

CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA*

ORTA ASYA'YA YÖNELİK ÇİN DIŞ POLİTİKASI

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, under the influence of "harmonious diplomacy" China has given every effort to improve its relationship with neighbouring countries to make a peaceful environment not only in accordance with the common interest of the Chinese and others, but also to facilitate peace and development in Asia. Due to its important strategic position and rich energy resources, Central Asia is seen as the Second Middle East and the strategic energy base for the 21st century, giving the region importance in China's strategic planning. Under the guidance of harmonious diplomacy, China has set up the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to strengthen its political, security and economic partnership with Central Asia in hopes of maintaining Chinese national interest and breaking through American containment. This paper aims to clarify expectations of China's future policy towards Central Asia by exploring the policies that has been adopted towards the region.

Key Words: China, Central Asia, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Good Neighbour Policy, Harmonious Worldview

ÖZET

Çin, son yıllarda benimsemiş olduğu "uyumlu diplomasi" anlayışıyla birlikte komşularıyla ortak çıkar prensibi temelinde barışçıl bir ortamın oluşturulması için ilişkilerini geliştirme çabası içerisinde. Bununla birlikte Asya'daki istikrar ve kalkınmanın da bu süreçten olumlu yönde etkileneceğine inanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede Orta Asya'nın sahip olduğu enerji kaynakları ve stratejik önemi dolayısıyla Çin'in uzun dönemli projeksiyonlarında önemli bir yere sahip olduğu belirtilebilir. Çin uyumlu diplomasi politikaları bağlamında Orta Asya ile ilişkilerinde Amerikan'ın çevreleme politikalarına karşı bir tutum içerisinde. Bu yönüyle Şanghay İşbirliği Teşkilatının kuruluş aşamasında etkin bir rol oynayan Çin, Orta Asya'da siyasi, ekonomik ve güvenlik alanlarında pozisyonunu güçlendirecek ve ulusal çıkarlarını koruyacak yönde adımlar atmaktadır. Bu çalışma Çin'in Orta Asya'daki geleceğe dönük politikalarını ve beklentilerini açıklayıcı bir amaç güderken bu bağlamda bu bölgeye dönük politikalarını inceleyecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çin, Orta Asya, Şanghay İşbirliği Örgütü, İyi Komşuluk İlişkileri, Uyumlu Dünya Görüşü

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INTRODUCTION

Following China's rapid rise in the post Cold War period, a peaceful international environment secures China's economic development and prevents China from "peacefully evolution"; it is an important basis for China to promote external economic interactions and to enter the international system.¹ Therefore, China began to promote the "harmonious worldview" (*he xie shi jie guan*) in response to the negative impacts of the "China threat." China also promoted the "good neighbor foreign policy" (*mu lin wai jiao zheng ce*) and adopted bilateral and multilateral diplomatic routes to improve relations with neighboring countries. Improvement in neighboring relations not only reduces national security threats for China, it also provides a peaceful and stable international environment to the benefit of economic development. The end of the Cold War, collapse of the USSR and improvement in Russia-China relations define Chinese policy and behavior toward Central Asia. Post-Cold War developments resulted in the creation of new states, reduction in Moscow's influence, and introduction of new avenues for spreading Chinese interests. The collapse of USSR also created a power vacuum that posed problems for China's security.²

Central Asia not only has important strategic position, due to its rich stock in natural resources such as coal, natural gas and oil, it is seen as the "second Middle East" or the "strategic resource base of the twenty first century."³ Central Asia thus has a significant strategic role in China's strategic planning in Asia and its maintenance of national interests. After the 9/11 attack, through the convenience of its global anti-terrorist campaign and attack on Afghanistan, the US entered Central Asia and developed close cooperation with states in the region.⁴ The US consolidated its influence and control in Central Asia to encircle China from the western flank.⁵ Central Asia has become the US main region for combating terrorism, providing aid and investment.⁶ On the other hand, due to the threat the US brings to Russia by entering Central Asia, Russia has exploited its traditional historical, geographical and cultural advantages with states in

¹ Chih-Chia Hsu, "Zong guo xin mu lin wai jiao zheng ce: zhan lue yi han yu zuo wei" (China's New Good Neighbour Foreign Policy: Strategy and Behavior), *Yuan Jin Ji Jin Hui Ji Kan* (Prospect Quarterly), Vol. 8, No. 3, 2007, p. 51.

² Matthew Oresman, "Repaving the Silk Road: China's Emergence in Central Asia", in Joshua Eisenman, et. al. (Ed.), *China and the Developing World*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe Press, 2007), pp. 60-83.

³ Zhong Hua Ou Ya Ji Jin Hui (Foundation on International of Cross-strait Studies), *Di Yuan Zheng Zhi Yu Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Zhan Lue* (Geopolitics and China Diplomatic Strategy), (Taipei: Datun Press, 2006), p. 197.

⁴ Yevgeny Vassilyev, "Central Asia at the Crossroads - the United States has Come to Central Asia to Stay", *Russia in Global Affairs*, 24 March 2003; (<http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/2/466.html>).

⁵ Ramakant Dwivedi, "China's Central Asia Policy in Recent Time", *China and Eurasia Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2006, pp. 143-144; Wu-Ping Kwo and Shiao-Shyang Liou, "Shang hai he zuo zu zhi yu e zhong zai zhong ya jing he guan xi" (Competition and Cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia and Shanghai Co-operation Organization: Analytical View from International Regime), *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2005, p. 148.

⁶ Niklas Swanstrom, "China and Central Asia: a New Great Game or Traditional Vassal Relations?", *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 14, No. 45, 2005, p. 580.

Central Asia to transform its policy, and to revive and develop its own influences towards the region.⁷

Whether in strategic position or energy stock, it is clear that Central Asia plays an important role, which has led to great power rivalry in the region, mostly for the expansion of regional influence to the benefit of maintaining national interests. These developments influence China's strategy, security and economic interests, giving Central Asia the spotlight of Chinese attention. Under the combined strategy of the harmonious worldview and good neighbor diplomacy, China adopted the peripheral diplomacy of "befriending and maintaining good relationship with the neighbour" (*yi lin wei ban, yi lin wei shan*) in Central Asia. Through the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China strengthened cooperation in politics, security, trade and energy with states in Central Asia. Closer relations with Central Asia not only facilitate regional peace and stability and the maintenance of China's national interests, they also help China penetrate US containment and establish its own regional presence and influence.

In other words, for China, the policy goal of providing a peaceful environment for economic development became very important after the 9/11 attack. China's insecurity came from US actions and threats and challenges induced by terrorism, Islamic extremism, Xin Jiang separatism and drug trafficking. China actively seeks effective diplomatic relations with states in Central Asia for the resolution of border disputes and better economic relations for the establishment of a peaceful environment.⁸ China seeks cooperation to avoid terrorism, separatism, and US power and influence.

The task of this article to analyze China's foreign policy in Central Asia, with the purpose of shedding some light on the prospects of Chinese policy towards the region. This article begins with a discussion of China's foreign policy focus and core objectives to understand the meaning of the harmonious worldview and good neighbor diplomacy, which form the basis for understanding China's foreign policy in Central Asia. Then the discussion moves on to examine the significance of Central Asia for China as a path to understanding China's strategic objectives and interests in the region.

1. China's Foreign Policy Focus and Core Objectives

1.1. China's Foreign Policy Focus

China's current foreign policy is mainly formed by the three concepts of "all around diplomacy" (*quan fang wei wai jiao*), "peaceful development" (*he ping fa zhan*) and the "harmonious world" (*he xie shi jie*).

⁷ Zhong Hua Ou Ya Ji Jin Hui (Foundation on International of Cross-strait Studies), *Di Yuan Zheng Zhi Yu Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Zhan Lue* (Geopolitics and China Diplomatic Strategy), p. 198.

⁸ Stuart Harris, "China's Regional Policies: How Much Hegemony?", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 4, 2005, pp. 487-488.

First, "all around" means: (1) China will continue to protect its national interest but not ideological goals; (2) China emphasizes the comprehensive nature of Chinese foreign policy, including developed and developing countries and regions, and embrace all modes of international interactions (bilateral, multilateral and regional) in economics, politics, military, technology, culture, education and tourism. The meaning of all around diplomacy is in contrast to past CCP guiding principle such as "leaning to one side," it is meant to signal the degree to which the Chinese leaders support a highly internationalist and non-ideological foreign policy.⁹

Second, since the mid 1980s, the successive Chinese leaderships have affirmed "peace and development" as the basis of China's reform-era foreign policy. In recent years, "peace, development, cooperation" have become the basic principles of Chinese diplomacy. Chinese Prime Minister Hu Jin Tao proposed "cooperation," (*he zuo*) emphasizing that China will participate in multilateral organizations. China has also emphasized "economic development" in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. After 2004, the concept of peaceful development symbolizes China's foreign policy, reflecting the state's effort to avoid the mistakes of past rising powers by reassuring other states about the means and direction of China's behavior in international politics. It is clear that China is mindful of other nation's interests as it ascends in the international system, and it will not use military competition as a means to realize national revitalization.¹⁰

Third, in 2005, Hu Jin Tao began calling for the building of the "harmonious world" as the external manifestation of China's domestic policy of building a "harmonious society." The principle of the harmonious world may become the key principle in China's diplomacy until China's fifth generation of leaders in 2012. For Hu, a harmonious world is one in which states act in ways that respect each other's national sovereignty, tolerate diversity in national political systems and values, and promote national development by *equitably* spreading economic benefits.¹¹

The "harmonious world" includes two aspects: (1) to move away from the traditionally reactive and combative view of foreign affairs as a struggle (*dou zheng*) against any number of external forces. In the 17th Party Congress, Hu used the phrase "China will work to make the international order fairer and more equitable." The Chinese media stopped using the phrase "opposing hegemonism and maintaining world peace" as a task in foreign affairs. The new formulation is "maintaining world peace and advocating common development." The CCP has also downplayed the advocacy of "multipolarity" to balance US power. (2) China's concept of the harmonious world emphasize how intimately tied China has become with the international community. Hu also seeks to foster greater linkages between domestic and international affairs as a way to promote better policy coordination in the Chinese bureaucracy. In other

⁹ Evan Medeiros, *China's International Behavior*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2009), pp. 46-47.

¹⁰ Evan Medeiros, *China's International Behavior*, p. 48.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

words, China can promote a harmonious world only if domestic actors in China are equally aware of China's foreign policy challenges and opportunities and can facilitate policy towards the direct assistance of domestic economic development.¹²

1.2. China's Core Objectives

China's core objectives (*he xin li yi*) are: (1) fostering economic development; (2) reassurance; (3) countering constraints; and (4) expanding and diversifying access to natural resources.

First, since the adoption of open reform, China has sought to maintain a favorable international environment conducive to domestic economic reform, development and modernization. Former leader Deng Xiao Ping set out these goals as the core objectives for the entire reform era. China's diplomacy seeks to minimize threats from its peripheries and regional states, stabilize regional security environment, and deal with territorial disputes and transnational challenges, to ensure that the leadership can continue to focus on economic development and growing China's comprehensive national power. China exploits foreign policy to expand gains in economics, investment, resources and technology and in particular, it seeks to forge and maintain bilateral political relationships for the sake of economic growth. As China's economy grows and globalization accelerates, state behaviours facilitate the appearance of "economic diplomacy" and make it a high priority for Chinese foreign policy.¹³

Regarding "reassurance" (*chong xin bao zheng*),¹⁴ beginning in the mid 1990s, China's leaders and analysts have begun to take notice of specific policies that cause suspicion among Asian countries towards Beijing's intentions, such as the sovereign dispute in the South China Sea and the 1995-96 missile crisis in the Taiwan Strait. During the turn of the century, China's rapidly growing economy and expanding military capabilities began to prompt varying degrees of concern from Asia powers and the broader international community. Suffice is to say that *China wants to represent an opportunity, not a threat*. Not only would China not undermine the economic and security interests of Asian powers, it would be beneficial to their national interests. Therefore, China subsequently implemented several policies to address these diverse anxieties. For example, in order to foster an image of a benign regional actor and a responsible major power, China has actively participated in multilateral economic and security organizations in Asia and promoted "greater peripheral diplomacy" (*da zhou bian wai jiao*) in its regional policy, which eventually culminated in the strategy of "peaceful development."¹⁵

¹² Ibid., pp. 49-50.

¹³ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁴ See Jia Qingguo, "Peaceful Development: China's Policy of Reassurance", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 4, 2005, pp. 493-507.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

China's third objective is "countering constraints" (*fan wei du* or *fan ju xian*). China's objective is to reduce other nation's ability and willingness to constrain China's influence and freedom of action in international affairs. China thinks US foreign policy is designed to hinder or prevent China's emergence as a great power. US moves in Asia such as the the US-Japan Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty, military sales to Taiwan and military deployments in Central Asia are considered by China to be a containment strategy aimed at constraining Chinese power. In the words of mainstream Chinese assessment, the US has never given up its efforts to establish a "small-sized NATO" in Asia in order to balance Chinese power in the region. Therefore, China seeks to establish political relations that collectively create an environment in which the US cannot use its diplomacy or military cooperation network to constrain China's freedom of action and balance the rise of China.

Counter constraint is not China's primary objective in global diplomacy, the focus of diplomacy is still mainly on economic growth and expansion in multilateral cooperation. Specifically, China not only seeks to create new institutions or expand existing multilateral organizations with limited US influence, but also to develop a regional order in East Asia in which US influence is diluted. However, China's strategy to counter constraint avoids direct confrontation with the US that would ultimately defeat the purpose of previous efforts. It may be said that China's policy is to seek suitable timing and space for development and to carry out policy that avoids antagonism due to "countering constraints" at the same time. It is a delicate balance act and a central challenge for China's foreign policy in the region and in its relationship with the US. Several factors determine how China manages this balancing act: the relative stability of bilateral relations, China's perception of US goals in Asia, US perception of China's regional diplomacy, and the extent of regional accommodation or alienation for China.¹⁶

Finally, China expands and diversifies access to natural resources, especially hydrocarbon energy resources. Not only has China's GDP accelerated starting last decade, its energy demand has also risen rapidly. Rising demand has forced China to search for energy to maintain its economic growth. China's increasing demand is expected to continue over the next 15 years, which supports China's effort to develop diplomatic relations with resource rich regions such as Africa, Middle East and Latin America. China's need for secure and consistent access to imported resources is expanding. China pays attention to regional dependencies, especially its reliance on the Middle East for about 45% percent of its crude oil imports. China's acute anxieties are also manifested in diplomacy. China seeks multiple channels to promote political relationships that ensure consistent access to energy supplies and natural resources. Efforts to upgrade bilateral relations with Zimbabwe, Sudan, Malaysia and Central Asia is proof to the strategy.¹⁷

¹⁶ Jia Qingguo, "Peaceful Development: China's Policy of Reassurance", p. 57.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

Overall, one could understand the harmonious worldview as China's policy focus, emphasizing peaceful development, support for internationalism, non-ideological foreign policy and the adoption of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy that helps China to become a responsible power and expand its source for natural resources. At the same time, China's policies are also aimed at minimizing threat from neighbouring and regional states, stabilizing the peripheral environment and dealing with territorial and international disputes, all towards the goal of avoiding disruptions on its path for economic development and negative influences on its leadership status.

2. Meaning of the Harmonious Worldview and the Good Neighbour Diplomacy

According to previous description, it may be understood that the harmonious worldview is "China's new concept of foreign policy" and "new development in China's foreign policy thinking."¹⁸ China promoted the "harmonious worldview" in response to negative influences brought forth by the "China threat." Chinese foreign policy is realized as "good neighbour policy" (*mu lin wai jiao*), which places an emphasis on bilateral and multilateral diplomatic routes to improve relations with neighbouring states. Improvement in neighbouring relations not only reduces national security threats against China, it also provides a peaceful and stable international environment in favour of economic development. Under the guidance of the harmonious worldview, China actively pursues good relations with neighbouring states, with the prime goal of establishing a peaceful environment in the common interest of China's people and its neighbours and the promotion of peace and development in Asia.

The harmonious worldview may be regarded as an extended result of China's proposal of "peaceful rise" (*he ping jue qi*) in 2003. The result of the proposal generated negative views from the international community and negative linkages among neighbouring countries, as "rise" (*jue qi*) implies the growth of relative power and potential pressure and threat towards neighbouring countries. Particularly in the case of anarchy, states pursue self interest and security, any state's sudden increase in power inevitably causes other state's insecurity and the rise of a security dilemma.¹⁹ As Herz points out, a state that seeks to increase its security has the unintended effect of decreasing the security of others.²⁰ When a state pursues power and security, security dilemma is fostered as it challenges other state's pursuit of power and security.²¹ China's proposal of the "harmonious world" in place of the "peaceful rise" is to eliminate its image as a potential challenger to the international system.²²

¹⁸ "Jian she he xie shi jie: zhong guo wai jiao si xiang de xin fa zhan" (Constructing a Harmonious World: New Developments in China's Foreign Policy Thinking), 23 August 2006; (http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2006-08/23/content_4993067.htm).

¹⁹ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

²⁰ Robert Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory and Cooperation", *World Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 1998, p. 317.

²¹ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), p. 295.

²² Chien-Min Chao & Chih-Chia Hsu, "Zhong gong di si dai ling dao ji ti de he xie shi jie guan: li lun yu yi han", (China's Harmonious World: Theory and Significance), *Yuan jin ji jin Hui ji Kan* (Prospect Quarterly), Vol. 10, No. 1, 2009, pp. 4-8.

The concept of the harmonious worldview first appeared in April 2005. In the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta, Hu Jin Tao points out that Asian and African countries should "promote friendship, equal dialogue and the development of prosperity among civilizations and jointly construct a harmonious world."²³ Former foreign minister, Li Zhao Xin, continued to point out in the foreign minister meeting of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in the following month that countries should continue to strengthen cultural exchange, promote equal dialogue between different countries, accommodate each other, develop prosperity and jointly construct a harmonious world. At the UN 60th anniversary summit in September, Hu delivered a speech entitled "Making Great Efforts to Build a Harmonious World with Long-lasting Peace and Common Prosperity" that further elaborate the new concept. With Hu as the leading spokesperson, China's elites have enunciated the harmonious concept at different international occasions. Active promotion for the establishment of a harmonious world of long lasting peace and common prosperity has become the main task of Chinese foreign policy.

The harmonious worldview has three basic points: (1) *China would maintain multilateralism and realize common security*. States should join hands to deal with global security threats; forgo Cold War thinking; erect new security concepts of mutual trust, mutual prosperity and mutual cooperation; construct an equal and effective collective security mechanism and maintain world peace and security together. (2) *China would maintain mutual benefit and cooperation and realize common prosperity*. In other words, China would actively push for the construction of a complete, open, equal and non-discriminatory multilateral trade system, and the further refinement of the international financial system, towards the goal of joint development of nations. (3) *China would maintain the spirit of accommodation and jointly construct the harmonious world*. Based on the spirit of equality and openness, China hopes to maintain diversity in civilizations, to facilitate democracy in international relations and to construct a harmonious world accommodating various civilizations.²⁴

The end of the Cold War caused relations among major countries to undergo major and deep adjustments and different forces have clashed and combined in various ways generating new phenomena. The degree of interdependence among states has deepened and in contrast to traditional concerns such as geopolitics, military security and ideology, economics has come to play a more significant role in international relations. How to enable China to join with its neighbors and the entire world quickly and smoothly is critical for future economic security and international strategic planning.²⁵ On the other hand, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific is most compatible with the

²³ "Hu jin tao zai ya fei feng hui shang de jiang hua quan wen" (Hu Jin Tao's Complete Speech at ASEM); (http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/world/2005-04/22/content_2865173.htm).

²⁴ Chien-Min Chao & Chih-Chia Hsu, "Zhong gong di si dai ling dao ji ti de he xie shi jie guan: li lun yu yi han", (China's Harmonious World: The ory and Significance), p. 9.

²⁵ Tung-Chieh Tsai, *Dang Dai Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Zheng Ce* (China's New Diplomacy: Interpreting its Connotation and Tendency), (Taipei: Wunan Book, 2008), p. 78.

development of China's interests, therefore China is stimulated to expend efforts to maintain and ensure regional stability as a foundation for economic development.

China has invested efforts in various fields towards the aim of regional stability. Politically, China is developing building harmonious ties and friendly and equal relations with neighbouring countries. Economically, China expends great effort in improving relations with East Asian countries to construct a regional economic system that benefits its members. In terms of security, China promotes regional cooperation, dialogue among states and peaceful resolution of conflicts in order to maintain domestic and regional stability. The essence of good neighbour diplomacy is made up of four points: (1) negotiate peacefully to resolve border conflicts and improve relations with neighboring countries; (2) construct companion and cooperative relationship and advance cooperation in bilateral dialogue; (3) participate in multilateral diplomatic mechanisms and promote joint resolution of conflicts; and (4) strengthen economic and trade cooperation.

Good neighbour diplomacy shows that the "harmonious world" is China's new diplomacy and basic blueprint of international strategy, in the 15th Party Congress in 1997, relevant policy was more clearly iterated.²⁶ Former CCP leader Jiang Zemin emphasized, "affirming to good neighbor is this country's long term stance, it will not change; regarding conflicting issues between this country and its neighbours, one should keep an eye on maintaining peace, stabilizing the overall situation and seeking resolution through friendly negotiations. If it is not possible to be resolved at once, it may be temporarily put aside; find common ground and save the differences."²⁷ The working report of the 16th Party Congress also points out that "(China) must continue to strengthen good neighbour and friendship, affirm to good relations and companionship, strengthen regional cooperation and strengthen exchange and cooperation with neighboring states." It is the first time the slogan of "befriending and maintaining good relationship with the neighbour" (*yi lin wei ban, yi lin wei shan*) is brought out, enriching the policy meaning of good neighbour diplomacy.²⁸

Further speaking, China must advocate the "good neighbor and friendly" (*mu lin you hao*) policy in its peripheral in order to shape a beneficial environment for the realization of economic reforms as a part of state development. Although economic reform is still at the heart of China's policy, the trend that China would adjust its strategic plans according to changes in its international status is emerging. China is trying to integrate its neighbours into an economic entity centered around China in order to develop a new order in East Asia and

²⁶ Chien-Min Chao & Chih-Chia Hsu, "Zhong gong di si dai ling dao ji ti de he xie shi jie guan: li lun yu yi han", (China's Harmonious World: The ory and Significance), p. 9.

²⁷ "Gao ju deng xiao ping li lun wei da qi zhi" (Raise Deng Xiao Ping's Great Flag Up High), 20 January 2003; (http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-01/20/content_6_97207.htm)

²⁸ "Jiang ze min zai dang de shi liu da shang suo zuo de bao gao" (Jiang Zemin's Report at the 16th Party Conference), 17 November 2002; (http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2002-11/17/content_632296.htm).

compete for global hegemony.²⁹ Accordingly, Hu Jin Tao points out five points in the 2004 Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference: increase "good neighbor and friendliness" and mutual political trust; expand and deepen bilateral economic cooperation; speed up the process of regional economic integration; promote cultural and personnel exchange; and promote security dialogue and military exchange.³⁰

In sum, good neighbor diplomacy has become a key direction of Chinese foreign policy in the post Cold War period and China has applied its "befriending" policy towards Central Asia, securing peripheral stability through the advocacy of good neighbour and friendly relations.³¹ China actively participates in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), abiding by the principles of equality, mutual benefit and common interest and promoting economic cooperation in the region. Regarding Sino-Central Asia relations, Li Peng pointed out China's four basic policies: (1) affirm to "good neighbour and friendliness" and peaceful coexistence; (2) initiate mutually beneficial cooperation and promote common prosperity; (3) respect the choice of peoples of other states and non-interference in their domestic politics; (4) respect independent sovereignty and promote regional stability.³² Speaking to the Uzbekistan parliament in 2004, Hu expressed that China is willing to "deepen 'good neighbour and friendliness,' improve mutual political trust; strengthen security cooperation, maintain regional stability; affirm to mutual benefit, promote pragmatic cooperation; expand cultural exchange, consolidate traditional friendship" with Central Asia to further develop bilateral relations.³³ Hu further expressed his hope for Central Asia to become "a harmonious region of long lasting peace and common prosperity" at the 2006 SCO summit.³⁴

3. Changes in China-Central Asia Relations

Since the independence of Central Asia states, China's Central Asia policy underwent three stages: (1) establishment of good neighbour and friendly relations (1991-1997); (2) strengthening cooperation in energy, trade and security (1997-2001); and (3) development of comprehensive cooperation relationship under the SCO framework (2001-). Chinese policy is based on

²⁹ Tung-Chieh Tsai, *Dang Dai Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Zheng Ce* (China's New Diplomacy: Interpreting its Connotation and Tendency), p. 104.

³⁰ "Zhong guo de fa zhan ya zhou de ji yu" (China's Development, Asia's Opportunity), 24 March 2004; (<http://www.people.com.cn/BIG5/qiche/2466687.html>).

³¹ Ramakant Dwivedi, "China's Central Asia Policy in Recent Time", p. 141.

³² U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *China's Foreign Policy and "Soft Power" in South America, Asia, and Africa*, (Washington DC: U.S. Senate Committee of Foreign Relations, 2008), p. 65.

³³ "Shen hua mu lin hu xin kai chuang mei ha o wei lai" (Deepen Good Neighbour and Mutual Trust, Open a Great Future), 16 June 2004; (<http://big5.fmprc.gov.cn/gate/big5/www.fmoprc.gov.hk/ch n/z t/2004zt/oysg/t139903.htm>).

³⁴ "Hu jin tao zai shang he zu zhi cheng yuan guo yuan shou li shi hui di liu ci hui yi shang de jiang hua" (Hu Jin Tao's Speech at the 6th Meeting of the Leader's of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization), 15 June 2006; (http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2006-06/15/content_4701974.htm).

principles of cooperation, multilateralism and integration, establishing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the states of Central Asia.³⁵

3.1. Establishment of Good Neighbour and Friendly Relations (1991-1997)

After the collapse of the USSR, the five states in Central Asia became independent, which brought about great changes to the geopolitical situation in China's northwest. The Central Asia region became a power vacuum and hotbed for the spread of nationalism and religious ideology. The situation opened up opportunities for the entry of the three forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism, which not only have a serious impact on regional political economy but also cause challenges and threats to regional security. The direct consequence for China is the immediate influence on the stability and security of its western provinces.³⁶ In response, China's main goals in the area are to establish diplomatic relations with neighboring states, cooperate with states to jointly maintain border stability and security, and develop cooperation in trade and promote economic development in China's western region. The three objectives support the central goal of gaining the support of Central Asia states on countering terrorism, separatism and extremism in the region, especially terrorist activities in East Turkistan.³⁷

China is one of the earliest countries in the world to recognize the independences of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and establish diplomatic relations with Central Asia. China recognized the independence of the five states during the turnover from 1991 - 1992 and established diplomatic relations with the region in 1992. China and the Central Asian states agree to develop friendly cooperative relations under the principle of peaceful coexistence, thus defining the establishment of bilateral relations and friendly relations as the key point of Chinese diplomacy in Central Asia. China and the Central Asian states signed a series of important documents accordingly, setting the foundation for long term development of bilateral relations. At this stage, China focused on politics and security. Both sides confirmed their "good neighbour and friendly" relations and initiated cooperative relations in politics and security.

3.2. Cooperation in Energy, Trade and Security (1997-2001)

With the signing of a cooperation agreement in oil and natural gas between China and Kazakhstan in 1997, China's Central Asian policy took a new turn in

³⁵ Michael Clarke, "China's Strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia: Toward Chinese Hegemony in the 'Geographical Pivot of History'?", *Issue & Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 2005, p. 87.

³⁶ U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *China's Foreign Policy and "Soft Power" in South America, Asia, and Africa*, p. 65; Yitzhak Shichor, "China's Central Asian Strategy and the Xinjiang Connection: Predicaments and Medicaments in a Contemporary Perspective", *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 56-57.

³⁷ See Dewardric McNeal, *China's Relations with Central Asian States and Problems with Terrorism*, (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 2001); Jim Nichol, *Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests* (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 2009).

direction. The new focus is on the strengthening of cooperation in energy, trade and security with Central Asia and the establishment of the "Shanghai Five" for multilateral security cooperation.³⁸ With the rise of China, China's demand for oil continued to increase and oil-rich Central Asia became China's new partner for expanding and diversifying its resource channel for oil. At the same time, Central Asia also became an important trade partner for China under the Chinese plan to hasten economic development and maintain stability in its western region. At this stage, aside from continuing development in political relations, China turned its focus to energy, trade and security cooperation, on the one hand to meet the common needs of both sides, on the other hand to deepen Sino-Russian partnership. China, Russia and Central Asia began to cooperate under the Shanghai Five mechanism.

3.3. Comprehensive Cooperation Relationship under the SCO (2001-)

The establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2006 symbolizes that the friendly relationship between China and Central Asia has entered a new stage of development. However, the geopolitical situation in Central Asia and China's strategic concerns changed with US entry into Central Asia after the 9/11 attack. China-Central Asia relations are challenged by US entry. As Central Asia strengthens relations with the US, it decreases its willingness to develop relations and security cooperation with China. Furthermore, US presence challenge China's status and interest in the region by forcing China to take the US factor into concern and adjust its priority of interests. Respectively, China's order of interests are to reinforce good neighbour and friendly relations with Central Asian states; to continue cooperation in combating the three forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism; to maintain the security and stability of Xin Jiang and Central Asia; to develop cooperation in energy and trade; and to resolve border disputes and strengthen cooperation in various fields. At this stage, due to the US challenge on China's interests, China actively develops all around cooperation with Central Asian states to maintain its influence and interest in the region and balance or eliminate western influences, including the US.³⁹

³⁸ See Michael Mikhlka, "Not Much of a Game: Security Dynamics in Central Asia", *China and Eurasia Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2007, pp. 21-39.

³⁹ Bates Gill, *Rising Star: China's New Security Diplomacy*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2007), pp. 37-52; Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation", *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2005, p. 80; Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), p. 309. Robert Sutter, "Durability in China's Strategy toward Central Asia – Reasons for Optimism," *China and Eurasia Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1 2008, p. 7, 309; Wayne Bert, *The United States, China and Southeast Asian Security: A Changing of the Guard?*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 112.

4. China's Strategic Goals and Foreign Policy in Central Asia

4.1. China's Strategic Goals in the Region

Promoting stable security relations with its neighbours is China's basic starting point; to have a peaceful and stable regional environment is an important aspect of China's security strategy and core interest. China's 1998 National Defense Whitepaper summed up the country's desire for an environment of long term international peace, especially a beneficial neighboring environment. Xin Jiang's economic development, domestic political stability, regional stability, energy security and the creation of an alternative transport corridor to Europe encouraged China to get in touch with Central Asia.⁴⁰ China's goals in Central Asia are to constrain the separatist forces of East Turkistan; to keep Central Asia as China's stable strategic backyard; and to make Central Asia into one of China's diversified sources of energy resources and a regional economic partner.⁴¹

Developing stable security relations with Central Asia has become a key issue of China's foreign policy. China-Central Asia relations have shown clear improvement in the post-Cold War period and cooperation has been strengthened in various fields. China has broad interests in Central Asia, including border stability, energy security, geopolitics, anti-extremism and anti-terrorism.⁴² China's interests in the region can be categorized as follows:

Strategic Position: Central Asia has an important position in terms of global geopolitics. As the geographic center of Eurasia and the hub and strategic juncture of the Eurasia Silk Road, Central Asia is a "pivot area" or "heartland" as defined by the British geo-political scientist Mackinder. As the theory of geographic determination goes, whoever gains control of Central Asia gains control over the Eurasia continent and whoever controls Eurasia gains control over the whole world.⁴³ The statement points out the critical status of Central Asia in terms of geopolitics. Coupled with rich strategic resources such as oil, Central Asia has become the new geopolitical battlefield. As former advisor to the US National Security Council, Zbigniew Brzezinski, points out, Central Asia is a grand chessboard and due to its strategic importance in geopolitics, great powers compete over control of the region.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Thrassy Marketos, *China's Energy Geopolitics: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Central Asia*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 19.

⁴¹ Thrassy Marketos, *China's Energy Geopolitics: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Central Asia*, p. 11.

⁴² Ramakant Dwivedi, "China's Central Asia Policy in Recent Time", p. 145.

⁴³ See Halford Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History (1904)," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol.170, No.4, 2004, pp. 298-321; Halford Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of Peace", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 21, No.4, 1943, pp. 595-605; Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1942).

⁴⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Hak Yin & Zhengxu Wang, *Assessing China's Influence in Central Asia: A Dominant Regional Power?*, (UK: China Policy Institute, 2009), pp. 8-9.

Securing Central Asia as China's strategic backyard is part of China's grand strategy in geopolitics. China concentrates on resources in the region and tries to maintain stability in the region. There are three pre-conditions to security in Central Asia: (1) solve the disputed border issues between Central Asian states and maintain peace and security in the border areas; (2) conduct bilateral relations between China and Central Asia in goodwill; and (3) prevent Central Asia from falling into the control of any major great powers or group of powers that have complicated geopolitical and strategic relations with China or threaten its interests in the region.⁴⁵ China perceives US activities in Central Asia as an expression of a new cold war containment strategy directed at China. For China, the US penetration of Central Asia is not only linked to a grand strategy for global domination but also to the possible stoking of Xin Jiang separatism.⁴⁶ The goal of China's policy is to prevent Central Asia from becoming an unstable challenge for development and foreign policy.⁴⁷

Economic Interest: China's main economic interest in Central Asia is energy.⁴⁸ Following the rapid economic growth, China became a net importer of oil, which has greatly increased Chinese interests in securing reliable supplies of oil and natural gas abroad.⁴⁹ China became a net importer of oil in 1993 and was responsible for 9.6 percent of global energy consumption in 1997, a figure projected to grow to 16.1 percent by 2020.⁵⁰ Although China has large reserves of coal, inefficiencies and high pollutants make oil and natural gas more appealing and heightened China's search for oversea supplies.⁵¹ While China's need for oil is growing, most other states in the world are experiencing an increased reliance on oil and gas as well to manage their own economic development. Increased international dependence and competition on oil and natural gas makes Central Asia a target for control, as it is both a producer and a transit region.⁵² As a result, China has sought oil and natural gas abroad and Central Asia, especially Kazakhstan, appears as a promising partner.⁵³

⁴⁵ Thrassy Marketos, *China's Energy Geopolitics: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Central Asia*, p. 14.

⁴⁶ Michael Clarke, "China's Strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia", p. 110.

⁴⁷ Bates Gill & Matthew Oresman, *China's New Journey to the West: China's Emergence in Central Asia and Implications for U.S. Interests*, (Washington DC: CSIS, 2003), p. VIII.

⁴⁸ Martine Spechler, "Why Does China Have No Business in Central Asia?", *China and Eurasia Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2009, p. 3; Hak Yin & Zhengxu Wang, *Assessing China's Influence in Central Asia: A Dominant Regional Power?*, p. 2; Ablat Khodzhaev, "The Central Asian Policy of the People's Republic of China", *China and Eurasia Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2009, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁹ Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, p. 318.

⁵⁰ Bernard Cole, *Oil for the Lamps of China: Beijing's 21st Century Search for Energy*, (Washington DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2003), p. VIII; Evan Medeiros, *China's International Behavior*, p. 134.

⁵¹ Bernard Cole, *Oil for the Lamps of China: Beijing's 21st Century Search for Energy*, p. 7.

⁵² Niklas Swanstrom, "China and Central Asia: a New Great Game or Traditional Vassal Relations?", p. 577; Hak Yin & Zhengxu Wang, *Assessing China's Influence in Central Asia: A Dominant Regional Power?*, p. 5.

⁵³ Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, p. 311; Robert Sutter, "Durability in China's Strategy toward Central", p. 8.

Despite increased ownership over oil and gas fields in Central Asia, it is not enough to sustain China's economic development. At least as important is the strategic linkage China can establish with the Middle East through a network of pipelines. On the other hand, US control of the oil transport route at sea has forced China to search for continental channels to diversify its source of energy.⁵⁴ An important part of China's energy strategy is participation in energy development projects in Central Asia. China invests or pledges substantial amounts of money in oil or natural gas companies in Central Asia, and works on new gas and oil pipelines connecting the Central Asia Republics to the pipeline network in Xin Jiang.⁵⁵

China and Central Asian economies are complementary as Central Asia harbours important resources such as oil and gas. China's leaders put special emphasis on Xin Jiang, as the region has a great flow of trade exchange with Central Asia; economic development of Xin Jiang is part of Beijing's strategy to calm unrest in the region.⁵⁶ Central Asia is the place for Chinese corporations to realize their "walk out" (*zou chu qu*) strategy and a budding market for the export of inexpensive Chinese goods. A potential role as an economic engine for Central Asia gives China a vital role in regional development and a strong position from which to fulfill its own development needs.⁵⁷ China's economic interests in Central Asia contains the following: support economic stability and regional development to maintain security and stability in China's western front; assist in the development of Central Asia economies for the establishment of a stable supply base of raw materials and a market for goods; support Chinese companies' move into the Central Asia market; and attract Central Asia into participating in China's western development.⁵⁸

Border Stability: China shares a nearly 7,000 km border with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan, and has expended considerable effort in demarcating and demilitarizing that frontier. This has allowed China to divert resources and attention away from high priority challenges such as domestic economy and relations with neighbors.⁵⁹ As Central Asia is critical to maintaining security and stability on the western front, China seeks to demarcate, demilitarize and stabilize borders with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan; border stability is central to China's development plans and foreign policy.⁶⁰ China has two goals in peripheral security: maintain stability within its territory and ensure the security and economic welfare of its people,

⁵⁴ Wu-Ping Kwo and Shiau-Shyang Liou, "Shang hai he zuo zu zhi yu e zhong zai zhong ya jing he guan xi" (Competition and Cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia and Shanghai Co-operation Organization: Analytical View from International Regime), p. 146.

⁵⁵ Ramakant Dwivedi, "China's Central Asia Policy in Recent Time", p. 145.

⁵⁶ Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, pp. 317-318.

⁵⁷ Bates Gill & Matthew Oresman, *China's New Journey to the West: China's Emergence in Central Asia and Implications for U.S. Interests*, p. IX.

⁵⁸ Yu Zheng, *Zhong E Mei Zai Zhong Ya: He Zuo Yu Jin Zhen* (Cooperation and Competition: China, Russia and U.S. in Central Asia), (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2007), pp. 188-192.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. VIII.

⁶⁰ Robert Sutter, "Durability in China's Strategy toward Central," p. 8; Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, p. 310.

and ensure peace and stability on the border through the promotion of good sense of neighbourhood and friendship.⁶¹

Regional Status: China's engagement with Central Asia, especially through the SCO, is part of its overall diplomatic strategy. While fostering a more widely accepted leadership role, China speeds up its effort to foster a stable and productive international environment around the periphery. The purpose of Beijing's relations with Central Asia is to legitimize China's positions on major international issues, strengthen relations with Russia, and serve as a counterweight to US power and influence. The purpose of China's Central Asia policy is to prevent the region from becoming a distraction to China's internal development and more important foreign policy objectives.⁶²

National Security: China's main security goal is to prohibit Central Asia from becoming an external base for separatist Uyghur element in China's northwestern Xin Jiang. China helps Central Asian states to control domestic security challenges, including terrorism, separatism, religious extremism and drug trafficking, so that the problems do not become security threats to China itself.⁶³ As China works to curb outside support for separatists in Xin Jiang, it works actively with Central Asia against terrorism and crime.⁶⁴ If the Xin Jiang problem is not resolved, it is bound to affect not only China's development but also the stability of Xin Jiang's neighbours, indeed of the broader world order.⁶⁵

4.2. China's Foreign Policy towards the Region

Based on the guidance of the harmonious worldview, China has adopted good neighbour policy towards bordering regions. As for the guiding criteria, China follows the "five principles of peaceful coexistence" (*he ping gong chu wu yuan ze*) as the policy foundation for shaping a peaceful international environment to the benefit of China's economic development.⁶⁶ Under the guidance of the "five guidelines of regional cooperation" (*qu yu he zuo wu xiang zhi dao*) and the precondition to set aside problems, China has set out to resolve residual historical problems through negotiations. China supports regional integration and through the "three neighbour" (*san lin*) principle, using "great power as key, neighbouring states as priority," (*da guo shi guan jian, zhou bian shi shou yao*), it has strengthened its leadership role.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Ramakant Dwivedi, "China's Central Asia Policy in Recent Time", p. 141.

⁶² Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, p. 310; Robert Sutter, "Durability in China's Strategy toward Central", p. 8.

⁶³ Bates Gill & Matthew Oresman, *China's New Journey to the West: China's Emergence in Central Asia and Implications for U.S. Interests*, p. VIII.

⁶⁴ Robert Sutter, "Durability in China's Strategy toward Central", p. 8; Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, p. 310.

⁶⁵ Graham Fuller & Frederick Starr, *The Xinjiang Problem*, (Washington: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2003), p. 9.

⁶⁶ Wayne Bert, *The United States, China and Southeast Asian Security: A Changing of the Guard?*, p. 112.

⁶⁷ Tung-Chieh Tsai, *Dang Dai Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Zheng Ce* (China's New Diplomacy: Interpreting its Connotation and Tendency), p. 79.

Specifically, the main goal of China's adoption of open door policy is to create a stable and safe environment for rapid economic development. China's policy goal is to facilitate growth and stability in domestic economics and establish an environment beneficial for its realization. As Chinese foreign minister Qian Qi Chen points out, the top priority of China's foreign policy is to maintain a stable peripheral environment to safeguard normal economic circumstances at home.⁶⁸ Based on the importance of Central Asia and China's national interests, China realizes its policy in Central Asia through the four aspects of politics, security, economics and multilateral institutions.

Politics: In December 1991, China recognized the independence of the five states in Central Asia and established diplomatic relations with the states separately in the following month. China and Central Asia have continued to improve and strengthen bilateral political and security relations. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought out problems of uncertainty for China and Central Asia, with border issues at the top of the list. China has undertaken negotiations on border disputes with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to improve bilateral political trust.

As early as November 1981, China and Russia began border negotiations, with the main outcome being the signature of the Agreement on the Guiding Principles on Mutual Disarmament and Improvement on Military Trust in the Sino-Soviet Border Areas. In 1992, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan formed a joint group of representatives and initiated border negotiations based on the agreed principles. In 1996, leaders of the five states met for the first time in Shanghai and signed the Agreement on Strengthening Confidence in the Military Field in the Border Area. An important outcome of the meeting is that all parties agreed to the holding of an annual summit representing the establishment of the Shanghai Five mechanism. Later, leaders of the five states signed the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Armed Forces in the Border Area. The two agreements set the foundation of political trust for the resolution of border disputes between China and Central Asia.

On the other hand, China achieved progress on border negotiations with Kazakhstan. Both sides reached the Agreement on the Border between China and Kazakhstan in April 1994 and signed a Supplementary Agreement on the Border between China and Kazakhstan in 1997. A second Supplementary Agreement was signed in 1998 and leaders of both states signed the Joint Communiqué on Complete Settlement of the Boundary Question between China and Kazakhstan in the following year. After the Agreement on Border Survey Protocol was reached in 2002 and went into effect in the following year, bilateral border disputes became fully resolved.

Resolution of border issues between China and Kazakhstan initiated a series of similar resolutions in Central Asia. China and Tajikistan signed a boundary agreement in 1999 and with the signature of a supplementary agreement in 2002, border issues became resolved. China and Kyrgyzstan signed a border

⁶⁸ Wayne Bert, *The United States, China and Southeast Asian Security: A Changing of the Guard?*, p. 112.

agreement in 1996 and completed a supplementary agreement in 1999. In 2004, both states signed an Agreement on Border Survey Protocol with print, symbolizing the resolution of border issues between the two countries.

China, Russia and Kazakhstan reached an agreement on delimiting the converging frontiers between the three countries in May 1999; China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan reached a similar agreement in August. Since, China has demarcated its borders with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, forming an important aspect of the development of friendly relations between China and Central Asia. China further established strategic partnerships with Central Asia states in turn, signing joint communiqué that further develop and strengthen friendly relations or good neighbour cooperation treaties that increase mutual trust.⁶⁹ Both China and the Central Asian states have agreed to strengthen ties among governments and departments; to expand and deepen exchange and cooperation in politics, trade, security and culture; and to continually raise the level of good neighbour cooperation.

Security: Aside from border disputes, political instability within Central Asia and great power competition in the region challenge China's security. The Uyghur independence movement in southern Xin Jiang poses as a security threat for China. Groups in the Uyghur Independence Organization are suspected to have connections with extremist groups in Afghanistan such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan; these groups are deemed by the UN as terrorist organizations after 9/11. For China, potential threats come from US entry into the region, containing China's regional influence, and a change of stance in Central Asia states regarding Uyghur Independence, which would give rise to security challenges on China's western front.⁷⁰

China's main concern is to prevent the US from using Central Asia as a strategic base for the reduction of Chinese influence and the containment of China. Through the convenience of its attack on Iraq, the US developed close relations with Central Asia.⁷¹ Holding up the banner of the anti-terrorism, the US won the support of Central Asia in the war in Afghanistan through diplomacy and received the right to use Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan and Karshi-Khanabad Air Base in Uzbekistan. Washington proposed the new Central Asia strategy in 2003 and started to bring the region within its influence. The US does not recognize Russia's special interest and status in the region, making great efforts towards blocking Russian influence in the region. The US has gradually penetrated into politics, military and education in Central Asia, shaping its influence and control in the region.⁷²

⁶⁹ Valérie Niquet, "China and Central Asia", *China Perspectives*, 10 October 2010; (<http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/document1045.html>).

⁷⁰ Zhong Hua Ou Ya Ji Jin Hui (Foundation on International of Cross-strait Studies), *Di Yuan Zheng Zhi Yu Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Zhan Lue* (Geopolitics and China Diplomatic Strategy), pp. 207-208.

⁷¹ Lynn Pascoe, "U.S. Policy in Central Asia and the War on Terrorism", *The Heritage Foundation*, 30 August 2010; (<http://www.heritage.org/research/russiaandeurasia/wm140.cfm>).

⁷² Zhong Hua Ou Ya Ji Jin Hui (Foundation on International of Cross-strait Studies), *Di Yuan Zheng Zhi Yu Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Zhan Lue* (Geopolitics and China Diplomatic Strategy), pp. 194-197.

In other words, after the 9/11 attack, the US used anti-terrorism to enter Central Asia and its new strategy succeeded in gaining considerable influence in the region while forming a new challenge to the development of the SCO at the same time. In response to US incursion, the goal of China's security policy is to prevent Central Asia from falling under the US sphere of influence in order to avoid containment and challenges to its national interests. China is making an effort to improve relations with Central Asia and is actively engaged in activities of regional security and the maintenance of peace designed by Central Asia.

China opposes the three forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism and seeks regional stability and prosperity. China's core objective and long term security goal in Central Asia is the prevention of terrorist influences in East Turkistan. China makes an effort in search of stability on its western border because regional stability in Central Asia affects China's security and its Western Development Program. Shanghai Five is an effort by China towards the end of regional stability and security. The Almaty Declaration in the third meeting (July 1998), the Bishkek Declaration in the fourth meeting (August 1999) and the Dushanbe Declaration in the fifth meeting (July 2000) are the common achievement of discussions. Member states agree to work together to oppose different forms of separatism, terrorism and extremism, deepen cooperation in politics, diplomacy, trade and military, and consolidate regional security and stability.

China cooperates with Central Asia through the Shanghai Five mechanism to counter the three forces and search for security, stability and prosperity. After the establishment of the SCO in 2001, China and the five Central Asian states signed the "Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism," which deepened security cooperation among the member states. Soon after, China expressed its high acclaim for the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone completed by the five Central Asian states in 2006, as the treaty is deemed to be beneficial to the prevention of nuclear proliferation and the promotion of security and stability in the region. This is also to the advantage of China's security in the west, as a nuclear free zone prevents weapon maneuvering and deployment by other states in the region.

Economics: China's main economic interest in Central Asia is energy, its economic policy is aimed at securing and diversifying channels of energy supply for China's continual development. Since Central Asia is the bridge connecting other major oil producing zones such as the Persian Gulf and Siberia, if China strengthens its foundation in energy cooperation in the region, northward, China may gain access to oil in Siberia and southward, China may gain access to oil in the Persian Gulf. In addition, energy cooperation in Central Asia has the benefits of reducing the risk in sea transport and avoiding potential conflict with US controlled Pacific sea lane.⁷³ China's policy is carried out through the purchase of oil mines and security of routes for oil transport. While setting its

⁷³ Bai-Ku Wei, "Zhong Guo Yu Zhong Ya De Neng Yuan Guan Xi: He Zuo Yu Tiao Zhan" (China-Central Asia Energy Relations: Cooperation and Challenges), *The Journal of International Relations*, No. 25, p. 67.

main task as participation in the establishment of oil related infrastructures, construction of continental pipelines and diversification of resource channels through investment, China has accordingly adopted methods such as share mergers, land survey and development and laying of oil and natural gas pipelines.⁷⁴

On the other hand, cooperation through the SCO has the effect of reducing worries from Central Asian states against China and benefiting energy cooperation between China and Central Asia. Energy cooperation is a main category of economic cooperation for the SCO. Cooperation is not only aimed at production capacity, network efficiency and development of oil and natural gas fields, modernization of transport facilities and systems is also an important goal.⁷⁵ The energy structures of China and Central Asia are complementary. Energy export is the key to the economic transformation and growth of Central Asia while China needs energy import to sustain its rapid development, which makes the increase in energy exports to China in the interest of economic growth of both parties.⁷⁶

Central Asia is also the cooperation partner for Chinese corporations to realize the "walk out" strategy. Not only is Central Asia an important source of raw material for China's economic development, it is also a newly emerging market for China's inexpensive goods. Therefore, China seeks stability and development in Central Asia and hopes Central Asian states can establish a favourable environment for trade and investment. Through the policies of economic aid and loans, trade and investment expansion and economic cooperation, China hopes to gain a tighter grip on Central Asia.⁷⁷

Regarding economic aid and loans, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asia is in need of external currency and trade in order to maintain its sovereignty and resuscitate economic development. This gives China the chance to provide unconditional aid and favourable loans and develop bilateral trade with Central Asia. China's aid towards Central Asia takes the form of unconditional government financial aid and interest free loan.⁷⁸ In terms of expansion in trade and investment, bilateral trade greatly expanded from a mere \$547 million in 1994 to \$30.8 billion in 2008, which makes China Central Asia's main trading partner.⁷⁹ China has actively invested in Central Asia. By the end of

⁷⁴ Bai-Ku Wei, "Zhong Guo Yu Zhong Ya De Neng Yuan Guan Xi: He Zuo Yu Tiao Zhan", p. 58.

⁷⁵ "Shang hai he zuo zu zhi cheng yuan guo duo bian jin mao he zuo gang yao" (Outline of Multilateral Trade Cooperation Among Shanghai Cooperation Organization Members); (http://www.sco-ec.gov.cn/crweb/scoc/info/Article.jsp?a_no=568&col_no=50)

⁷⁶ "Dui kuo da shang hai he zuo zu zhi kuang jia nei neng yuan he zuo de ruo gan si kao" (Thoughts on the Expansion of Energy Cooperation under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Framework); (http://www.sco-ec.gov.cn/crweb/scoc/info/Article.jsp?a_no=50997&col_no=229).

⁷⁷ Niklas Swanstrom, "China and Central Asia: a New Great Game or Traditional Vassal Relations?", p. 579.

⁷⁸ Yu Zheng, *Zhong E Mei Zai Zhong Ya: He Zuo Yu Jin Zhen* (Cooperation and Competition: China, Russia and U.S. in Central Asia), pp. 192-193.

⁷⁹ National Bureau of Statistics of China, *China Statistical Yearbook-2009*, (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2009).

2007, China's total sum of investment in Central Asia was approximately \$860 million, including categories such as natural resources, mechanics, automobiles and agriculture.⁸⁰ Finally, regarding bilateral economic cooperation, including contracted projects, labour cooperation and design consultation, the figure increased from \$810 million US in 2007 to \$1.6 billion in 2008.⁸¹ It is clear that through energy and trade cooperation in Central Asia, China is able to play an important role in regional economic development and even guide fill in the power vacuum left behind by the collapse of USSR.⁸²

Multilateral Institutions: The Soviet Union's collapse left Central Asia as a power vacuum. Central Asia has gained a place in world energy supply with the discovery of rich oil and natural gas resources. Therefore, Central Asia became an arena for great power competition due to geostrategic and energy factors.⁸³ Meanwhile, collapse of the communist party has not only caused the wide spread of nationalism and religious ideology, it has also opened a window of opportunity for the three forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism. The three forces seriously affect political economy and challenge national security in the region.

Five years since the establishment of the Shanghai Five mechanism, great changes have occurred in international politics and economics that challenge both China and Central Asia. Central Asia needs multilateral institutions for the maintenance of self-security and economic development while China needs a stable neighbouring environment for continued development. With the gradual resolution of border issues and the continued development of regional security cooperation, the Shanghai Five mechanism has expanded into cooperation in politics, economics and culture.⁸⁴

However, the Shanghai Five mechanism lacks functioning mechanisms other than meetings, which is a setback for deepening multilateral cooperation, hinting at the call to expand into comprehensive cooperation. Uzbekistan and Mongolia have expressed their willingness to participate in the plan, which caused member states to recognize that the mechanism may be ill-suited for the needs of regional multilateral cooperation. In 2001, the six states of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan signed the Declaration of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the "Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism," which

⁸⁰ "Zhong guo yu zhong ya wu guo shi qi nian lai mao yi e zeng zhang jin wu shi bei" (China and Central Asia's Sum of Trade Increase Nearly 50 Times in 17 Years), 17 November 2009; (<http://finance.people.com.cn/BIG5/10395475.html>).

⁸¹ National Bureau of Statistics of China, *China Statistical Yearbook-2009*, (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2009).

⁸² Niklas Swanström, "China Conquers Central Asia through Trade", *Analyst*, Institute for Security and Development Policy, 17 October 2010; (http://www.cornellcaspien.com/pub/0104swanstrom_china.htm).

⁸³ Zhong Hua Ou Ya Ji Jin Hui (Foundation on International of Cross-strait Studies), *Di Yuan Zheng Zhi Yu Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Zhan Lue* (Geopolitics and China Diplomatic Strategy), p. 192.

⁸⁴ "Shang hai he zuo zu zhi cheng li xuan yan" (Declaration of the Creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization); (<http://www.sectsc.org/CN/2001.asp>).

officially established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The leaders agree to hold an annual summit to deepen the level of cooperation.

China's active participation in the establishment of multilateral institutions like the SCO shows that China is open to multilateralism and has gradually foregone the thinking that multilateralism is against national interests. China's leadership has established the first multilateral organization in the region that is named after a Chinese city --- Shanghai. The organization is established for the resolution of territorial disputes and border demilitarization in the region, with recent developments in cooperation in anti-terrorism and trade.

SCO demonstrates China's change to multilateralism in its regional strategy and the SCO is the first multilateral security organization in which China plays a leading role from the very beginning.⁸⁵ The SCO's initial goal was to resolve border disputes between China, Russia and Central Asia and establish confidence building measures among the states. The organization has grown in function since, especially in the institutionalization of anti-terrorism and the expansion of economic ties. The SCO is fast becoming one of the most important organizations in the world.⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

In response to the negative impacts of the "China threat," China has begun to promote the harmonious worldview and good neighbour policy. China actively pursues good neighbour and friendly relations with Central Asia and carries out respective foreign policy to establish a peaceful and friendly environment for economic development. China's actions are not only in the common interest of China and Central Asia, they provide wider consequence for peace and development in Asia. Through the SCO, China is able to generate common interest with neighbouring states and establish peace and stability in its frontier. Effective foreign policy and developments in trade have all helped to create a foundation for China's predominance in Central Asia.⁸⁷

Although China has carved out a favourable position in Central Asia, its regional influence still falls behind Russian and the US.⁸⁸ Central Asia's important strategic position and rich energy resources hint at potential great power competition that may challenge Chinese strategy and energy security. Moreover, the three forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism would continue to undermine China's national security and border stability. In response, China may adopt the following policies:

1. China should continue to strengthen and deepen bilateral relations and

⁸⁵ Jianwei Wang, "China and SCO: Towards a New Type of Interstate Relation," in Guoguang Wu & Helen Lansdowne (Ed.), *China Turns to Multilateralism: Foreign Policy and Regional Security*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 104.

⁸⁶ Stuart Harris, "China's Regional Policies: How Much Hegemony?", p. 488.

⁸⁷ Niklas Swanstrom, "China and Central Asia: a New Great Game or Traditional Vassal Relations?", pp. 569-584; Kevin Sheives, "China Turns West: Beijing's Contemporary Strategy Toward Central Asia", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 2, 2006, pp. 205-224.

⁸⁸ Bates Gill & Matthew Oresman, *China's New Journey to the West: China's Emergence in Central Asia and Implications for U.S. Interests*, p.VI.

increase mutual political trust for cooperation in the future.

2. China should strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Central Asia (for example, increasing channels for dialogue and negotiation on important issues) and continue to strengthen influences in Chinese culture, diplomacy and trade.

3. China should continue to dilute the three forces and diversify channels for energy sources through the SCO for the maintenance of its security interests.

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