

**RCSS Policy Studies 32**

**New Nuclear Triangle  
and  
China's Role in South Asia**

**Sun Xun**



**Regional Centre for Strategic Studies**

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Queries may be addressed to:

Regional Centre for Strategic Studies

2, Elibank Road

Colombo 5, SRI LANKA.

Tel: (94-11) 2599737

Fax: (94-11) 2599993

e-mail: [edrcss@sri.lanka.net](mailto:edrcss@sri.lanka.net)

website: <http://www.rcss.org>

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2, Elibank Road

Colombo 5, SRI LANKA.

Tel: (94-11) 2599734-5; Fax: 2599993; e-mail: [rcss@sri.lanka.net](mailto:rcss@sri.lanka.net)

Website: <http://www.rcss.org>

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First Published: January 2005

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*Printed by:*

Ceylon Printers Ltd.

ISBN: 955-8051-33-0

RCSS is grateful to the  
Nuclear Threat Initiative for its generous support  
for the RCSS-NTI Summer Workshop Award  
on which this report is based

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# **New Nuclear Triangle and China's Role in South Asia**

*Sun Xun*

The US is the only superpower in the world today. It is also the most important power in the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, China and India are rising powers in Asia, each having a population of more than a billion people, possessing nuclear weapons, and ranking among the fastest growing economies in the world. Relations among the US, China, and India will, to a large extent, influence the course of events within South Asia in the twenty-first century. In the field of international relations, the methodology of triangle is a useful tool in analysing complicated multilateral interactions. For instance, international relations (IR) theorists' interest in triangular dynamics largely rose and fell along with the waxing and waning of the Sino-Soviet–American triangle. The end of the Cold War certainly did not mark the end of triangular politics. There has been, in fact since May 1998, in the aftermath of the India and Pakistani nuclear tests, a three-cornered or nuclear triangular relationship between China, the US and India. Such trilateral interactions among these three countries can be termed a “new nuclear triangle”. The demolition of the Cold War structure seems to have provided a fertile environment for the rise of multiple regional triangles. Bilateral relations often have an impact on a third state that is strategically involved in a trilateral game.

This paper begins with a brief analysis of the study of triangles in international relations and seeks to explore the interactions within the Sino-India–US triangle; after observations about China's policy towards South Asia, the paper also draws attention concerning China's role in South Asia.

## **The Study of Triangles in International Relations**

The study of triangles originated in sociology and social psychology with a focus on the individual level of analysis. IR scholars used models such as coalition theory and structural balance theory from other disciplines and attempted to apply them to interstate situations with a varying degree of success. In the 1970s, scholars of international relations were caught up by the fascinating development and dynamism in the triadic interactions among China, the Soviet Union, and the US.

Sociological coalition theory and the theory of structural balance have been especially influential in the study of triangles in IR. Coalition theorists

maintain that the distribution of power among the players decides who is to align with whom.<sup>1</sup> Structural balance theorists argue that the fate of the remaining side is determined by the nature of the other two relationships, because players pursue cognitive consistency.<sup>2</sup> Caplow argues that “the formation of given coalitions depends upon the initial distribution of power in the triad”.<sup>3</sup> He divides triads into eight types depending on the power configuration among the three players, and predicts a tendency towards a two-against-one coalition. The predicted outcomes are predicated upon the distribution of power among the three. For instance, in a triad where A is stronger than B, and B and C are equal in terms of strength, Caplow predicts a coalition of B and C. When A, B, and C are equal in strength, any coalition is possible. In a triangle where A is weaker than B, and B and C are equal in strength, a coalition of A and B or A and C is predicted.<sup>4</sup>

Coalition theory focuses on state decisions concerning with whom to ally and why. Strength differences among states are a key explanatory variable. Its application in interstate relations, however, becomes formidable because of the difficulty associated with measurement of national power. Coalition theory does not venture much beyond the politics of alliance formation. It does not add much to our knowledge of how states interact with one another once they have been identified as foes and friends. The theory of structural balance emphasizes the finding that three actors show a tendency to build a positive product in a triadic configuration.<sup>5</sup> Its basic idea is that the nature of relations between the two sides decisively preordains the fate of relations in the remaining dyad. This model receives mixed results when researchers try to test it against diplomatic history. The realization of structural balance is often hampered by rigid dyads or domestic politics in triangles of international relations. To conclude, any theory that exclusively rests upon either the distribution of power or the nature of

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Caplow, “A Theory of Coalitions in the Triad”, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 21, no. 4, August 1956, pp. 483–93.

<sup>2</sup> H. Brook McDonald and Richard Rosecrance, “Alliance and Structural Balance in the International System: A Reinterpretation”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 29, March 1985, pp. 57–82.

<sup>3</sup> Caplow, op. cit., n. 1 above, p. 486.

<sup>4</sup> Theodore Caplow, *Two Against One: Coalition in Triads*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968, pp. 2–4.

<sup>5</sup> Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 2.

relations is unlikely to fare well in explaining interstate behaviour in triangular settings. In the Cold War era, the superpower rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union underwent a severe change when China began to break away from the Soviet bloc and asserted itself as an independent actor. A subsequent engagement between China and the US added another chapter to the otherwise dyadic, global contention between Washington and Moscow. Heavy traffic among the three powers and the three states' power struggle, jostling for a better position vis-à-vis the other two, have led to the talk of the rise of a strategic triangle.<sup>6</sup>

### Patterns of Triangles

Triangles are defined as an intimate and interdependent relationship of three states whose existence creates a series of incentives and constraints for cooperative and conflictual behaviours among those states. Three components are essential in the making of a triangle: three sovereign states are involved; the interaction between two states influences and is influenced by the presence of a third party; and each party considers that national security issues, in some cases even its own survival as an independent actor in regional politics, are at stake. The triangle provides ample opportunity for triangle watchers to analyse how domestic politics shape triadic permutations. The three states struggle for their security and survival. Each state identifies the other two as belonging to the category either of a security provider, or a threat. The three states are presumed to have formed a community of fate: "The security of each state was significantly shaped by the nature of the relationship between the other two."<sup>7</sup> The politics of triangles are conditioned by each state's perceived strategic gains and losses, which are again affected by the factors of positions, relations, and structure of, and interactions among, states. In identifying triangles, one needs to pay attention to both perceptions and behaviours.

Lowell Dittmer approaches the strategic triangle from a rational choice perspective. He viewed a triangle as "a sort of transactional game among

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<sup>6</sup> Gerald Segal, *The Great Power Triangle*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981; Richard K. Ashley, *The Political Economy of War and Peace: The Sino-Soviet-American Triangle and the Modern Security Problematique*, London: Frances Pinter, 1980.

<sup>7</sup> Philip A. Schrodt and Alex Mintz, "The Conditional Probability Analysis of International Events Data", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 32, no. 1, February 1988, pp. 217-30.

three players”.<sup>8</sup> As one of the pioneers of triangle studies, he has contributed a valuable typology. According to Dittmer, three ideal-type patterns of exchange exist in a triangle: the *ménage à trois*, consisting of symmetrical amities among all three players; the romantic triangle, consisting of amity between one pivot player and two wing players, but enmity between each of the latter; and the stable marriage, consisting of amity between two of the players and enmity between each and the third.<sup>9</sup>

For any state involved in triadic interaction, a pivot position in a romantic triangle would be the most desirable. In a unit-veto triangle, every state has an incentive to defect early to avoid becoming a sucker. States should also seek to escape a pariah position outside a stable marriage (that is, two against one): the outside position in a stable marriage, analogous to the position of “it” in a game of keep-away, is the least advantageous because the player is frozen out of amities with either of the others and must cope with two enmities. A state’s position in a particular international structure creates characteristic behaviour. In the case of a strategic triangle, a central issue concerns how each state, due to its position vis-à-vis its counterparts, develops a unique response to triangular pressures. Dittmer assumes that the pariah state in the triad tends to have “an inherent propensity” to “take a defiant, even an aggressive stance” out of desperation.<sup>10</sup> In other words, a state’s preferences are predicated upon its positioning vis-à-vis the other states in the triangle. The rules of play in a triangular relationship are that:

1. each player will, maximally, try to have good relations with both the other players, or, minimally, try to avoid having hostile relations with both the other players; and
2. each player will try to prevent close cooperation between the other two players.<sup>11</sup>

The presence of security triangles is an exciting part of world politics. Major and minor powers coexist and struggle for security and survival, often forming various patterns of triangular interaction. International relations

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<sup>8</sup> Lowell Dittmer, “The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game-Theoretical Analysis”, *World Politics*, vol. 33, no. 4, July 1981, pp. 485–515.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 489.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 509.

<sup>11</sup> Walter S. Jones, *The Logics of International Relations*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1993, pp. 121–25.

scholars have so far largely been focusing on various dyadic relationships, the minimal pair of interstate interaction, arms races, and rivalry interaction: the triangular relationship has received only scarce and scattered attention. The most famous example is the US–Soviet Union–China triangle of the Cold War period. Other examples, though with a much narrower strategic scope, include Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East, and Argentina, Brazil, and Chile in Latin America.

### **Interactions Within Sino-India–US Triangle**

The end of the Cold War certainly did not mark the end of triangular politics. Eventually, South Asia settled into a strategic triangle involving China, the US, and India. One important intervening variable that promotes or inhibits intra-alignment feuds is “strategic compensation”.<sup>12</sup> The new triad composed of China, the US and India is replacing the India–Soviet–American triangle during the Cold War in South Asia. The nature of interaction among the Sino-Indian, Sino-US, and US–Indian dyads is currently far from hostile and full of uncertainties at the dawn of the new millennium. The trio is showing a remarkably consistent and restrained reciprocity towards one another.

In the India–China–US context, this would mean that the general trend would be one where each of the three manoeuvres for maximum diplomatic gain for itself vis-à-vis the other two powers. All three would maintain good relations with the others and not enter into any alliance or entente with each other. However, India and the US will collaborate on issues where they share common interests vis-à-vis China. Similarly, India and China, as emerging powers and the largest developing countries in the world, might join hands on issues where they have interests in common, e.g., on environmental issues, and on the building of a multipolar world. India and China may proceed to initiate a trilateral dialogue with Russia on various global issues with a view to identifying common ground between the three countries. The US and China have cooperated in the past on issues pertaining to India–Pakistan relations, and can be expected to continue to do so. A conflict between India and Pakistan might see them joining hands once again against India, as has happened in the past.

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<sup>12</sup> Ming Zhang, “The Asia-Pacific Triangle and US Response”, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 29, no. 1, March 1998, pp. 126–28.

Cooperation and conflict may arise in one dyad as a response to what goes on in the neighbouring dyads. Triangles stand for the linkage of cooperation and conflict. For instance, the intensification of conflict in Sino-Soviet relations in the late 1960s is helpful in making sense of Sino-American reconciliation as well as Soviet-American détente afterwards, in the first half of the 1970s. For the US, the new nuclear triangle poses a policy dilemma, because either too much or too little policy coordination with India tends to generate suspicion on the Chinese side. China worries that the strengthening of the US-India relationship is a threat to its security interests in the region. The rise of the Sino-India-Russia triangle or the Sino-India-Pakistan triangle also testifies to the fact that policy makers of the nuclear triangle cannot afford to neglect triangular dynamics.

### **The US: A Pivotal Player?**

In terms of the triangular relationship, Sino-Indian relations are strongly affected by US foreign policy, but US-Chinese and US-Indian relations are relatively unaffected by the actions of the third party. Among the three sides of a triangle, only the Sino-Indian dyad is sensitive to triangular impacts. India-US relations have moved from “estrangement” to “convergence”. India-China relations are on a definite path of improvement: there do, however, remain major differences between India and China, which still need to be resolved. US-China relations have a strong economic underpinning, and the US will continue to engage China. However, the relationship is likely to remain fragile because of the intractable nature of the differences between the two sides over issues such as Taiwan, human rights, and missile defence, as well as fears on both sides of a looming structural conflict.

The key to stability in South Asia is the relationship between India and Pakistan. In recent years, the Indian economy has grown rapidly. After the 11 September event, it has further improved relations and strengthened anti-terrorism cooperation with the US, enhancing its strategic superiority and position. Pakistan has adopted a policy of supporting the US fight against the Taliban, and improved its relations with the latter after the 11 September event and the Afghanistan war. The emergence of nuclear weapons has witnessed increased tensions, a growing arms race, and a half-dozen crises

neering war in the region. The region has come close to full blows at least twice since the open 1998 nuclear weapons tests (in 1999 and 2001–02) and thrice earlier in the covert nuclear period (in 1984, 1986–87, and 1989–90). In fact, the three most recent crises (in 1990, 1999, and 2001–02) only avoided escalating into a full-scale war because of intense US diplomacy.<sup>13</sup> In fact, it could be argued that the deterrence equation in South Asia now implicitly depends on US intervention. In essence, India's and Pakistan's nuclear policies involve what might be called the “independence–dependence paradox”. These two countries have attempted to wean themselves from outside support by using nuclear weapons. But this strategy has, ironically, served to make them more dependent on other powers who are forced to mitigate the consequences of this arms race. No other country has played a more crucial role than the US.

In May 2000, Bill Clinton paid a historic visit to the subcontinent, marking the first US presidential visit to India in 22 years. In a communiqué issued by both sides entitled “Indo-US Relations: A Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, the Indo-US relationship was deemed to have entered a new stage – continuous, constructive in the political area, and beneficial in the economic area. It was to form the basis for mutual strategic, economic, political and social benefit. The Bush Administration's determination to make a “fundamental difference” in the relationship sustained this process. The events of 11 September and their aftermath have further succeeded in providing new strategic glue to bring the two countries even closer together. Sanctions against India have been lifted and an ambitious agenda for future cooperation unveiled. Military-to-military relations have been resumed in a big way. Collaboration in the field of counter-terrorism has also acquired new dimensions.

China views this rapid improvement in India–US relations with concern. India has always seen a close US–China relationship with apprehension and suspected that it might adversely affect its interests. For example, in 1998, Beijing and Washington adopted a Joint Communiqué condemning Indian Nuclear Tests and using language that was seen in India as a US attempt to confer a supervisory role upon China in South Asia.

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<sup>13</sup> Alan Sipress and Thomas E. Ricks, “Report: India, Pakistan Were Near Nuclear War”, *Washington Post*, 15 May 2002.

Some scholars have argued that Sino-India-US relations would influence the course of events within Asia in the twenty-first century.<sup>14</sup> Compared with the Sino-Japan-US triangle after the end of the Cold War, with which leaders in the three countries are familiar, the emerging Sino-India-US strategic triangle is a new one which no leader has much experience in managing. Unlike the US, which worries about the rise of China and not the rise of India, what concerns China most is how to prevent US-Indian relations from becoming a formal alliance in South Asia similar to the US-Japan alliance in East Asia.<sup>15</sup> A growing convergence of Indian and US interests in Asian security is likely to be the most dynamic element in the bilateral relationship in the next decade. Despite the two countries' differences over nuclear policy, their common interest in Indian Ocean security and in not having Asia dominated by a single power can be the basis for a significant expansion of their security cooperation. Short-term points of Indo-US divergence over Pakistan, terrorism, and Kashmir following 11 September will not prevent long-term convergence based on common commercial interests, security cooperation, and democratic values. Moreover, both India and the US share the common view of China as a potential and major future threat, and have common interests in restricting the rise of China. In the long term, there is, thus, the possibility of establishing strategic relations with each other to contain China by using the other as a core element for balancing Beijing, especially at a time when each has trouble with China.<sup>16</sup>

However, the present triangle is not a kind of stable marriage: China is not frozen out of amities with either of the others and must cope with two enmities. That is to say, it is impossible for the US to play the role of a pivot in the triangle. The US-India partnership is unlikely to turn into any kind of formal alliance in coming years. Such an alliance is not in the interests of either. Besides, both India and the US have substantive interests *vis-à-vis* China which they would not like to jeopardize. What is more likely is the emergence of a "soft balance of power" system among the three countries,

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<sup>14</sup> Venu Rajamony, "India-China-U.S. Triangle: A 'Soft' Balance of Power System in the Making", CSIS Working Report, March 2002, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Zhang Guihong, "U.S. Security Policy Toward South Asia and its Implications for China: A Chinese Perspective", Washington, D.C.: The Henry L Stimson Center, January 2003, p. 22: [www.stimson.org](http://www.stimson.org)

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

in which each seeks to manoeuvre the maximum diplomatic space for itself, and works to improve relations on both fronts without entering into formal alliances. Collaboration between two against the third is likely only on an issue-by-issue basis. For example, India and China may come together in pursuit of their common goal of a multipolar world. On the other hand, a conflict between India and Pakistan might witness the US and China joining hands against India. It is not rational for India to confront China before its rivalry with Pakistan is resolved. If India does not participate in the containment of China, China's development will lighten US strategic pressure on India. And if India joins forces with the US to contain China, the future years of the twenty-first century will not belong to India.<sup>17</sup> Yet, even as India and Pakistan count on US intervention to restrain its adversary and ensure stability, paradoxically, they are adamant about their professed independence in nuclear matters. Historically, the two South Asian states developed their nuclear arsenals much against the will and non-proliferation efforts of the West. Even today, India and Pakistan take little heed of outside powers as they develop and possibly deploy strategic weapons. That attitude has constrained the ability of the US to be a pivotal player in South Asia.

### **India: Not a Balancer**

India has been regarded as an emerging or rising state. It is no wonder that many have predicted the emergence of India as a major Asian power, or even a world-class state. The Sino-India-US triangle is, thus, poised at an interesting juncture. None of the three countries actively seek rivalry or confrontation. They all have an interest in maintaining good relations with one another. Under these circumstances, India has not been perceiving the triangular relationship purely in terms of balance of power.<sup>18</sup> Its goal is to work towards the initiation of a virtuous cycle of improving relations with both the US and China.

India has a much greater stake than Washington in a closer relationship. The economic dimensions of a relationship also favour Washington, and it will be a long time before India acquires significant leverage in this regard.

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<sup>17</sup> Zhang Wenmu, "Global Geopolitics and India's Future Security", *Journal of Security and Management*, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Rajamony, *op. cit.*, n. 14 above, p. 3.

For this reason, recent Indian policy makers have all but abandoned the view that the US is a strategic threat, and that India should join with other countries in balancing the “sole superpower”. The underlying strategic logic of this position was pure Krishna Menon-think; namely, that emerging powers like India will inevitably be opposed by dominant world powers.

One of the largest uncertainties in the region is whether India will be able to emulate China's sustained economic dynamism, thereby laying the foundation for an expanded political-military role. Compared with China, India has many advantages that could well enable it to become the region's next economic success story. It has a vigorous high-tech sector supported by high-quality academic institutions; it enjoys a functioning legal system that can protect property rights; it will not face an ageing-population problem in the next two decades or a gender imbalance over the longer term. Although India faces a large task in privatizing various state-owned industries, it does have the legal infrastructure in place for doing so. Moreover, unlike China, India need not be concerned that increasing links to the rest of the world and growing prosperity will place potentially fatal stresses on its political system; if anything, such forces could be expected to strengthen India's democracy.

In early May 1998, India held a series of nuclear test explosions, answered within a fortnight by Pakistan's matching set. South Asia had become “the most dangerous place on earth”. Nuclear weapons have yet to bring about a hoped-for period of détente and stability between India and Pakistan. So far, the subcontinent's nuclear era has been marked by chronic crises and close calls. The leverage of the US is reinforced by Pakistan's need for US and international assistance, and India's strong desire to maintain warm relations with the West and foster foreign trade and investment. The lifting of the sanctions can be used to increase Washington's influence with New Delhi and Islamabad.

Today, India enjoys unprecedented space and room for diplomatic manoeuvre. Its relations with the US are at an all-time high, and those with China on a definite path of improvement. India's objective should, therefore, be to consolidate these gains and improve its attractiveness as a partner to both the US and China, by forging strong economic foundations for these relationships. Economic development and growth are not just domestic imperatives, but also a foreign policy and security priority. The remarkable

economic and social transformation China has accomplished in the last two decades provides proof that India too can achieve the same.

India's relations with the US have improved dramatically. The substantial improvements in Indo-US relations, which took place during the last two years of the Clinton Administration, received a further boost under President George W. Bush. Even before 11 September, both sides had positively assessed their ongoing dialogue on security and non-proliferation cooperation. India spontaneously supported the US national missile defence programme and signalled India's desire for a shift in the Indo-US bilateral defence relationship. New Delhi noted in its support for missile defence that it could lead to a reduction of nuclear stockpiles in Russia and the US, a long-term goal of India's nuclear policy. India and the US agreed to establish a "new strategic frame work dialogue". This dialogue includes expanded cooperation in science, civil nuclear safety, and military technology. Indo-US military-to-military relations have also been established and will now extend to training, military exercises, and the exchange of intelligence to combat terrorism. Although bilateral relations still fall short of an "alliance", Indo-US relations are set to enter a new era of positive cooperation. But this improvement is only few years old and started from a low base, considering 50 years of difficult relations. There are also several uncertainties in the relationship which would require deft handling by both sides if they are not to result in a setback for the relationship as a whole. India has encouraged the US to sustain its engagement with South Asia. A relationship with India offers the US an opportunity to combine principles with national interests. India hopes to be a priority in US foreign policy, both by virtue of being the largest democracy in the world and a society which shares common values, as well as because it is a rising power in Asia and potentially a useful partner in confronting the formidable challenges that a complex and turbulent region pose. India also hopes the American government understands that India is not a threat to the security of the US in any manner, and the possibility of any major conflict of interests between the two countries is unlikely.

Sino-Indian relations have improved steadily over the years. Former Chinese National People's Congress Chairman Li Peng visited India in January 2001, stating that China did not consider India a threat, and would like to maintain friendly relations. At the same time, he acknowledged that

the relationship lacked sufficient mutual trust and understanding. Although the Sino-Indian border has remained peaceful, the Line of Actual Control has been made, which could create tense situations on the ground. India also continues to be wary of China's drive to modernize and improve the capability of its military. China's improving defence capabilities will continue to remain a major focus of India's own defence planning and modernization. While there is logic in the Chinese perception that India and China are both natural allies in the pursuit of a multipolar world, India will also have to ask itself whether the actions of China contribute to the emergence of India as one of the poles in a multipolar world, or whether China is seeking to contain and limit India. India continues to attach the highest importance to its relations with China. It has expanded its diplomatic as well as economic engagement with China, especially at senior levels of government. Among other things, these exchanges should be used to reassure China that improvement in India-US relations are not aimed at it, and that India-China relations stand on their own. India has never been, and will never be, part of anyone else's agenda against China.

### **China's Role in South Asia**

China is a rapidly-rising, big, developing country, a socialist country, and a permanent member of the Security Council of the UN and one of the big powers possessing nuclear weapons. China should make its due contributions to the world. We also need to seek and maintain necessary balance between rights and obligations. The complexity and progressive contents of modern times require that China gradually acquire its awareness of becoming the world's big power. Dr Wang Yizhou, Deputy Director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics, CASS, points out that China's diplomacy for the twenty-first century should and will be based on three basic interests and demands. They are: first, development interests and demand, namely serving the purpose of achieving the objectives of domestic economic development and winning a relatively stable external environment favourable to reform and development; second, sovereignty interests and demand, that is, to ensure that the territory, borders and the basic sovereignty would not be encroached upon, and, through a fairly long period of time, strive to realize the reunification of the country step by step; third, responsibility demand and interests, that is, to exert a predominantly active and gradually-rising influence in the Asia-Pacific region so as to become a

country that is influential globally, and commonly recognized as having a constructive role to play.<sup>19</sup> The US role in Asia is undoubtedly a significant factor in China's strategic calculus with regard to India. Calls within the US to work with India to contain China have provided Chinese strategists with a reason to warm relations with India. A closer relationship with India is beneficial to China in that it precludes the US from being able to co-opt India into a containment strategy, whereas the existence of tensions between China and India would provide an ideal opportunity for both the US and India to work together in containment.

With the changing of the geopolitical environment of South Asia, China's foreign policy towards South Asia began to shift. China's place is that of a quasi-interloper in the region: like India or Pakistan, China is an Asian country, but it is not a South Asian country. As a powerful third party, China might conceivably play the role of balancer, possibly even mediator, in the Indo-Pakistani confrontation. But for China to play the pivot in a regional triangular game would require scrupulous neutrality. China has been moving gradually towards a more neutral position. China maintains that the dispute concerning borders and territory left over by history be solved through dialogues and talks so as to seek fair and reasonable solutions. If a dispute cannot be solved right away, it may be put aside for the time being, and common ground be sought while reserving differences. An unsolved dispute should not affect normal relations between the concerned countries.

At the same time, China views its relationship with the US as potentially the most troubling, believing that the US is the primary constraint on Chinese manoeuvring and influence in the region. For three decades, China has made a conscious decision to confine itself to a relatively modest second-strike nuclear force. China has territorial disputes outstanding with a number of countries (including India); however, it has neither revisionist nor imperial aims. The Chinese government understands that the best way to defend its interests is to make its own voice heard in the rule-making process by joining influential regional and international institutions. In the past two decades, China has resolved territorial disputes with Afghanistan, Myanmar (Burma), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Russia.

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<sup>19</sup>. Wang Yizhou, "China's Diplomacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Balance Among Three Demands", 15 January 2002: <http://www.iwep.org.cn/english/index-2.htm>

### **Concept of Peaceful Rise**

In recent history, the rise of big countries has generally been realized in two ways. One is war or military expansion. The other is extreme confrontation or cold war. But China is trying to find another way to rise: that is, to participate in economic globalization and compete with others in the world market in mutually beneficial ways. China firmly defends the authority of the UN and insists on the reform of the current international economic and political orders. In this sense, China aims to be a constructor and a reformer, not a destroyer.

China's road of a "peaceful rise" is a specific concept. It refers to the course of development of China since the Third Plenary Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1978 to the mid-twenty-first century when China is expected to basically realize modernization and the development road China takes in this period of time.<sup>20</sup> In brief, China is seeking to develop itself in a peaceful environment, and at the same time to promote world peace. The nature of the concept is that under the theme of peace and development of our time, China has found an independent development road to build socialism with Chinese characteristics through involvement in, not isolation from, economic globalization. Late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping once said that the socialism China is building aims at developing productive forces and promoting peace. The concept of peaceful rise is the summarization of China's development experiences over the past 25 years, and a further development of the theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.<sup>21</sup>

The features of a peaceful rise will be manifested in the following aspects.

1. China should continue to adhere to putting economic construction as the centre of its work, and setting development as the priority of the peaceful rise. That is to say, China will not see political confrontation as its target, nor develop its economy through expansion or in a closed way.

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<sup>20</sup> Li Junru, "Peaceful Rise", *Beijing Review*, April 2004, p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> Zhang Lijun, "Pakistan and U.S.—A Surging Alliance", *Beijing Review*, April 2004, pp. 20–21.

2. China will participate in economic globalization and compete with others in the world market to realize a win-win result. Amid the acceleration of economic globalization in the 1970s, China decided to carry out reform and opening-up policies and integrate itself in the process. And in the 1990s when anti-globalization was on the rise, China still insisted on opening-up policies and continued participating in globalization.
3. China will persist in independent development when participating in economic globalization. That means China's development will be based on its own strength. In dealing with problems arising from development, China should depend mainly on its own institutional innovation, structural adjustment, expansion of domestic demand, and utilization of private capital at home. In short, China will take advantage of world resources, but will not bring troubles to the world.
4. In the international arena, China should play its due role as a big country, but it has no intention to seek domination in dealing with international affairs. History has proved that domination will inevitably lead to world disorder, so the Chinese leaders have pledged to the world that China will never seek hegemony, even after it basically realizes modernization.

China's rise will not damage the interests of other Asian countries. That is because as China rises, it provides a huge market for its neighbours. At the same time, the achievement of China's development will allow it to support the progress of others in the region. In the future, various interest groups will come into being among China and regional countries.

### **Principled Diplomacy**

For Chinese diplomats, the focus of work for a period of time to come (say 5–15 years) should be put on how to ensure the steady advance of such objectives as domestic reform, development and stability, to ensure territorial integrity of the country, to realize total reunification of the motherland, and to gradually exert its constructive and responsible influence in its own region (Asia-Pacific), and even the world as a whole. "Diplomacy is an art." This is especially an apt description here, for without a well-thought-out and

delicate balance between international cooperation and struggle and the country's internal reform and development, without the overall arrangements in the military, political, social, economic and ideological areas, without inner links between short-term policy and medium- and long-term strategy, in a word, without a unified diplomatic strategy, China would not make a greater leap forward in the new millennium on the basis of the past 20 years, and there would be no such grandiose prospect for China to become a big power of the world in the twenty-first century.

The five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are the core of the Chinese government's diplomatic policy. For half a century, Chinese leaders have frequently reiterated the principles on innumerable international platforms, making these principles very familiar to the international community. In 1953, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai first proposed the Five Principles, which were written into the Agreement between China and India on Trade and Intercourse Between the Tibet Region of China and India in April 1954. Subsequently, the principles experienced some initial amendments and finally came into being as they are today: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in each other's affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.<sup>22</sup> These principles were initially proposed by the Chinese government in handling relations with neighbouring countries that have a different social system from China. Later, they became the norms of China in developing friendly and cooperative relations with all the other countries throughout the world.

The Five Principles, which are based on the respect for state sovereignty, never oppose the pursuit of joint efforts to maintain world peace and promote world prosperity. It is evident that the Five Principles have distinctive characteristics of openness and tolerance. The Chinese government has been trying to develop and enrich the Five Principles so that they meet the requirement of the changing world. Its advocacy of civilizational diversity is actually based on the theory of the Five Principles.

Confronted with the complicated and changeable international security situation, China stands for the fostering of a new security concept sought through cooperation, dialogue, mutual trust, and development. China will

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<sup>22</sup> Pan Tao, "Timeless Theme of International Relations", *Beijing Review*, June 2004, pp. 16-18.

join the members of the international community who love peace and stability in making contributions to accelerating the development of the international security mechanism and to promoting world peace, stability, and development through unremitting international efforts.

### **China's Policy Towards South Asia**

China is one of the strongest defenders of sovereignty. Along with a large number of other developing countries, it is, by and large, fighting as a conservative power to reaffirm sovereignty and internal autonomy against challenges from evolving concepts of human rights, domestic governance, and humanitarian intervention – concepts being pushed by some liberal democracies, non-governmental organizations, and international civil society activities. Both the political leadership and the Chinese public believe that China must regain major-power status. China perceives the international environment in the past decade as less hostile, and even benign.

In the context of the great change in global politics since the end of the East-West Cold War, new alignments and realignments are taking place in the Asia-Pacific region, including South Asia. China perceives Asia as its natural cultural domain, where it is destined to play a crucial role. So China is watching changing patterns of the international system in South Asia with great interest, and its role in the area is of great significance and importance. Today, China is taking dynamic and strategic steps to enhance its role as a big power. China is not happy in the emerging unipolar world order with the US as the remaining superpower. China has maintained intimate ties with South Asian countries sharing a common civilization (which is the oldest) and heritage and now stand together as dynamic partners in the struggle for establishing a new international economic order to bring prosperity for their peoples.<sup>23</sup> Geographical proximity, and its vast size and enormous resource potentiality have now made China a prominent factor in South Asia, as in the old days. From the viewpoints of biospheres, sociocultural spheres, and technospheres, both China and South Asia have no option, but a compulsion, for mutual existence for global peace and stability by exploiting the unidentified status of incredible human treasures and natural resources in the region.

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<sup>23</sup> Wang Hongwei, "South Asia Facing Development Challenge", *South Asian Studies*, Centre for Studies of South Asia Culture, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing 1992, pp.49–56.

To maintain simultaneous friendly relations with India and Pakistan has been a difficult (if not impossible) task for any of the major powers. But in recent years, China has developed good relations with both India and Pakistan. China, in the post-Cold War era, has been trying to normalize Sino-Indian relations, without sacrificing its special link with Pakistan. The 11 September terrorist attacks have increased Chinese concern about non-traditional sources of security threats, which have both international and domestic dimensions. These include the terrorist incidents abroad as well as those within China. In response to these events, the Chinese government took measures to strengthen border security in the western provinces where Central and South Asian countries border China. China also took serious measures to ensure security during the Shanghai APEC meetings.

To conclude, as the new South Asian strategic configuration has not yet been finalized, the realignment of forces is still going on. The old differences have not been removed, the new contradictions are emerging. This will have some unpredictable effects on China. China needs a peaceful and stable international environment, hopes to strengthen cooperation with the South Asian countries, and is willing to make its own contributions to South Asian peace, security, stability, and prosperity.

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***Mr. SUN Xun*** is Associate Professor at the PLA University of Foreign Language, Luoyang, Henan Province, People's Republic of China

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