

Ten Foreign Policy Relationships in China's New Era

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We are in the vortex of a new era—a fast-moving epoch of widespread turbulence, albeit abundant with great opportunities. In the words of Dr. Henry Kissinger, our international system is experiencing “the fourth historic transformation”, following the three forerunners of the Westphalian, Washington-Versailles and Yalta order.

A Grand Strategy: Call of the Hour

Five defining dynamics are underpinning this new age. First, emerging big and medium powers, some fourteen or fifteen in number, are on the rise as a group either as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa—the newcomer), or as the cluster of VISTA which embraces Vietnam, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey and Argentina, as well as the wider team of the Next Eleven (N-11) which includes Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea and Vietnam.¹

What an impressive array, the first ever seen in human history! Of particular significance are the ascendance of China and the resurgence of Russia.

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¹ The eleven countries identified by the Goldman Sachs investment bank and economist Jim O'Neil in a research paper as having a high potential of becoming, along with the BRICS, the world's large economies in the 21st century. The bank chose these states, all with promising outlooks for investment and future growth, on December 12, 2005. At the end of 2011, the four major countries (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and Turkey), also known as MIKT, made up 73 percent of all Next Eleven GDP. BRIC GDP was then \$13.5 trillion, while MIKT GDP which accounted for almost 30 percent of that, was \$3.9 trillion.

Second, in stark contrast to the group rise of emerging powers is the collective depression of the Western powers, with the triad of the United States, Europe and Japan trapped in the doldrums all at the same time, and plagued with underlying systematic ills at the same time. Until now, reforms have defied substantive progress, with economic recovery as yet out of reach. This has been the case for half a century. It may be an exaggeration to condemn the Western world to a path of decline, and yet across-the-board sluggishness is nevertheless the harsh reality.

Third, non-state actors are key players on the international stage. Witness the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Wall Street-induced 9/15 global financial tsunami, the hand of civil society behind the turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East as well as in the "Occupy Wall Street Movement", the muscle-flexing in international politics by cyberspace giants such as twitter, Facebook and others, and the clout shown in the global economic and political landscape by "business sharks" such as Murdoch the press baron, Steve Jobs the IT wizard and Soros the master financial speculator, to name just a few. All this gives eloquent testimony to the fact that non-state players are reshaping the configuration of traditional world politics. No wonder Joseph Nye, Jr., observed that the "Information revolution and globalization are providing the non-state players with new power resources," and that, "in an insecure cyberspace, power diffusion poses a greater threat than power shift." Indeed, the synchronic occurrence of the power shift and power diffusion has brought about a multitude of centers of power, action and decision-making.

Fourth, global issues have for the first time claimed unprecedented worldwide attention. These include, among other things, climate change, energy shortages, environmental pollution, food security, water scarcity, the warming of the North Pole, terrorism, and a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Consequently, due to a mutual switch, the boundary between high and low politics is becoming gradually blurred, which highlights the necessity and urgency for global governance as never before.

Fifth, and finally, globalization, multipolarity, the information revolution and democratization have ushered in a new stage, interacting

like streams converging into a big river with a powerful force, and this serves as a key to unveiling the secret of current worldwide turbulence.

As a shining star among the emerging powers, China, while orbiting around Planet Earth, so to speak, together with the other peer satellites of political forces, is also rotating on its own unique axis at the same time. Amid the gyrations, Beijing has scaled up to the global economic forefront, taken the global political center stage, and arrived at sensitive hotspots of global security. This has led to a dichotomy. On the one hand, its rising international status and resultant ballooning national pride have turned the country into an indispensable player in global political, economic and security affairs, thus enhancing its capabilities for coping with and influencing the volatile international landscape. On the other hand, pressures both at home and abroad are mounting at the same time, and these are multi-tiered, multi-dimensional composite pressures. We are now under the crossfire from the suspicions and constraints of the global hegemony and the rivalry and envy between peer emerging powers. In the Asia-Pacific rim, we are accused of practicing a far-fetched “Neo-Monroe Doctrine” or a “getting tough diplomacy”. In Africa and Latin America, we are facing the claim of “neo-colonialism”. Indeed this queer symphony of the “China threat” side-by-side with the “China responsibility” or of the “China rise”, spoken in the same breath as the “China collapse” has rarely been seen in world history. The rising power of today’s Middle Kingdom is caught right in the eye of a storm of demanding challenges.

As a matter of fact, in response to the fluid world scene, virtually all the big powers are crafting grand strategies of their own initiative. They are doing basically the same thing as if by prior arrangement: in-depth structural reform at home coupled with seizure of favorable strategic space abroad. In a word they are “seeking change amid turbulence for a turnaround or a way out”.

In the case of Washington, this is Obama’s “New Deal” and “Pivot to the Asia-Pacific”. In fact, the in-depth reform in the military, intelligence and diplomatic fields had already been in place since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, with an intensity and rich rewards far ahead of the other big powers. What Obama is doing now is to make up for the neglected or

long-delayed economic, social and political reforms. Observers tend to fix their sights on the awesome difficulties and strong resistance involved in the process, disregarding the crucial significance of the structural reform itself. Admittedly, it is easier said than done. But once breakthroughs are made in overcoming the formidable obstacles, the rewards will be extraordinarily rich. It can be readily imagined that if—and it's a big if at that—bipartisanship as witnessed in superstorm Sandy should once again prevail in the post-2012 elections days, for example a temporary deal on tackling the “fiscal cliff”, then long-awaited economic recovery would not be out of reach. In the final analysis, the economic picture in America compares favorably with the status quo in Europe and Japan. Mountain-high foreign holdings of U.S. treasury bonds and the cash-strapped government don't look so worrying when its rich citizens and affluent enterprises are taken into account, not to mention the huge potential for economic resurgence hidden in the U.S. abundance of materials and energy resources like shale gas. Externally, while continuing overall global retrenchment on the battle lines and battle grounds, Washington is focusing its money and energy on the Asia-Pacific, where its economic future and global hegemony lie. Its new strategy for this vast region is already taking shape. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta have reiterated on various occasions that America is an “Asia-Pacific country”; where it will “keep a permanent presence”. This highlights its resolve to control this vital strategic space, as evidenced by the unusual first foreign moves of the second term of the Obama Administration.

The same story is true with Russia. Whether under the Medvedev-Putin pairing of yesteryear or the Putin-Medvedev tandem of today, the Kremlin has long been bent on internal economic growth for rejuvenation and the relentless external grabbing of core interest areas. Three years after the war with Georgia, Moscow has once again regained its control over the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and its near neighbors by brain and brawn. Building on this achievement, it has come up with a concept of the “Eurasia Alliance” and demonstrated a geostrategic posture of steady progress by setting up an Oriental

Department, hosting the Vladivostok Summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), joining the East Asia Summit, intervening in North-East Asian affairs and getting involved in disputes in the Middle East and South Asia.

Even the debt-ridden Europe has been intent on seeking transformation amid turbulence by launching offensives in spite of its awkward defensive position. In fact, the debt crisis sounded an alarm to the European Union (EU) and the euro zone. It opened the eyes of Europe to the root causes of its disease and the prescription in kind which was nothing short of a systematic reform. This would spell a blessing for long-term continental peace and tranquility to the satisfaction of all, should the ongoing transfer of partial power by EU member states to Brussels, the spirit of “being in the same boat” shown among euro zone partners and the adequate transatlantic handshake translate into a recipe for addressing that root cause. It’s worth noting that mounting “internal woes” have not distracted European nations from grabbing overseas “strategic space”, i.e. North Africa and West Asia, ever since former French president Nicolas Sarkozy floated the concept of a “Mediterranean Sea Alliance”. The cat was let out of the bag when French troops rushed to Libya to cash in on U.S. reluctance to take the lead.

Indeed the scramble for strategic space by a certain big power can be seen behind the escalating tensions in the South and East China Seas. While the great powers are wrangling on the global stage, the minor powers are also stirring up trouble in the regional scene. One echoes the other. In this tangled context, what then will China’s strategic option be?

A Blunder-free Trajectory

Hindsight shows that China’s rapid growth in domestic political stability stems by and large from a trajectory of three decades devoid of any big strategic blunder and as the sole major world power at that. Here a brief contrastive review can substantiate my statement.

While Gorbachev’s new thinking led to Soviet disintegration, Yeltsin’s wild swings in foreign policy and Putin’s not-so-flawless first presidential tenure plunged Russia into the throes of the 1980-2000 ordeals. George

Bush's preoccupation with the ill-advised second War in Iraq triggered negligence of both domestic structural reform and diplomatic endeavors in the Asia-Pacific, resulting in a synchronous slide in both hard and soft power. Japan has suffered from a lost decade of frequent cabinet change that resembles musical chairs and economic malaise. India, once adrift in decision-making, has also earned itself the title of a late-starter in ascendency.

By contrast, the Chinese leadership has been quick to make accurate judgments in grand strategies at every defining juncture over the past three decades. Between 1978 and 1980, in the aftermath of the disastrous decade of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Deng Xiaoping laid the all-important theoretical and diplomatic groundwork for China's spectacular economic growth through launching the reform and opening-up, and calling for emancipation of the mind. He lost no time in improving the external environment for the new long march through realizing diplomatic normalization with Washington and Tokyo and beating back Hanoi's border provocations in self-defense. From 1989 to 1991, at a time when China's reform was trapped between the dual threats of domestic unrest and external pressures, all of a sudden the academic circle was thrown off balance and the elites were drowning in puzzled pessimism in the face of the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, the June 1989 Tiananmen incident and Western collective sanctions. Deng hit the nail on the head when he made the strategic judgment of the situation as "a combination of the big international atmosphere and the small domestic climate." He came up with the famous 24-character dictum—"Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; never claim leadership; keep a low profile, but play a due role."¹ Guided by this dictum, while standing rock-firm before external and internal pressures, China became all the more vigorous in pressing ahead with its reform and opening-up, thereby

¹ This is a key principle underpinning China's diplomacy. It means that one should be low key, hard-working and unpretentious, which reflects the traditional Chinese philosophy of valuing self-restraint and peace. But it was misinterpreted inadvertently or by design as "hiding one's capacities and biding one's time" in the Pentagon's 2002 annual report to Congress.

gaining a firm foothold and breaking through the encirclement. The publication of Deng's talks on his 1992 inspection tour to the South and the convening of the Fourteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) shortly afterwards opened up a still broader vista for China's forward march accompanied by a higher global profile. The years 1999 to 2001 saw the outbreak of a succession of grave events, including, amongst other things, the Falun Gong (The Buddhist Wheel of the Law) riot,¹ the air collision between a Chinese fighter jet and a U.S. EP-3 reconnaissance plane off China's Hainan Island, the kite-flying of the so-called "two states" theory by the then leader of Taiwan Li Tenghui, and the NATO/U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, which the Chinese government handled with aplomb. Moreover, all these troubles notwithstanding, China integrated its economy fully into the world by completing the tedious WTO accession negotiations. Shortly thereafter, faced with domestic controversy over the assessment of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, the Chinese leadership once again made an accurate strategic judgment by verifying both U.S. anti-terror intentions and the underlying pursuit of hegemony in Central Asia. While watchful of designs to split and westernize the country, Beijing stabilized and improved its ties with Washington by combating terrorism together in earnest. Upon the smooth leadership transition in 2002, Beijing correctly identified the first two decades as a promising period of strategic opportunity, which underpins the concept of a "harmonious world" and the strategy of "peaceful development", as befits the foreign policy of a great power. If it had not been for these quick and accurate strategic judgments, the more than 30-year world-class reform and progress would never have been reality.

Daunting Challenges Ahead

China is facing yet another crossroads as it calls for another grand strategic evaluation amid awesome challenges both at home and abroad.

¹ It is neither a "religious belief" nor a "spiritual movement", but a cult hazardous to society of the same nature as other cults in the U.S., Europe and Japan.

Externally, pressures began with the 2008 Wall Street financial meltdown that sparked a transatlantic debt crisis, mounted with the instability in North Africa and West Asia, and intensified with the escalating Sino-U.S. rivalry before deteriorating further with the territorial disputes with some maritime neighbors. Internally, rising acrimony is much in evidence in the heated debate between the right and the “new left” schools of thought, the labor pains of economic restructuring and social transition and the aggravating partial imbalances in reform, development and stability.

Controversy has sprung up over a plethora of issues, with neither side giving an inch. People wonder how long the Western debt crisis will persist. Is it merely a temporary trouble affecting individual nations or rather a systemic disease of Western capitalism or even a strategic pitfall that will entrap China's ascendancy? There is also debate over the nature of the turmoil in North Africa and West Asia. Is it home-grown or driven externally? Does it represent a general eruption of unique contradictions or is it merely another national rejuvenation for the Islamic world? Is it the prelude to a new round of chaos for the Greater Middle East or, indeed, an “Arab Spring” full of promise? Will opportunities for China in the region outweigh the challenges or vice versa? What explains the sudden reversal of trends in China's maritime neighborhood? Is it a necessary hedging against China's ascent? Or rather a strategic encirclement of China with bewildering underlying causes that are yet to be unveiled? Answers abound to all these chicken-and-egg questions.

Conceivably, this heated debate touched the core of the grand strategy for China's foreign policy and even that of the entire country. People argue for and against the array of vital issues: Will the strategic period of opportunity endure amid instability close by and across the world? Will China remain committed to the path of peaceful development when its sovereign territorial rights are repeatedly challenged by a number of countries? Will keeping a low profile still be viable when China rises like a towering tree that catches the wind, and which will not yield, no matter how hard the tree craves calm? Then, what about the principle of non-intervention (in the internal affairs of the other states) in the context of rising overseas interests and the increasing challenge of

non-involvement in international affairs? Still then, will China abandon its principle of non-alignment at a time when Washington is beefing up its alliances and partnerships around China? And so on and so forth.

Why so many puzzles? What explains the feeling of growing fragility amid rising national strength? How is it possible to reconcile perceptions of China's toughness abroad with complaints about its weakness at home?

The answer can be captured in the three words of rapidity, novelty and complexity. Events continue to flare up thick and fast: the split into two of the Sudan, the "Jasmine Revolution" in Tunis, unrest in Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria and so on. All of these made China quick to respond and escape and caught the United States by surprise. Gone forever were the days when the landscape remained unchanged for several years or decades at a stretch. Today, change visits us once a month, once a week, every day. People are at a loss as to what to do. The new things raining down on us come in the form of "knowledge explosion". The list covers the financial tsunami, ozone-sphere destruction, climate change, the polar region scramble, the Arab Spring, QE-3, shale-gas, rare earth, the nine-dotted line, Facebook, twitter, the sky-sea battle, TTP (Transpacific Partnership), and many more. No one can call himself Mr. know-it-all. Here, by complexity, we mean that things are always interconnected and often involve China, whether this is the link between politics and economics, domestic and foreign affairs, or traditional or non-traditional security concerns. In short, all of these look like "wheels within wheels".

Scrutiny, however, reveals that the root cause of bewilderment can be traced to the sea change in China itself, and this should be factored in. As a Chinese saying goes, "The spectators see the chess game better than the players." In the past, China was on the periphery as a spectator or in merely a support role. As an outsider, it watched most of the game. But this is no longer the case today. China is now at the global political center-stage, the economic forefront and the locus of security-sensitive areas. Deeply involved, China now runs the risk of losing sight of things that are plain to the bystanders. Small wonder the poet Su Shi (1037-1101) famously sighed over the truth being incomprehensive to one who is too deeply involved to be objective in his poem "Written on the Wall of West

Forest Temple”: “It’s a range viewed in face and peaks viewed from the side, assuming different shapes viewed from far and wide. Of Mountain Lu we cannot make out the true face, for we are lost in the heart of the very place.” So the most demanding challenge for China’s diplomacy in this fast-changing world is to acquire the vision to observe things from both the “inside out” and “outside in” at the same time.

The facts demonstrate that China has already navigated smoothly through the first round of severe tests in 2008-2009: the riots on March 15 in Tibet and on July 5 the following year in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, the devastating earthquakes first on May 12 in Wenchuan, south-west China, and then later in Yushu in the north-west of the country. Despite such social unrest and natural disasters, China successfully staged the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the Shanghai World Expo the following year. What is more, it survived with calm and self-confidence the once-in-a-century global financial meltdown. Surprisingly, China surpassed Japan to become the world’s second largest economy in 2010, five to ten years ahead of international forecasts. Further, the Chinese leadership laid out a grand blueprint to change its development model in the Twelfth Five-year Plan (2011-2015) by industrial restructuring, speeding up demand at home and domestic consumption by raising living standards, promoting innovation and the green economy. All these reflect the astuteness of the Chinese government in steering reform and openness to new heights by closely following developments both at home and abroad. This timely turnaround is posing new demands on China’s international strategy and foreign policy in the new times.

Harmonizing Ten Relations for China’s Diplomacy

Designing a grand strategy for the country represents a gigantic systems engineering project that requires collective wisdom. Here the author gives his personal premature analysis of ten relationships worthy of our attention, in celebration of the recently-concluded Eighteenth National Congress of the CPC, which witnessed a smooth and satisfactory leadership transition with Xi Jinping in the lead.

First, no. 2 vs. no. 88. A latest World Bank survey ranks China world no. 2 in terms of GDP, but world no.88 in per capita GDP—a classical case of seeing a range or peaks depending on how you view the mountain. From the perspective of international relations and world politics, the GDP figure is valid, but from the angle of the economic/social development of a nation, the per capita ranking matters more, for it is the yardstick for living standards and the prerequisite to political/social stability. As such, the correct approach is to keep the two parameters in mind. We should raise the awareness of a rising power full of strategic self-confidence, and never forget our status of being a developing nation wary of strategic self-discipline. We in China should be aware of the international expectations of a big power ready to step forward and take action at a critical juncture for burden-sharing. On the other hand, we should always remember the arduous task of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and reach the level of a medium-developed nation by 2020. This requires prudence and a low profile. Such a dual status constitutes a precondition for China to transform from a big country to a strong country with a sound mindset for its citizens. In sum, it seems appropriate to define contemporary China as a socialist developing country on the rise and a regional power with mounting global influence.

Second, expanding interests vs. strategic follow-up. In the midst of unleashing energies accumulated over 30-plus years of reform and openness, China is expanding its interests to the ocean, outer space and cyberspace, with its ubiquitous presence far ahead of its strategy design. Lack of regional and global strategies often catches out a country that reacts in haste to major events as opposed to shaping the momentum in a mood of calm. Despite worldwide acclaim for its emergency evacuation of over 35,000 nationals from war-torn Libya in the space of a week, the resettlement of these people at home and the attention to our interests in that country leave much to be desired. As such, a grand strategy design should be put on the agenda post-haste.

Third, new problems vs. commensurable capabilities. As mentioned earlier, new problems facing China are crying out for greater capabilities. The global financial crisis and the ever-mounting sovereign debt of the

West involve global politics, trans-Atlantic interaction, reform of financial regimes and the transformation of the international system. These are all typical, inter-disciplinary issues of theoretical and concrete evidential concern, which demand brainstorming. Real experts on North Africa and West Asia are few and our understanding of specific countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and others also needs enrichment. So why don't we ask ourselves how much we understand about Egypt before blaming foreigners for their ignorance about China? Such being the case, we can only parrot the words of others and sometimes even echo the views of the Western media. The same is true with other new issues such as climate change, the international law of the sea, cyber security and so on. The facts over the past three decades give eloquent testimony to our aptitude for learning new things, but this needs to be translated into an ability to take action. Now is high time to do so.

Fourth, the key vs. the primacy. Chinese post-Cold War foreign policy, especially that since the Sixteenth National Congress of the CPC in 2002, has been focused on two dimensions, with big power diplomacy as the key and good neighbor diplomacy as the primacy. Obviously this is an attempt to strike a balance between importance and urgency. But today the two dimensions are increasingly interwoven into one, as a fusion of relations with the United States and with our neighbors is presented. As such, improved Sino-US relations should be premised with a virtuous interaction between the two capitals of the Asia-Pacific, or in China's surrounding areas, to be more exact. In other words, appropriate handling of the American element in the equation represents a significant factor in pressing forward good neighboring diplomacy. Indeed, a pressing task in designing a grand strategy for the country is to factor in the "third party" element when navigating our relationship with the United States and the American factor when managing our ties with neighboring states or playing a balancing act on a big chessboard.

Fifth, the government vs. the public. A salient feature of current Chinese foreign policy is the glaring divide between the government, the public and the media, as well as that between the military and the civilians. Such a phenomenon stems from the rise of civil society and the prevalence

of the Internet, a phenomenon seen in major powers across the world, and so not something confined to China alone. The Chinese and U.S. governments decided to build a new type of great power relationship featuring a cooperative partnership based on mutual respect and win-win progress, against a backdrop of over sixty dialogue mechanisms and as many as a dozen Hu-Obama meetings which frequently took the spirit of “being the same boat” when it came to major issues. Nevertheless, such a political will has as yet to be translated into a public consensus on both shores of the Pacific Ocean. Official words contrast with public deeds. As a result, Chinese diplomatic decision-making finds itself increasingly at the mercy of disturbances and trends of thought as hijacked by domestic interest groups or social media. This leads to difficulties in decision-making and policy implementation, which in turn end up as either haste or hesitancy in decision-making on the one hand or on the other in applause for and condemnation against the same policy on the part in the general public. Thus China’s foreign policy appears to be too assertive when viewed from abroad and too weak-kneed when viewed from home. Such a stark contrast is definitely not a blessing for China in the face of a highly complicated regional situation and global landscape. Clearly, it is also a matter of urgency for China to improve publicity at home as well as abroad in order to win more popular understanding and support domestically for raising the efficiency of policies through improved overall planning and better coordination.

Sixth, principle vs. policy. China is a country oriented to foreign principles such as non-intervention, non-alignment, non-first-use of nuclear weapons, the “one China stance” and so on. And yet firmness in principle and flexibility in policy constitute two sides of the same coin. This calls for an overarching dialectic understanding. Indeed, China’s diplomatic acumen is now facing a severe test at a time when a sea change is occurring both inside and outside the country. In fact, some scholars are currently rethinking a whole host of time-honored principles. They argue, for example, whether an action can still be labeled an intervention when it is taken under UN authorization, welcomed by the target nation and conducive to regional peace and stability. Or rather, can a “creative

intervention” be considered as an alternative option? Again, how about a form of alliance with Russia etc. to counterbalance the U.S. effort at China encirclement, i.e. through beefing up old alliances and building new partnerships? Admittedly, such musings are still in their early stages. However, they will mostly evolve into a diplomatic task, along with China’s ballooning overseas interests, rising global expectations of China’s responsibilities, growing international hotspot issues and shifts in domestic political trends.

Seventh, domestic vs. foreign bonds. Diplomacy represents nothing but an extension of domestic affairs—a truism applicable to nations across the world, both past and present. And yet nowhere are the two banded together as closely as they are in China today. Geopolitically, an interlocking pattern exists between China’s border areas and its surrounding land and maritime neighbors, with spillover of Chinese interests or influx of external security threats on the rise in recent years, as seen in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and the turmoil of Afghanistan/Pakistan, China’s north-east and the touch-and-go stand-off in the Korean Peninsula, China’s south-west and the developments in India and Myanmar, and so on. From the economic/financial perspective, the debt crisis in America and Europe is intricately linked with China’s economic growth and financial security, so much so that a “financial balance of terror” is looming large between Washington and Beijing. In the context of a security strategy, the unrest in North Africa and the Middle East, cybercrime etc. have transcended the traditional geographic borders in this regard. In response, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has introduced the useful practice of sending officials to the local level to temper themselves for a fixed period, while retaining their original positions and recruiting local fresh blood at the same time. The idea is that this will lead to improved coordination in foreign and home affairs. Nevertheless, it remains an arduous task to eliminate the phenomenon of each side going its own way. Along with China’s ascent in the global hierarchy, greater achievements in China’s diplomacy will hinge all the more on progress in domestic politics, coupled with strides in political restructuring.

Eighth, low profile vs. a due role. This has evolved into a classic hot

topic in today's academic cycles, with the focus on which part of the equation should be the focus: the former or the latter. At first, each side seemed to have its point. However, deepening debate has led to a more objective and rational consensus. In essence, a low profile represents a diplomatic philosophy and thinking that is deeply rooted in China's traditional culture, rather than a simple matter of it being a foreign policy option. It has been a time-honored diplomatic strategy and self-restraint as opposed to a scheme of expediency. In fact, a low profile does not spell inaction. Its connection with playing a due role in doing something is not a case of "either/or", but a dialectic twin. In other words, one fulfills one's due role when keeping a low profile, while exercising self-restraint in scoring achievements. Henceforth, China should perhaps pursue greater achievements in its diplomacy without abandoning its humility. We should remain modest and prudent by guarding against arrogance and impetuosity, no matter how phenomenal our achievements may be.

Ninth, opportunities vs. challenges. Assessments vary greatly on this issue in China. Some argue that the window of strategic opportunity remains open despite mounting challenges, so we should stick to the original evaluation of the international landscape. Others, however, assert that we should shake off illusions and face up to the reality of challenge outweighing opportunity. As the author sees it, they are but two sides of the same coin that is in a constant state of flux. Or "in good fortune lurks bad luck," as the Chinese saying goes. Indeed, China has undergone three stages in this regard since the notion of "a period of strategic opportunity" was proposed at the Sixteenth National Congress of the CPC in 2002. We first seized, then created strategic opportunities, and now it is time to turn challenges into opportunities. One-sided emphasis on challenges at the expense of the latent opportunities that could be transformed and even created does not spell an approach of dialectic materialism. As such, China should focus on fostering transformational creativity in its foreign policy so as to explore opportunities of its own initiative, rather than waiting for and seizing them passively.

Tenth, and finally, China vs. the world. Herein lies the crux of all issues. Modern Chinese history over the past more than a century has been

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one in which the country has interacted with the outside world. It underwent stages of self-seclusion and was forced to open its door by invading gunboats. Then it began to open its eyes to observe and learn from the international community. Still later, it stood up rock firm among the big family of nations, and eventually it threw its doors wide open to welcome them in, and reached out once again to integrate with them through reform and opening up. Even so, a strange pattern of mutual exclusiveness still lingers between the two, and an ideal state of dialectic unity of opposites remains lacking. Nevertheless, today the two are already highly interconnected. It has become a prerequisite when observing any domestic or international issue to view the world from the prism of China and vice versa. Indeed, in this fast-moving new era, as China moves from regional to global power, it is crucial for China to rethink its relationship with the outside world.

(translated by Ma Zongshi)

Contemporary International Relations

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China is facing another crossroads as it calls for another grand strategic evaluation amid awesome challenges both at home and abroad. In this article, the author gives his personal premature analysis of ten relationships worthy of attention.