

FEATURE

Impact of the Tradition of Solidarity and Unity upon Current Chinese Foreign Policy

By Tao Jiyi [鮑季怡]

Up to the present, few American and Chinese scholars have examined current Chinese foreign policy from a traditional Chinese cultural perspective. In this article, I explore current Chinese foreign policy from the standpoint of the tradition of solidarity and unity [tuanjie tongyi 團結統一] in Chinese history and culture.

THE TRADITION OF SOLIDARITY AND UNITY IN CHINESE HISTORY AND CULTURE

In a book entitled, “The World to 1500: A Global History”, Leften S. Stavrianos, a contemporary American historian, suggested that the two important characteristics of Chinese civilization were unity and the continuity. [1] Generally speaking, he was right.

China is a country with 5000 years of civilization. The Chinese nation is a big family composed of 56 nationalities. As early as “ the Three Dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou ” [xia shang zhou san dai 夏商周] (from the 21th century BC to 256 BC), people of these nationalities began to establish close-knit links and joined hands in developing the vast land of the country. China became a vast unified country in the Qin and Han [馬] Dynasties. After unification, the measures of the imperial governments and the age-old Chinese culture forged a strong foundation for future ethnic harmony and national unity. Despite occasional political divisions, ethnic harmony and national unity had remained deep-rooted in ancient history of the Chinese nation. Solidarity and unity were inscribed in the hearts of the Chinese people as part of their national identity.

In modern times, the corruption of the imperial Qing government and incursion of imperialist foreign powers weakened China. Against this background, people of all ethnic groups in China united to lift themselves from their historical plight under semi-colonial rule. Dr. Sun Yatsen [孫逸仙] (1866-1925), China’s forerunner in the democratic revolution, was the first to put forward the slogan of “rejuvenation of China.” He led the Revolution of 1911 to overthrow the autocratic monarchy in China. After one hundred years’ struggle, China has now stood up again as a giant.

The founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 marked an unprecedented unity event of the Chinese nation. A new type of relationship of equality, solidarity and mutual assistance among all these nationalities was established. People of all these nationalities enjoy rights provided for by the law. In places where there is a high concentration of ethnic minorities, regional autonomy is in practice. All ethnic groups are free to use and develop their own spoken and written languages as well as to keep and reform their own customs and habits. The process towards development and prosperity of all ethnic groups is constantly being accelerated. All these have laid a solid political foundation for consolidated national unity.

THE TRADITION OF SOLIDARITY AND UNITY ON CURRENT CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

Before 1981, especially in the period of “the Great Cultural Revolution” [wen ge 文革] (1966-1976), because of its left-leaning mistakes, the Communist Party of China regarded the class struggle as the guiding

principle and totally repudiated traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, traditional Chinese culture could not have any impact upon the CCP policy including its diplomacy. Since 1981, the CCP has restored things back to normal and put forward the fundamental guiding principle of shifting the focus of all party work to the four modernizations. It has re-evaluated traditional Chinese culture with a realistic attitude and recognized the great enduring value of traditional Chinese culture in China's national psyche. As a result, the CCP has inherited and developed these historical cultural values according to features of the modern era. That is why traditional Chinese culture of solidarity and unity can have an impact upon the CCP policies including foreign affairs.

The emphasis of solidarity and unity has apparently played a part in current Chinese foreign policy. In his Harvard speech entitled "Enhance Mutual Understanding And Build Stronger Ties of Friendship And Cooperation" on November 1, 1997, Jiang Zemin [江泽民], then President of the People's Republic of China, declared that traditional Chinese culture, including "the tradition of solidarity and unity", had exerted a profound impact on the values of the Chinese people and current China's road of development including its foreign policy.[2] When he visited Argentina on November 11, 2004, Hu Jintao [胡锦涛], current President of the PRC, also said that in the prolonged course of its history, people of all Chinese nationalities always developed "the spirit of solidarity and unity" and that China advocates "maintaining the world peace and promoting the common development of the mankind," and "strengthening its solidarity and cooperation with numerous developing countries." [3] It is quite evident that the tradition of solidarity and unity has a special place in current Chinese statements of foreign policies.

The value of solidarity and unity has exerted such effects on current Chinese foreign policy, because of the following reasons: since 1978, Chinese leaders have repeatedly emphasized the need to shift China's priority from "revolution" to "modernization." Deng Xiaoping's [邓小平] idea was that by the middle of the 21st century, China should have basically realized modernization. [4] Therefore, China needs urgently a long-term international environment of peace and stability to achieve this goal. At the same time, the Chinese nation with a tradition of solidarity and unity can readily help the current Chinese government to pursue a foreign policy to reach out to other countries.

Firstly, one fundamental goal of Chinese foreign policy is to defend China's independence, state sovereignty and territorial integrity. [5] Especially, the Chinese government has been working to strengthen ethnic solidarity and to achieve national reunification. It stresses that unlike Hong Kong and Macao, Taiwan is an issue left over from the struggle between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang. Its resolution is an internal affair of China and should be worked out by the Chinese people on both sides of the Straits. The basic policy of the Chinese government for the settlement of the Taiwan question is "peaceful reunification based on one country, two systems." The Chinese government has already made a solemn appeal to the other side of the Straits that the two sides hold negotiations and conclude an agreement on officially ending the state of hostility in accordance with the principle that there is only one China. On that basis, the two sides can undertake jointly to maintain China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and formulate plans for future development of cross-straits relations. [6]

Secondly, China would like to establish and develop relations of friendship and

cooperation with all the countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence, namely, mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. [7]

a. To actively develop good-neighborly relations with the surrounding countries is an important component of China's foreign policy. China has set up or resumed normal relations with all the surrounding countries and settled the questions left over by history with the overwhelming majority of the neighboring countries.

b. To strengthen its solidarity and cooperation with the developing countries is the basic standpoint of China's foreign policy. China shares common historical experiences with the developing countries and is confronted with the same goal of safeguarding national independence and developing the economy.

c. China attaches great importance to improving and developing relations with the developed countries. It stands for transcending differences in social systems and ideology in handling state to state relations. Mutual respect, seek common ground while putting aside differences and expand mutually beneficial cooperation. As regards the divergences between states, it should be settled properly on the basis of equality and mutual respect through dialogue rather than confrontation.

Thirdly, China carries out an opening-up policy. It is conducting trade, economic and technical cooperation, scientific and cultural exchanges with all countries of the world on the basis of the principle of equality and mutual benefit to promote prosperity, thus creating a brand-new situation in the Chinese history.

Lastly, together with the international community, China stands ready to strengthen its cooperation in tackling with the global issues confronting human development such as environment deterioration, depletion of natural resources, poverty and unemployment, population growth, spread of diseases, drug abuses and rampancy of international crimes. Especially, as a country that carries considerable weight in the world and as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China and the rest of the world will step up their cooperation and exchanges in such areas as preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, combating international terrorism and prohibiting illegal immigration.

CONCLUSION

This paper seeks to explore connections between the tradition of solidarity and unity and current Chinese foreign policy. From the analyses, we can find that the above-mentioned Chinese foreign policy principles are a reflection of the tradition of solidarity and unity in Chinese culture, and that current Chinese foreign policy has been influenced by the tradition of solidarity and unity to a great degree.

The world has entered the new century and is filled with hope. China will continue to develop the tradition of solidarity and unity in the course of its development. In its foreign policy, China will stick to an independent foreign policy of peace, develop and enhance its relations of friendship and cooperation with all countries, make its due contributions to safeguard world peace, and promote the common well-being of mankind.

Notes:

[1] Leften S. Stavrianos, ed., *The World to 1500: A Global History*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970. Chapter Ten: Chinese Civilization. Or <http://www.mlcool.com/info/if003199.htm> (Access: 05/01/2005)

[2] Jiang Zemin [江泽民], “ President Jiang Zemin’s Speech at Harvard University.” <http://www.china->

embassy.org/eng/zmgx/zysj/jzxfm/t36252.htm (Access: 04/30/2005)

[3] Hu Jintao [胡锦涛], “ Strengthening Friendly Cooperation and Promoting the Common Development.”

<http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/1024/2997241.html> (Access: 04/30/2005)

[4] Quansheng Zhao. Chinese Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era. Guoli Liu, ed., Chinese Foreign Policy in Transition. New York: Aldine De Gruyter, Inc., 2004. PP295-297.

[5] China’s Independent Foreign Policy of Peace.

<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cese/eng/zgwj/jbzc/t100416.htm> (Access: 04/29/2005)

[6] Jiang Zemin [江泽民]. Address by President Jiang Zemin at Luncheon by the America-China Society and Five Other Organization on October 30, 1997. Jiang Zemin. Strive to Build A Constructive Strategic Partnership Between China and the United States [nuli jianli zhongmei jianshexing de huoban guanxi]. 努力建设中美战略伙伴关系. Beijing [北京]: World Affairs Press [shijie zhishi chubanshe 世界知识出版社], 1998. P44.

[7] Deng Xiaoping [邓小平]. Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping [deng xiaoping wenxuan 邓小平文选]. The third Volume. Beijing [北京]: People’s Publishing House [renmin chubanshe 人民出版社], 2002. P353.

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