

# Chinese Foreign Policy

WHAT ARE THE MAIN TENETS OF CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY?

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## Background

- China often characterizes its foreign policy and national security goals in terms of a series of principles and slogans.
- Since the 1980s under Deng Xiaoping, Beijing has said it pursues an “independent foreign policy of peace” under which China’s “fundamental” foreign policy goals are
  - “to preserve China’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity” and
  - “to create a favorable international environment or China’s reform and opening up and modernization.”
- China has also formally introduced the concept of a “harmonious world” into its official lexicon to complement its commitment to a “peaceful rise” and a “harmonious society” at home (see box). To this end, China has declared that it will “hold high the banner of peace, development, and cooperation” and “pursue an independent foreign policy of peace” to achieve the desired “win-win” outcomes in its foreign relations.
- China’s concern over its “territorial integrity” is most associated with (re)assumption of sovereign control over Taiwan and continued control over the restive western autonomous regions of Xinjiang and Tibet.
- As communism declined as a credible ideology, the measure of the Chinese Communist Party’s fitness to lead—and arguably its survival—became based on its ability to enhance national prosperity, restore China’s prestige and stature as a great power, and unify the nation.

## Current Situation

- China has placed particular emphasis on the development of “good neighborly” relations and “partnership” with border countries in order to prevent external threats from triggering internal instability. China has

emphasized nonmilitary aspects of its comprehensive national power, adopting a three-pronged approach of

- setting aside areas of disagreement with neighboring states,
  - focusing on confidence-building measures to promote ties, and
  - engaging in economic integration and multilateral cooperation to address shared concerns.
- China has sought to isolate Taiwan in the international community, including drawing official recognition from the dwindling number of African, Latin American, and Oceanic nations that have official diplomatic relations with the “Republic of China on Taiwan.” Additionally, China has sought to limit Taiwan’s participation in international organizations.
  - China’s urgent need to acquire natural resources for its economic development, including but not limited to energy (oil and natural gas), has led Beijing to reach out increasingly to nations with resources available for export.
  - China’s “energy diplomacy” has led to close relationships with unsavory regimes and foreign aid practices that lack transparency, which have raised questions about China’s role as a responsible international actor. The desire to secure resources has also generated friction with its neighbors over energy reserves in the East and South China Seas.

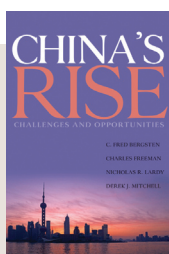
## Implications

- China’s essentially defensive posture and keen desire for a peaceful international environment to allow focus on its domestic challenges provide hope for cooperation with the United States and others to sustain regional stability. An example of such successful cooperation is China’s key role in the Six Party Talks.

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- Questions remain about future Chinese foreign policy, however, particularly as China becomes stronger. For instance, how will overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea, East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and along its western border with India be resolved? How will China apply its growing political and economic power should its domestic situation falter?
- China has recently demonstrated occasional if hesitant willingness to consent to UN resolutions targeting such countries as North Korea and Sudan. However, China's adherence to the principle of "noninterference" in other countries' internal affairs is unlikely to evolve quickly.
- China's record of domestic human rights abuses and its handling of Tibet, Taiwan, and other sovereignty issues continue to be a stumbling block in its foreign relations, particularly with the United States and European countries.
- Several key transnational twenty-first century challenges will require solutions that closely involve China, making clear the benefits of stable Chinese relations and engagement with the United States and the international community.

Term	Definition	Implications
Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity;</li> <li>▪ Mutual nonaggression;</li> <li>▪ Noninterference;</li> <li>▪ Equality and mutual benefit;</li> <li>▪ Peaceful coexistence"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good neighborly relations—preventing external instabilities from "spilling over" to fuel internal frictions.</li> <li>▪ Noninterference in internal affairs, most notably Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang.</li> </ul>
New Security Concept	<p>Unveiled in 1997 to reflect China's aspiration for a new post-Cold War international security order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence;</li> <li>▪ Emphasis on mutually beneficial economic cooperation among states;</li> <li>▪ Pursuit of confidence-building measures amongst states</li> <li>▪ Establishment of bilateral "strategic partnerships" that are not directed at any third country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Marks new proactive Chinese approach to international affairs.</li> <li>▪ Offers alternative vision of international order, particularly in relation to the U.S. alliance-based security structure in East Asia.</li> </ul>
Peaceful Rise/Peaceful Development	Campaign to reassure the international community, particularly neighboring countries, that China's future is benign and that its rise will not be a zero-sum game.	
Period of Strategic Opportunity	The next 20 years was conceived in 2002 as a period during which China's relations with its periphery and with major powers such as the United States are expected to remain essentially stable to allow the PRC to focus its attention on "building a well-off society" at home.	
Harmonious World	First publicly introduced by Hu Jintao at the World Summit and 60th General Assembly of the United Nations in 2005. Although the exact meaning and policy implications of "harmonious world" are undefined, the slogan is meant to demonstrate China's commitment to global peace and stability and to the goal of a more just and equitable international system.	



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:  
 SEE CHAPTER 10: "CHINA AND THE WORLD" IN *CHINA'S RISE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES* BY C. FRED BERGSTEN, CHARLES FREEMAN, NICHOLAS LARDY, DEREK J. MITCHELL & CHAPTER 5: "CHINA'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY: PARTNER OR RIVAL?" IN *CHINA: THE BALANCE SHEET: WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS TO KNOW NOW ABOUT THE EMERGING SUPERPOWER* BY C. FRED BERGSTEN, BATES GILL, NICHOLAS LARDY, DEREK J. MITCHELL