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China in World Politics:
Policies, Processes, Prospects
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Introduction

In this first decade of the twenty-first century, much of the global power structure familiar to political leaders, researchers, and students of international politics no longer holds sway. In this book, we will look over the shoulders of the decisionmakers in Beijing to see how the emerging global system of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has brought about both new opportunities and new risks to China's leaders. Ever since Western imperialism reached China's shores over 300 years ago, outsiders have greatly influenced China's policy choices. In the chapters that follow, we will consider whether China is now taking a primary role on the world stage—influencing events at both the regional and the global levels—or whether it will remain largely a reactor to events beyond its shores.

Within this context, we will ask whether Marxism and Leninism were not ends in themselves inside China, but instead means to achieve the more basic goals of China's leaders both before and after the triumph of Mao Zedong in 1949: freedom from foreign imperialism, unification of the Chinese nation, creation of effective political power (rule for the people but not by the people), establishment of order and stability, and promotion of prestige and well-being through the Four Modernizations—agriculture, industry, science and technology, and military capability.

We will also ask whether Adam Smith has finally triumphed over Karl Marx inside China, as seems to be the case not only in the West but also in Eastern Europe, the former areas of the Soviet Union, and most of the third world. Though many China-watchers are predicting that it is merely a matter of time until an economic marketplace in China is followed by a marketplace of ideas as well as individual and political freedoms, we will look at current developments and trends inside China and suggest a number of possible alternatives, leaving it up to the reader to assess China's future. For example,

these options might include a combination of marketplace investment, production, and distribution of goods with the continuation of many socialist values and practices, as well as the preservation of Chinese traditions. Even if, in the long run, individual freedom and mass political participation triumph in China, are these viable policy choices for the country in the foreseeable future? This line of reasoning takes into account the emergence of such practices in the West only after several centuries of marketplace development, the triumph of science and technology, the achievement of mass consumerism, and the near universality of basic education and literacy. In the West, universal adult suffrage and individual rights were not achieved with the Declaration of Independence or the French Revolution. Beijing's leaders might argue even today that most Western societies have basic deficiencies not only in political freedom and individual rights but also in safety and security of the people, human decency, and essential economic and social needs such as meaningful work and adequate health care. Beijing's leaders might further argue that although many Marxist prescriptions for achieving human well-being have largely been discredited, most Marxist criticisms of the first and third worlds remain valid even now. From the perspective of Beijing, is it not reasonable to argue that there must be better ways to achieve China's well-being than by adopting Western policies that have produced so many undesirable social, economic, and political results in much of the first world, most of the third world, and much of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union? In each chapter we will challenge the reader to place him- or herself in the role of the Chinese decisionmakers and examine the risks and opportunities of different policy choices. At the end of each chapter, after looking at the policy problems and the supporting data for different policy choices, we will ask a number of questions about future possibilities and offer suggested readings for further study.

■ **New Ideologies**

In order to understand China's current choices, in Chapter 1 we will look at the remarkable evolution of Beijing's policies from the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949 through the end of communism to the uncertainties of the early 2000s. With all the twists and turns from 1949 to 1989, culminating with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and the student demonstrations at Tiananmen Square, we will point out continuities in Chinese policy, such as the continuing efforts of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to legitimize itself in the eyes of the people through the mobilization of mass support for a combination of traditional Chinese values (the Mandate of Heaven and the Middle Kingdom). We will see how the CCP has appealed to popular aspirations: Chinese nationalism; removal of foreign influence; security, stability, and order; and the Four Modernizations. We will then conclude Chapter 1

with a look at how the world's current power structure is affecting Beijing's policy choices.

■ **Greater China**

In order to understand the domestic determinants of Beijing's foreign policy choices, in Chapter 2 we will look at some of the major developments inside China to see how these enhance or limit the directions in which Beijing can move. We will also compare these variables with key factors affecting decisionmakers during the crucial period from 1989 through 1991, when communism was collapsing in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, to determine the extent to which conditions were similar or dissimilar.

We will discuss the extent to which the CCP has been able to utilize traditional values such as the Mandate of Heaven to legitimize its rule. We will also look at challenges to party rule and how the CCP has handled these threats to its power base. In looking at the future choices of the Beijing leadership in maintaining the predominant role of the CCP, we will consider to what extent Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of glasnost (freedom of expression) and perestroika (restructuring of political and economic institutions) are viable policy choices for China's leaders. We will ask whether the CCP can continue its control of Chinese politics. We will also discuss what policy choices might make it possible for the party to succeed.

Throughout its rule, the CCP has stressed Chinese nationalism and the continuity of CCP policies. These policies were designed to strengthen rule in Beijing and the control of outlying areas such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Tibet based on the ancient appeal of the Middle Kingdom, in which the masses are unified in supporting the common values of Chinese civilization. We will ask whether such appeals can continue to unify the support of the people.

To conclude Chapter 2 we will look at China's leaders. Most of the first three generations of leaders have reached the age at which they can no longer control China's destiny. Yet during their reign, like opposing chess masters, they balanced the selection of China's future leaders to preserve the country's future options. Some leaders were more oriented toward the Open Door policy, whereas others sought to prevent further penetration of China's culture and traditions from the outside and at the same time preserve the dominant role of the CCP. Though the fourth generation seems to be firmly in control, we must consider the internal political forces they must contend with to survive in power.

■ **The Ascendancy of Adam Smith over Karl Marx?**

In Chapter 3, which deals with China's Open Door policy since 1978, we will look at some of the most important political, social, and economic initiatives by any major world actor in the twentieth century. Almost ten years before

Gorbachev announced his new thinking in 1985, Deng Xiaoping, China's aging leader, started an economic, social, and political revolution that not only brought about basic changes in China but also served as a major stimulus to revolutionary changes in other parts of the communist world.

We will look at the circumstances inside China at the time Deng assumed power, in particular the overwhelming relief of nearly all segments of Chinese society with the end of the Cultural Revolution. Next we will examine the new leadership's revolutionary decisions, which have changed the course of Chinese history. Because of the importance of these decisions, we will examine Deng Xiaoping's thinking in considerable detail. We will also look at Deng's actual reforms at home and his new openings to the outside world, all of which were designed to raise living standards through the Four Modernizations while at the same time preserving domestic stability and the dominant role of the CCP in Chinese society.

With these changes, we will see how the outside world became fascinated with China's new image, as evidenced by exchanges of faculty, students, and tourists in unprecedented numbers, while capitalists competed with each other to take advantage of favorable investment conditions inside China and the potential market of over 1 billion Chinese. We will next look at China's rethinking of its Open Door policy following the student demonstrations at Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989. We will ask which developments since Tiananmen Square have not only preserved Deng's earlier reforms but also led to further change. We will ask whether, in fact, Beijing's leaders have already abandoned the basic tenets of Marxist economic theory, even though centralized rule from above remains, at least for now, largely intact.

■ **The Collapse of the Soviet Empire**

Understanding China's choices requires knowledge of the changing relations between the two great communist empires during a half century of confrontation between the East and the West. In Chapter 4 we will look at Sino-Soviet and then Chinese-Russian relations, noting the reasons for the rise and fall of both cooperation and conflict. We will see why China has never accepted a dominant-subordinate relationship, even though until the 1990s Beijing largely reacted to policies originating in Moscow and the Soviets gave little credence to Mao's radical changes from 1949 to 1976. We will look at how Beijing viewed events as the Iron Curtain came down in Eastern Europe and the communist rulers lost power inside the Soviet Union, and we will discuss why the Chinese had to stand by helplessly as communism first collapsed in Eastern Europe and then in the Soviet heartland, with Gorbachev's resignation on Christmas Day 1991. We will also look at the improvement in Sino-Soviet relations throughout the Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin eras, with the reduction in border tensions and Moscow's accommodation of Beijing's basic demands

for the normalization of relations: Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Soviet pressure for Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, and the reduction of Soviet military presence along its borders with China and in Vietnam.

To conclude the chapter, we will look at China's relations with the newly independent republics, which have also been in the process of removing their communist and Marxist institutions. Both China and the former parts of the Soviet empire have sought normalization and improvement of relations during the current era of transition, but many questions remain unanswered about the future of these relations, especially in matters of security and influence. Rather than suggest probable developments, we will consider a number of choices available to Beijing's leaders, with their relative risks and opportunities, especially in light of important changes taking place in the former parts of the Soviet empire in Central Asia.

■ Chinese-U.S. Relations

Throughout the Cold War years, U.S. policy in Asia had a greater impact on Beijing's policy choices than that of any other state. However, as we look at Chinese-U.S. relations in Chapter 5, we will see that the Soviet Union played an important role in these relations. In the latter stages of the Cold War, the Soviet Union became a greater security concern to the Chinese than the United States, especially with the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam and the buildup of Soviet military in the Far East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia during the Brezhnev era.

In discussing the different stages of Sino-U.S. relations, we will ask whether Beijing and Washington could have pursued different policies that might have avoided most of their Cold War confrontations. In any case, we will see how each side both initiated and responded to crisis situations, and that even though Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger are usually given credit for the era of good feeling and peaceful coexistence in the 1970s, Mao Zedong also played a major role in the normalization of Sino-U.S. relations. With China's Open Door policies beginning in 1978, Chinese-U.S. relations became more complex as Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and a number of Western European countries also became involved in China's opening to the outside world.

We will also see how economic and trade relations have largely dominated Chinese-U.S. concerns, accompanied by both major conflicts of interest and efforts at accommodation. We will carefully consider human rights issues and the extent to which Sino-U.S. relations have been influenced by China's repression of student demonstrators.

A number of other factors, however, inside both China and the United States, have also affected political, economic, and security relations; these factors have created cross-boundary dependencies in which different con-

stituencies have developed inside both countries for cooperation but also for the use of threats.

■ **China and Its Neighbors in the Post-Cold War Era**

Although the United States probably played a greater role than any Asian state in China's Open Door policy in the 1980s, there is now growing economic interdependence among China and its Asian neighbors in both investment and trade. What is lacking, with the decline of both Russian and U.S. military presence in Asia, is a stable balance-of-power system in the region. In Chapter 6, we will consider how these developments may have affected Beijing's policy choices (in terms of economics, politics, terrorism, and security) in dealing with an emerging regional system that is much more advanced in economic terms than in security cooperation. In fact, although economic and security relations are interdependent and trade and investment may lessen the danger of conflict in Asia, potential power rivalries may develop in what is currently a regional power vacuum. Because of the importance of Chinese-Japanese relations, we will deal with the topic separately in Chapter 7, but we will also note in Chapter 6 how Japan and China interact with their neighbors on specific issues.

All actors in Northeast Asia seem to have a common interest in defusing the long-lasting tensions and rivalry on the Korean peninsula: China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, and Russia. Currently, Taiwan seems to be a loser as relations improve between China and South Korea, whereas the United States as well as other Western countries stand to gain by normalization of relations in the region.

As for Southeast Asia, China's policy choices involve both dangers and opportunities. In the early years of China's economic modernization policy, trade between China and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was quite limited compared with trade and investment involving South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Security arrangements in the region were also almost nonexistent. The large Chinese population in all Southeast Asian countries provides both opportunities and risks in China's relations with these countries. The withdrawal of both U.S. and Russian influence in the region made ASEAN countries fearful of both Japanese and Chinese influence. At the same time, the ASEAN countries are seeking to improve relations among all states in the region, including both Japan and China, and China has reciprocated by expressing support for regional economic and security regimes.

South Asia poses a different set of issues for Beijing's decisionmakers. Long after the end of the Cold War, the United States, Russia, and China are seeking to limit regional rivalries, particularly between Pakistan and India,

and traditional lines of alliance are shifting in the face of Pakistan's growing instability. Nevertheless, China could be a decisive factor in promoting order in the region—or in the further buildup of arms, including nuclear arms.

In addition to China's influence on the regional balance-of-power system, there is also the question of rivalry or cooperation between China and India. These are the world's two most populous states, and they are both going through a transition to modernization. In both countries, there has been a shift from state ownership and control of the economy to marketplace incentives, but India takes pride in its claim of being the world's largest democracy, with a combination of parliamentary government, federalism, and decentralization, in which considerable autonomy is given to the different regions. As in China, however, there have been severe human rights violations as well as social, economic, and political discontent. For both China and India, the greatest stakes involve internal stability and modernization, as well as the realization that little can be accomplished without reduced population growth rates. Sino-Indian relations seem to have improved, at least on the surface, but future policy choices involving the relations of these two Asian giants could be crucial to regional and global peace.

Current developments in the independent republics of Central Asia, on China's western boundary, are potentially destabilizing; as we will see, China's policy choices with regard to these new republics, which are largely Islamic, all suggest caution and perhaps a wait-and-see attitude. Historically, there have been close cultural and economic ties between the peoples of Central Asia and the province of Xinjiang, which is a very large but thinly populated region of western China. China's fears of instability, Islamic separatism, and terrorism all color its relations with its Central Asian neighbors.

■ Global Regimes

One of the most controversial issues in global politics is the future role of China in the emerging global regimes of the post-Cold War era. Regimes consist of the rules of behavior (or lack of rules) that seem to guide the actions of states as they become increasingly interdependent. In some types of transactions, such as international trade and finance, these rules have become systems of extensive cooperation and regularized behavior; whereas in other areas of interaction, such as regional conflicts, arms races, and arms trade, the current global system lacks effective rules for cooperation, although some states have called for more effective regimes in these areas.

In all of these emerging areas of interdependence and growing interaction, the need for global cooperation is increasingly apparent. However, China's leaders traditionally emphasized the principle of national sovereignty, and their interactions on economic, security, or environmental issues were more bilateral than multilateral. Yet, as we will see, there are signs that even

China may be moving gradually toward more cooperation in solving these global problems, especially if there is a general consensus within the United Nations on what rules of behavior should be adopted. With respect to the emerging global regimes, Beijing's leaders must choose between following their past policies (refusal to take a position, actual resistance, or hesitant cooperation) and taking a greater leadership role.

■ **Alternative Scenarios
for the Twenty-First Century**

Today, China stands at the crossroads, uncertain about its own identity in a post-Cold War world, one in which Marxist ideology has largely been discredited. Changes are taking place inside China as its leaders move more rapidly and successfully toward a marketplace economy than has been the case with former communist states throughout the Eurasian land mass. With the exception of the 1989–1990 period, China's gross national product has increased at the rate of 9 percent a year since the 1978 reforms, much more rapidly than for the Western economies (including Japan, which has faced serious challenges since 1985).

In our final chapter, we will look at some of the reasons, despite recent economic success, that the Chinese people and their leaders have been unable to clarify their future role. There is a serious identity crisis inside China. The collapse of international communism wiped away many of Beijing's views of the outside world, and Tiananmen Square challenged the very foundations of order and the Chinese Communist Party's mandate to rule from above. No new ideology, not even nationalism, has filled the void in China's definition of itself domestically and internationally.

As we analyze China's current role in the international security system, we will see how Beijing's leaders remain the world's strongest supporters of the Westphalian system of power relations, which emphasizes sovereignty and noninterference in the affairs of other states. At the regional level, China until recently had been resistant to multilateral efforts to achieve collective arrangements such as those emerging in Europe. In considering China's future, we will summarize Beijing's risks and opportunities in continuing its current policies. We will also look at its choices in breaking new ground, both in its domestic policies and at the regional and global levels, and look at choices that may bring China into harmony with the emerging global regimes of the twenty-first century.