Korea, and considering the special military alliance between the U.S. and Taiwan. Joining forces with China and Russia, moreover, can provide the conditions for North Korea to assume a more advantageous position in its negotiations with the United States and South Korea.

Military Relations in Northeast Asia

From the military perspective, progress in Sino-Russian relations points toward the strengthening of Chinese military power. China's arms purchases from Russia reached some 6.5 billion dollars for the period between 1991 to early 1999. In 1999 alone, China purchased some 3 billion dollars in arms from Russia. In December 1999, at the summit meeting between China and Russia, China agreed to make purchases of 20 billion dollars in arms and military technology from Russia from 2000 to 2004. Among the new arms slated for purchase are the Sukhoi-30 jet fighter, five Sovremenny-class destroyers, eight modern Kilo-class diesel submarines, and other nuclear submarines.²⁶⁾ These purchases are part of China's effort to strengthen its air force and naval capabilities, primarily in its strategic maritime capabilities in the Taiwan Strait and the Spratly Islands. However, it is difficult to assess such military contacts as a military alliance. Wary of China's excessive military build-up, Russia has set restrictions on its arms sales to China. In other words, the current Russian arms sales to China are motivated by economic necessity and not by a strategic one. However, modernization of Chinese military power is likely to have consequences on the balance of military power in Northeast Asia. The possibility of raising a new round of arms race in Northeast Asia cannot be dismissed.

26) Alexander V. Nemets, and John L. Schere, "The Emerging Sino-Russian Axis," *The World & I*, Vol. 15 Issue 6 (June, 2000).

An important long-term issue is that China is extremely critical of U.S. military power in Northeast Asia. In the past, China tolerated, while not giving official approval, the occupation of American military in the region, since it was seen as a countermeasure for threats from the Soviet Union and as a check on Japanese militarism. However, Beijing considers the recent consolidation of U.S.-Japan alliance, American military support for Taiwan, and the U.S. plans to deploy a Northeast Asian TMD system as a scheme with China in mind. In fact, China has already shifted its strategic focus in preparation for an armed conflict in Asia.²⁷⁾ As for American armed forces stationed in South Korea, China has not voiced an official position opposing the American military presence, considering it a matter to be resolved by the two Koreas; however, it is opposed to a prolonged American military presence, and has expressed this position in different ways. For example, in the *Liberation Army Daily*, the People's Liberation Army bulletin, following the inter-Korean summit, an editorial was published pointing out that the U.S. no longer had any reasons to keep its armed forces on the Korean peninsula. Given the fact the road to unification of the Korean peninsula is still in the distant future, China is cautious about bringing to the fore such difficult issues as American military presence in South Korea; however, China may make its position explicit once substantive talks are under way and the United States makes a move to consolidate its military hegemony.

CONCLUSION

China's foreign policy remains centered on creating a favorable environment for its development, and its security strategy is focused

27) China is particularly concerned that issues regarding Taiwan, Tibet, and the Spratly Islands will not be resolved regionally, but would develop into a Kosovo-

on internal and peripheral issues rather than competing with American hegemony. Likewise, consolidation of Sino-Russian relations can also be understood in this light. In short, understanding the changes in Chinese foreign policy based on the logic of the balance of power is not persuasive. Similarly, Russia, rather than seeking an alliance, seems to be using the "China card" to gain bargaining power with the Western hemisphere and to obtain stability in the Eastern region.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that China's foreign policy ignores the issue of a balance of power. Chinese strategy in Northeast Asian region is, to a certain degree, informed by the logic of balance of power. China considers such issues as the Taiwan issue as vital, and perceives as a direct threat to its security. Hence, any excessive optimism regarding the region should be avoided.

South Korea, in particular, has been able to pursue its North Korea policy in a relatively favorable international environment, but the circumstances are expected to change in the future. In other words, considering South Korea's special relationship with the United States, its relationship with China and Russia may not go smoothly, and its relationship with North Korea would no longer be determined unilaterally. Amidst the emergence of new powers in Northeast Asia, securing cooperation and support for peace and unification of the Korean peninsula would be a difficult task.

In the long term, there remains the question of what course the two contradictory tendencies in Chinese foreign policy would take in the future. However, a single variable would not provide the answer to the issue, since it would be determined by both external and internal factors, as well as the interaction of those factors. Meanwhile, the international community should find ways to build mutual trust to avoid confrontation with China, that seeks an active role in world affairs.

style conflict with American intervention. Ji You, *The Armed Forces of China* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999), p. 202.