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China's Changing Approach to Strategy and Negotiations: Past And Present

Ashok Kapur

Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi- 110 001

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Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road
New Delhi- 110 001, India
Tel. +91-11-23317242
Fax: +91-11-23322710
www.icwa.in

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Abstract

China's negotiating experiences with the non-Chinese world – Britain in the 1800s, Korea in the early 50s, Indo-China in mid 50s, USA in the mid 40s and the 70s, and India, from 1949 to the present day- shows the primacy of key strategic principles which are embedded in China's view of the world and its position in it, and its view of her rivals' position in a geopolitical context. China's approach shows a continuous attention to the external environment but its diplomatic style varies. It adopted the position of the Middle Kingdom when it could govern unaided. It was attentive about external threats when it came in contact with Russian, British and Tibetan power in the 19th century and it asserted its rules of discourse with the barbarians in a vague and inconclusive manner in which China's style was dictated by a position of weakness and imperial destiny. China's view was that diplomatic discourse

could be separated from trade links. The Korean War was a transformative phase for China because Soviet, Chinese and American diplomatic/military interactions and China's ability to stalemate American power gave it confidence, and China's diplomatic style in the negotiations showed signs of rudeness and arrogance. But lessons were learnt and China pursued a charming diplomacy in the Indo-China crisis in the 1950s and in the Bandung conference, where its assessment of international politics led it to take an independent diplomatic stance. One observes a slow, albeit calculated, change in style and orientation while comparing China's pre-1949 view of diplomacy to the Mao-Zhou approach and the Deng and post-Deng approach. However, the non-Chinese world has provided the catalyst of change in China's diplomatic orientation. Beijing changes in response to external pressures and the cascading effect of these on internal politics is important. This is a durable pattern in contemporary China's diplomacy because it can no longer pursue its strategic interests unaided.

Introduction

A review of China's negotiating experiences with the non-Chinese world reveals the primacy of key strategic principles but they are in a state of flux (*shi* in Chinese) and they face an internal review by Chinese practitioners as their international experiences and circumstances change. The negotiating experiences have taken shape since the 1800s and they show a gradual rise in Chinese diplomatic theory, incremental growth of intra-elite debates and dilemmas about social (domestic) and diplomatic (external) questions.

In a nutshell, China's diplomatic development has progressed and its diplomatic, economic and military capacities have increased along with the rise of a globalising outlook. There is a saying that time moves in a linear fashion but governments are prone to act in ways which produce a boomerang effect. This is the law of unintended consequences. Errors in decision-making stem from the use of mistaken concepts or a faulty pattern of thought or action which do not serve the long term interests of the country or form the development of relationships (friendships or enmities/rivalries) which cannot be muted or deflected and which form entangling relationships that have domestic and international costs. Here the risk/reward ratios are merit assessment based on realised gains and projected losses.

A study of the history and the pattern of development of China's diplomatic theory is required to show (a) contemporary

China's approach to diplomacy and negotiations is grounded in pre-1949 thinking and practices, and (b) sustained external pressures mounted by Japan, Russia and Western powers has transformed China's approach to international trade, diplomacy and the position of China in the world system. The first element suggests that China has the strategic initiative to move others; the second element suggests that there is interaction between (a) and (b) and inputs and pressures from the non-Chinese world are now a part of China's diplomatic discourse, within China and in relation to the non-Chinese world. This has affected China's approach to diplomacy. Pre-1949 and Communist China have developed attitudes and policies which may be characterised in three ways: (a) where elusive bargaining occurs; (b) where tacit bargaining and manoeuvering occurs; and (c) where bargaining based on convergent interests occurs. Particular attention must be given to (b) because China's diplomatic and military history has not settled on a fixed pattern of relationships with friends and enemies and the risk/reward ratios are in flux because China's internal and international environment is in flux. In my view, so far (b) has produced more activity (a) and there is limited activity under (c).

The China Factor has Grown in Importance in World History along with the Growth of Diplomatic Challenges

Three patterns of development shaped the China story during this period. First, China was in play in the actions of the Chinese

traders and Western governments. This became a commercial and diplomatic object of attention and pressure. Second, in the ensuing internal debate among Chinese practitioners about the methods required to deal with the foreign barbarians, questions about the role of diplomacy, alliances and military power gained ground. Third, with the Communist victory and the ascendency of Maoist thought, diplomacy war and psychological warfare emerged in Chinese political thought as key elements of an integrated strategy. War and peace were not opposites in Maoist thinking, they were essential elements to secure ongoing manoeuvers. This theory did not foresee a point of equilibrium in China's thinking but a process of ongoing manoeuver that sought psychological advantage for China. Thereafter, from 1949 through the 1970s, China adopted a strategy of controlled conflict-making and escalation to teach the enemy a lesson but significantly to establish red lines to define Chinese core interests and to test the enemy's red lines. This strategy was meant to learn from practical diplomatic-military experiences rather than from theory and political rhetoric. A later section examines the 1949-1970s strategy and the role of negotiations.

China's Diplomatic Development has Progressed through Several Stages

Pre-19th century China did not see the need for diplomacy or negotiations between China- the universal centre- and on

the other hand, the Barbarians who the Chinese thought to be culturally inferior . These barbarians could be civilised by bringing them into contact with superior Chinese culture and by forming tributary relationships. The T'ang empire (618-907 AD), which colonised all of China except Yunnan, set the geographical limits to the north which came to be represented by the Great Wall of China , but there was no limits against expansion to the South (which is the current Southeast and South Asia). The rulers did not see any value in alliances or balance of power diplomacy. There was no need of friends when China was strong and if it was weak then allies were 'false friends'[1]

The 19th century was important because it exposed China to the pressures of Japan, Russia and the West. It forced Chinese practitioners to acknowledge these pressures and to find ways to deal with them. In doing so it revealed methods of action and patterns of thought which projected diplomacy and foreign policy as a temporary phenomenon, alliances as temporary and saw no need to practice a Western style balance of power policy. Instead Chinese practitioners relied on traditional methods to set baits for the barbarians, make temporary concessions, and to play on the greed and rivalries among barbarians. China's approach differed from the standard Anglo-Saxon approach. Western strategy, generally speaking, relies on three components: sufficient force must be visible to create a fear of punishment; a craft in the strategy (i.e. some mystery, some uncertainty, some promise of gain), something

to tempt the other side; and a line of action or manoeuver vis-à-vis the opposition; and there must be sincerity vis-à-vis others. Under these conditions enemy behaviour could be changed. At this time China neither sought war with stronger external enemies nor alliances with them. It sought instead to get outer or far off barbarians who did not have territorial designs against China (i.e. the US and England compared to Japan and Russia) to engage the inner barbarians who sought territorial gain, were in close geographical proximity to China and whose policy affected China's core interests and prestige. Several subtle formulations informed China's approach, which was formed in the 19th century and applied in the 20th century as well. Among the formulae was a theory of the five baits, value of a protracted campaign, the belief that warring barbarians were advantageous to China because they cancelled out each other. Victory was sought by gaining psychological advantage and without direct conflict and generally through pursuit of a policy of manoeuvre rather than a quest for permanent or fixed alignments. (The baits were meant to corrupt the enemy through gifts, entertainment, women and imperial reception for those who surrendered to China's will.) The core premise was an old one: China was the Middle Kingdom, the central country, and the aim of policy was to undermine enemy morale and place it in an unfavourable psychological position. Deception and manipulation was the accepted diplomatic norm for China.[2]

However, this policy of temporary accommodation and stimulation of the barbarians' rivalries did not settle foreign

pressures against China territorially and against her view of the world and her position in it. The lure of territorial and commercial aggrandisement was central to the colonial policies of the major powers in the 19th century, but for our analysis the existence of such threats stimulated a significant, albeit intra-elite, debate amongst Chinese practitioners. The parameters of this debate were set in the mid-1800s. However, even as Mao Tze Tung and fellow Communists advanced the debate by articulating the importance of revolutionary violence, the proper role of diplomacy, military force and core interests remains unsettled in the thinking and practices of China's leaders post-Mao, post-Deng Xiaoping and post-Hu Jinto. It is unlikely that the selection of new leaders in 2012 will settle this debate under foreseeable circumstances. A study of China's internal debate (s) is a useful exercise because on one hand they reveal the existence of dilemmas and recurring pressures which require policy development, and on the other hand they set up benchmarks, i.e. points of resistance, to change and areas where change is possible or likely. This is the context or the framework to evaluate the successes and failures of Chinese diplomacy since 1949 and the growth of situations and issues that have led Chinese practitioners to adopt negotiating positions, which may be labelled as 'elusive', 'tacit manoeuvers and bargaining' or 'convergent negotiations', that produce limited agreement. In my view, the development of China's diplomatic thought is still a work in progress since the mid-1800s.

Communist China's post-1949 strategy revealed major changes from the pre-1949 approaches. The debate of the mid-1800s was settled in favour of Mao's view that power comes from the barrel of the gun. This led China to shift from her traditional position as the central country that had prestige based on cultural superiority to a new view and confidence that it was the centre of a revolutionary world (1949-1960s). From the 1970s onwards two further shifts occurred. The revolutionary theme and 'power through armed struggle' was abandoned in favour of power through economic and military modernisation and by a posture that China was a normal country. It joined the United Nations and sought a peaceful rise and participation as a member of the world community.

Post-1970s the Chinese approach to military and diplomatic strategy requires careful scrutiny because on one hand, clearly a transformation in its political rhetoric and diplomatic style occurred and China's presence in regional and international diplomatic, military and economic affairs grew in a phenomenal way, but on the other hand it was unclear if this was the result of compelling pressures in the international environment or because of China's rising economic and military strength and its determination to safeguard its core territories and other interests created opportunities and incentives to act forcefully, and/or if the changes were a result of adoption of radical new attitudes to make China a big player in the Asian and global strategic and economic game. In the Korean war, it shed its

old preference for indirect conflict and getting one barbarian power to fight and neutralise the other (In the Korean conflict Stalin refused to fight USA and let China do this work). By its participation in the Korean war and the Sino-Indian conflict, by her threats to liberate Taiwan by force if necessary, and by her shelling of Quemoy and Matsu in the 1950s, China projected the utility of war in select circumstances in relation to foreign threats. These actions laid the basis for the formation of a USA-China diplomatic contact in Warsaw and later in the formation of a USA-China-Russia strategic triangle which reached its height in the 1971-72 agreements between China and USA.[3] These events raise two important questions. Even though the China factor has grown in importance in Asian strategic affairs, is China still the central country as is traditionally believed? Events in the 1950s and the 1960s and in the case of the brief conflict with Vietnam in 1979 provide two different answers. The first one is that China remains the central country in her southern zone that extends from Afghanistan to the South China seas including the Indian Ocean. China's push to her southern zone has two pedigrees. First, geopolitics and imperial history points to the attention given to the southern zone and the pressure of Russian, Tibetan and British India policies. The pre-1949 attitudes were translated into the advancement of China's military and political presence in the Tibet and Xinjiang areas and the buildup of her military infrastructure in the Himalayan zone. The second reason is that China and the USA see value in partnering with each other to stabilise

the southern zone and in this regard even prior to the unstable situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Nixon, Clinton and Obama presidencies have recognised China's interests and rights in the Indian subcontinent. Pre-1949 Chinese rulers set limits to northern expansion but none for southern expansion and the south has been the strategic direction of China's strategic (military and economic) expansion continuously since 1949, starting with the takeover of Tibet, consolidation of her position in Xinjiang, removal of Soviet Union's legal rights and commercial presence in Xinjiang, followed by the extension of China's presence in the Himalayan zone and in South Asia and the Indian Ocean area. Here China's manoeuvrability and psychological advantage has increased dramatically. These gains are consistent with traditional, pre-1949 and post-1949 Maoist aims. The second answer, however, relates to China's position in Far Eastern international relations. Maoist China stalemated superior American forces in the Korean war, rolled back Soviet territorial gains in Manchuria and Xinjiang, rejected Soviet ideological and diplomatic leadership by the 1960s, humiliated India, a friend of both the Soviet Union and the USA, and carried on a campaign against Japanese militarism and American rearmament of Japan and South Korea. But Japan, Taiwan and South Korea did not disarm, the military ties between the USA and her Asian allies grew strong and credible, and in a region bristling with military modernisation and formal or semi-formal alliances or alignments, China is an important country but not the central country in Pacific, South

East Asian and Indian Ocean affairs. Now it is repeatedly reminded about its obligation to work as a normal international stakeholder as a member of the U.N. Was Mao right to argue that U.N. membership would decrease China's international manoeuverability? In secret instructions to the Chinese army on April 25, 1961, Beijing argued: 'If our country joins the United Nations, we cannot have a majority in voting ; formally the difficult situation may be moderated to some extent, but actually the struggle that arises will be more violent and we shall lose our present freedom of action'.[4] Pre-1949 China believed in temporary concessions to Western traders and governments to avoid pressure and encirclement and it played the far away barbarian to check the barbarian at the gate. It avoided alliances and the balance of power policy. In 2012, it is face to face with non-Chinese alliances and alignments across the northern and southern parts of Asia and these are based on a growing suspicion of a rising China. As a result, it sees itself involved in a balance of power diplomacy that started with the Kissinger/Nixon visits to China and by 2012 had broadened to include Japan, Australia and Southeast Asian nations (particularly Philippines and India). Even if these countries do not intend at the moment to mount a joint encirclement campaign against China or declare publicly that it is an enemy state, the participation of these countries in the formation of alignments around China triggers fears of isolation and encirclement in China's traditional thought process.

Whereas China's phenomenal economic and military rise has increased her footprint in world politics, the rise of alignments that are meant to engage China may also serve to check her adventurist impulses in, say, the South China seas.

In summary, Communist Chinese diplomacy has adjusted itself to changing regional and international circumstances. It acts as the central country in the affairs of its southern zone (the Himalayan area and South Asia) and this corresponds to her traditional view, that limits to southward expansion do not exist. Here opportunities to enlarge her footprint in political, diplomatic and military affairs are numerous because of the three major zones in Asia. In 1945, USSR was firmly in control of one zone, and China gained control of the second zone. The retreat of European empires from the Indian subcontinent and the Southeast Asia left the southern zone in a power vacuum which India could not control in 1947. But the second adjustment lies in the Far Eastern area where China's ability to function as the central country is inhibited by the policies of her neighbours and the US. As early as 1961, China's practitioners recognised the implication of diffusion of power in the world even as China's importance had grown. In the secret instructions noted earlier it said: 'Without the participation of China none of the important problems of the world can be solved. From other considerations, however, we have also seen, even with the participation of China, the world problems cannot depend on only a few powers for a thorough solution…'[5]. This is an

apt characterisation of the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean scene with a proliferation of big and medium powers with competing interests and growing economic, military and diplomatic capacities and skills to manoeuvre in a world of power diffusion. The new situation is a far cry from Beijing's view of the world in 1961. Informed by their view of history from their experiences with Western and Japanese pressures and interventions in the 1800s, Mao Tze-tung and Chou Enlai, two prime exponents of China's world views, placed China as a victim of foreign imperialism and as a fighter against colonialism and imperialism. This was a constant theme in China's diplomatic discourse since the 1800s and as late as the 1960s. The 'Bulletin of Activities' (1961) records the 'Secret Instructions to the Chinese Army, April 25, 1961' in part as follows: 'We must unite the Socialist camp, support actively the struggle of the people of the colonies and semicolonies, try to establish friendly relations with all countries, isolate the bloc including Nehru in India and Tito in Yugoslavia and oppose American imperialism'.[6]

The discussion indicates that China's post-1949 diplomatic and military experiences with the non-Chinese world have undermined her pre-1949 patterns of thought and action. Some of these are unworkable and some required modifications. I summarise below the strategic ideas in traditional Chinese thought which are still operative compared to ideas which are unworkable and ideas which have required modification.

The Permanent Importance of Manoeuvrability in China's Foreign Relations

The quest for some room to manoeuvre has been constant in Chinese diplomatic and military theory and practice. In 1950, China signed a friendship treaty with Stalin, an event which was widely regarded as a manoeuvre towards Russia and against the West but this manoeuvre should be seen as a diplomatic one, and not an ideological one. Earlier, before the victory of China's communists, Mao made an overture to Washington to seek friendly relations. He made two requests for American support, in 1944-46 and again in 1949.[7] Both were rebuffed and then Mao turned to Stalin for support. So the first manoeuvre was towards Washington and the second was towards Moscow. But the Moscow manoeuvre was a temporary one and the Sino-Soviet split revealed the contention in terms of ideology, military and diplomatic issues. Before the split with Moscow, China learnt to deal with triangular diplomacy in the Korean war. It confronted America's superior military power with nominal Soviet support and manipulation. Thereafter, it developed a stance to confront both superpowers and to stake out a claim as the true leader of the Socialist camp. For the duration of the 1960s and the 1970s it sought to manoeuvre itself as a major player in the third world and an opponent of imperialism of both superpowers. Forgetting ideology and stressing the primacy of strategic interests and tactical considerations, it built diplomatic and military ties with Pakistan and had a brief war with India

to gain military and psychological advantage. In this case, it manoeuvred against its earlier use of India to build its case for peaceful coexistence in the third world. It also signed border agreements with Nepal, Pakistan, and Burma (acknowledging the validity of the McMahon Line which it refused to accept as a basis of negotiations with India). By these manoeuvres, it had positioned itself against the two superpowers, staked a claim as the true leader of the Socialist camp vis-à-vis European Communist parties, positioned itself as a peace loving country in the third world, and positioned itself as a follower of a policy of independence by the development of both a conventional and a nuclear armament. The early 1970s produced another set of major manoeuvres. China abandoned its revolutionary theory and armed struggle rhetoric. It built a strategic link with the US because the two had a convergent interest against the Soviet Union and the two needed each other as they could not pursue their interests unaided. It also accepted the value of the US-Japan military links and recognised Nixon's point that the US pact with Japan checked Japanese militarism and without this relationship a neutral Japan would be open to Soviet influence. Having railed for years against Japanese militarism as a national threat the shift towards Nixon's view represented a major change in leadership thinking. Furthermore, by accepting a delay in the recovery of Taiwan it implicitly accepted the value of America's permanent presence in the region. Here, China was acting like a practitioner in the classical European balance of power tradition in Far Eastern international relations but

it is ironic that the Western powers had succeeded in baiting China's Communist leaders to adapt modern diplomatic thinking which was the antithesis to China's belief that it could bait foreigners.

China's diplomatic ideas which became outdated China's diplomatic and military journey, however, shows that some ideas require modification. China's Middle Kingdom theory is still relevant but it is unclear if it is a core element in the current Chinese thought process and the extent to which it determines China's action is also unclear. The Chinese word for China today is still *Chung Kuo* or the 'Middle Kingdom'; 'China', the term used in official and academic discourse, is a non-Chinese construct. Dealing with barbarians has an official history. China's foreign ministry was established in 1861 and replaced the 'Office of Barbarian Affairs' also known as the 'Office for the General Management of the Affairs of All Nations'. A question for the official and academic practitioner is whether the establishment of the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the retention of the Middle Kingdom name in Chinese- for the Chinese population- implies merely a cosmetic institutional change without a change in the traditional attitude. As a member of the United Nations and international diplomatic system, China follows the norm of sovereignty and legal equality among nations but the Middle Kingdom characterisation reveals a commitment to cultural and possibly racial superiority. In a world of competing major and minor powers, the Middle

Kingdom complex is not likely to function as an effective principle in a world that is dominated by nationalism. Seasoned practitioners from different parts of the world are unlikely to be impressed with the Middle Kingdom theory although a few weak states may be tempted to accept China's baits. Pre-1949, China had a theory about the use of the 'five baits' to corrupt foreign officials. Kissinger notes these.[8] But the excessive use of these baits can also backfire in the modern world of instant communication and social media. Africannations have begun to criticise the commercial practices of Chinese companies and their state sponsors and there is open talk about 'Chinese colonialism'. China's relations with Myanmar are revealing in this regard. Since the early 1980s, Myanmar was regarded as a client state of China because of the isolation of the military government, the close proximity of Myanmar to Yunnan, and China's need to build commercial and military links to serve her energy needs through Myanmar. But Myanmar has shown that it is not a client state, her nationalism and political consciousness is a robust feature of Myanmarese political and cultural life, and her recent action to suspend a major irrigation project that was being built with China's aid shows a willingness to push back China's growing influence in the region. Another set of traditional ideas appear unworkable under modern conditions assuming that China's neighbours are on guard in safeguarding their military and diplomatic fronts and they understand the difference between the action and the talk agendas of China. Ideas that wars between barbarians are auspicious for China,

that formation of enemy coalitions against China can and should be prevented and that China should seek to develop situations of protracted conflict and to gain psychological advantage by wearing down the enemy require re-thinking by China's official and academic practitioners.

Still, subtle changes in China's approach to strategy and diplomacy may be noted but the points of change ought to be compared with the points of continuity. This change is represented by the rhetorical stress on China's peaceful rise but a seasoned observer will note a continuity as well. The new stance does not replace Mao's theory of the use of force to signal the existence of core interests and to convey the existence of China's red lines, and to use crises to discover the enemy's red lines. Mao called this 'learning by experience'. Participation in a military crisis can lead to war as happened in the Korean, Indian and Vietnam Wars, but it can also lead to crisis management and testing the intentions of the enemy as was the case in the shelling and military buildup in relation to Quemoy, Matsu and Taiwan since the 1950s. Diplomacy becomes an important tool for the Chinese practitioner if war results in a military stalemate. Diplomacy can help settle some agenda items and reduce tensions, while strategy helps maintain the general confrontation and the potential for controlled escalation at a time of China's choosing. Retaining the initiative to escalate or reduce tension in China's hands and to keep the enemy engaged is the benchmark to possess a

psychological advantage. But diplomacy is not a useful tool or it has limited value if fighting leads to victory and the enemy's capitulation. That would result in a victor's peace.

The Role of Diplomacy in China's Statecraft and the Future Potential of Controlled Escalation and War Preparation: China in the 21st Century

In the 19th century, Chinese diplomacy was a part of the theory of making temporary concessions to avoid encirclement, to gain psychological advantage, to recover lost territories, and bring China into play in Asian affairs. As China came under increasing foreign pressures it gained an appreciation of the role of diplomacy as well as military power in dealing with the non-Chinese world. Through self-help in the 20th century it gained a place on the world stage with her victory in 1949, by her recovery of her position in Tibet and Xinjiang and the push back to Stalin in Manchuria, by her ability to stalemate superior US power in Korea, by her defeat of India in 1962, and by her ability to enter the deliberations of the third world and Southeast Asian affairs. It gained this outside the U.N. system because it had the manoeuvrability of acting in her interest without the responsibility of acting as per the diplomatic norms of the U.N. or the Vienna Convention.

Note that the rate or pace of change and its scope was enormous, comparing China's position and diplomatic practices

in the 19th and the 20th century. *Shi* is the term Chinese use to define the 'potential energy of a developing situation'. In the 19th century the energy came from the Western China traders and the direction was to open imperial China to Western commercial and diplomatic discourse and to undermine the confidence of the imperial system in its ability to manage the barbarians through temporary concessions. In the first half of the 20th century the energy came from Maoist guerrillas and Maoist beliefs and guidance which brought China under single party and central control. This development was to make China the centre of a new and highly motivated state that was committed to major internal social, economic and political change, and a power committed to emerge as the Socialist centre for revolutionary change. Thus, China's *shi* was favourable precisely when European empires in South and Southeast Asia were disintegrating, a power vacuum emerged in the Indian subcontinent and the southern zone of Asia, and following Japan's defeat, the US government was organising its alignments in the Far East but the situation was still developing. Dean Acheson, the US Secretary of State, had declared that Korea and Taiwan were not a part of the American defence perimeter; reforming Japan's internal politics and external policy was the priority for Washington. Clearly, the situation was developing in the Far East when the Korean War broke out. This was because of the ambiguity in Stalin's Korea policy, his guidance to the North Koreans to start the war, his refusal

to help China militarily except in a token way and China's sense of vulnerability to the possibility of an American push to unify the two Koreas by force and thereby bring American forces to the banks of the Yalu river. With the entry of Chinese forces into the Korean fight and the push back of American forces, the military lines were stabilised and the parameters of the configuration of forces were established. The potential energy of *shi* lay in a military and political stalemate and a divided Korea which suited (and still suits) China's strategic interests.[9] American and Chinese negotiators engaged in bitter, but in hindsight, 'convergent bargaining' because as neither side wanted a new war, both had a common interest to stabilise the front through an international agreement which has lasted since 1953.

Shi also explains Beijing's approach to negotiations in Indo-China in the 1950s and in the Bandung conference in 1955. A quest for increased manoeuvrability led Chou Enlai to use his 'charm diplomacy' at the Bandung conference and bring China into play in third world politics, and in hindsight, to undermine the influence of the founders of the non-aligned movement: Nehru, Tito and Sukarno. Recall that in the secret instructions issued to the Chinese army in April 1961 (cited earlier) Nehru and Tito were named as targets for international isolation. China's diplomacy laid the groundwork for this action. Thereafter, Chinese diplomatic and military actions– in the Indo-China conferences and as a military aid giver to Vietnam

during the Vietnam war which indicated China's mistrust of Soviet actions in her underbelly- indicated a willingness to play an independent and a supportive role even vis-à-vis its regional rival, Vietnam, and to widen the field of power politics and the configuration of forces in a way that showed the introduction of new energy into a developing situation. The new direction was to form a US-Soviet-China triangle in Indo-China affairs and to do so by a combination of military aid to Vietnam (rival of the US) and diplomatic support to the US by showing the existence of a difference with USSR.[10]

In the Korean and the Indo-China cases of the 1950s China could change the configuration of forces by triangulating the situation, by inserting itself as the third player rather than leaving it as a bipolar game. In both cases, China was successful in joining the strategic game and its diplomacy and negotiation methods were to participate in convergent bargaining where an area of negotiability existed in the interests of the players i.e. China and the US.

But in two other instances, in the 1962 war with India and the 1979 war with Vietnam, China's effort to teach the two a lesson and to knock them into a negotiating position which would give China a psychological advantage produced a mixed record. The military actions produced unintended consequences, the situation did not develop as Beijing would have wanted and the changing configuration of forces in the long term created a mix

of limited convergent negotiations in the form of several border agreements to gain tranquility in the area, and the establishment of diplomatic, trade and cultural links with India and Vietnam, but it also led to an on-going strategic rivalry with China. We see elusive bargaining in the ongoing China-India border talks, a loading of agendas. The two sides have different views about the length of the disputed border. Aksai Chin is a settled matter for China, Indian Kashmir is a disputed territory, Pakistan Kashmir and China Kashmir are not, and Arunachal Pradesh is 'Southern Tibet'. India does not accept these positions. These competing agendas are a part of a developing situation and do not form an established trend. With Vietnam too, territorial disagreements over resource rights in the South China Seas make for elusive bargaining. The challenge for the academic and the government practice is to define situations which lend themselves to convergent bargaining or tacit bargaining or manoeuvring or elusive bargaining.

China's Negotiating Strategies and heir Intended and Unintended Consequences

China's approach to negotiations is complicated because it could be classified in different ways.

(a) It is a form of elusive bargaining that is opaque and could lead to either warfare or a negotiated settlement but often leads to giving the other side a hard time, maintaining a level of tension and uncertainty to keep the other side

engaged, and giving shape to both the 'talk arena' and the 'action arena'. The ratio of talk to action, however, is unclear and it is a variable element in the relationship[11].

Mao told Henry Kissinger that China had to use force to 'knock' India back to the negotiating table. Pre-1949 China used elusive bargaining on the border. Her negotiator initialled the McMahon Line but did not sign the 1914 agreement. In diplomatic practice, as Kissinger notes, initialling freezes the text; signing puts it into force. Chou Enlai had proposed to trade the McMahon Line for Aksai China but Nehru ignored the trade.[12] The intention was to stop the momentum of Nehru's forward policy in the border areas and to isolate him in the world foray. The Mao view indicates that the 1914 agreement which established the McMahon Line on the Himalayan map and serves as the basis of India's boundary claim was, for China's Communists, a form of elusive bargaining. But the Sino-Indian negotiating (or talking) experiences show a pattern of shifts from elusive to potentially convergent to elusive bargaining and again back to potentially convergent bargaining. This evaluation is based on the following observations. In diplomatic protocol when British, Chinese and Tibetan negotiators initialed the McMahon Line agreement in 1914, that froze the agreement between China and others, China's refusal to ratify it meant that the agreement could not be brought into force. Later on, Chou

Enlai offered Nehru a trade between his acceptance of China's claim to Aksai Chin in return for China's acceptance of the McMahon Line in the east. This was an attempt at potential convergent bargaining. But Nehru declined Chou's offer and the negotiating process shifted to the 1962 war, and after the 1980s the two sides resumed talks about restarting the diplomatic relationship and border talks. Currently, boundary talks and the development of trade relations could be considered as convergent bargaining in the sense that both sides have formally agreed to maintain tranquility on the existing border and have taken bilateral trade to a $60 billion plus level. At the same time, the disagreements about the length of the border and the claims about Arunachal Pradesh and the Chinese push into Kashmir indicate the prominence of manoeuvring and elusive bargaining. From the 1980s onwards both talk and action arenas emerged in Sino-India relations. Despite several rounds of talks, the policy of maintaining a level of tension and uncertainty to keep the other side engaged has been retained in this case; the ratio since the 1980s to the present suggests high talk, high action on the trade front, low action in terms of border settlement, high action in terms of pushing the China factor in Kashmir affairs and in Pakistan's economic and diplomatic development. But at the same time the build up of Chinese and Indian military capacities and policies in the Himalayan and the Indian Ocean areas indicates that India too has embraced

the Chinese approach to maintain a level of uncertainty to keep China engaged with India and to build the Indian versions of the talk and action arenas.

If China's intention was to secure Indian capitulation after the defeat in 1962 and force India to accept a position as a subordinate member of a China-led South Asian system, then knocking India had unintended consequences. It aroused Indian nationalism against China's action and alerted many third world countries about China's faith in military intervention which tainted its commitment to peaceful co-existence. It also led India to rearm and reject Nehru's peace through diplomacy policy in general and his opposition to the development of the Indian armed forces. Chinese military and nuclear aid to Pakistan, India's main regional rival, created a sense that their aim was to keep India on the edge in the Himalayan region as well as India's western flank and to the extent that both Washington and Moscow concluded that China's 1962 action was destructive to regional security and both started a programme to aid India's military development. Thus, China's war was counter-productive in the long run. If the aim of policy is to alter the enemy's domestic politics and foreign policy, then Mao's knocking of India had major unintended consequences which were not to China's advantage and which left China locked in a position of elusive bargaining and military build-ups with India. In

1840, a Chinese emperor reportedly said: "After prolonged negotiation has made the Barbarians weary and exhausted, we can suddenly attack them and thereby subdue them".[13] If this is a relevant prescription for China's India policy at the moment, then an elusive form of negotiation is necessary to maintain the war option. It recalls Prince Gong's advice in 1860: "Resort to peace and friendship when temporarily obliged to do so; use war and defence as your actual policy".[14]

(b) The second form of China's negotiating strategy may be called 'tacit negotiations' combined with on-going manoeuvres. This form of negotiation has emerged in an important way in China's approach to the wars and crises in Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam, three major geographical and strategic neighbours of China where a continuous pattern of engagement with the US, the principal power in Asia-Pacific, has emerged. Consistent with Maoist thinking the Korean War had several intended consequences. (a) It knocked down US 'arrogance' in as much as General Doulas McArthur was confident that he could unify the Korean peninsula by force and expand US presence in the region; (b) It convinced American military generals never again to face China in a direct conflict; (c) It brought USA to the armistice agreement; (d) It ensured that the two Koreas would remain divided as an alternative to Korean unification and the prospect of the advancement

of American and Japanese commercial and military influences in the Korean peninsula; (e) it exposed Soviet aggressiveness in promoting North Korean military action and Stalin's unwillingness to help China's war effort in Korea revealed the limits in Sino-Soviet relations. In this list, the armistice agreement and the repatriation of prisoners of war were the objects of formal negotiations; both were achieved. The peace treaty was a subject of future negotiations but neither side had an incentive to proceed towards that aim given.

The 1958 Taiwan crisis is another example which shows how multiple motives often exist in China's actions. China initiated the shelling and the threat making and it has continuously maintained a formidable military presence aimed at Taiwan and it has a public position to take Taiwan by force if it declares independence. Following the Shanghai communiqué (1972), the US accepted that Taiwan was a part of China but that the unification had to be pursued by peaceful means. The American conversations with Mao and Chou revealed that Beijing was in no hurry to recover Taiwan as it was more interested to establish a firm relationship with Washington and to form a three power game to check Moscow. Note that the Shanghai communiqué revealed two convergent interests i.e. peaceful unification of Taiwan and bringing Washington on China's side. In the secret instructions to the Chinese

army in 1961 (cited earlier) Beijing had argued that it wanted a package deal with the US and that its troops must withdraw from Taiwan. The Shanghai communiqué showed that China was willing to settle for half measures as long as larger strategic gains were available, in this case vis-à-vis Moscow and by building up the US links. Here Mao and Chou decided not to give Nixon and Kissinger a hard time but to develop both talk and action arenas to keep them engaged in the Taiwan question in a triangular and a diplomatic way.

Compare the post-1972 the US-China-Taiwan relationship which is now seen as both constant and stable with the situation in 1958. China used the shelling with several aims in mind. It wanted to test the limits of the US policy. It wanted to assert her abiding interests in Taiwan and to ensure that it did not drift into the American orbit or into independence. It wanted to knock the US for its arrogance in sending the Marines into Lebanon. Its policy was to raise international tensions, teach the US a lesson and to give it a hard time. It also wanted to test Khrushchev's policy towards China and Taiwan.[15] China was talking about peaceful co-existence with third world nations but it practiced, in Kissinger's words, combative co-existence vis-à-vis Moscow and Washington. Two parameters emerged: keeping conflict limited but maintaining an escalatory potential to keep the opposition engaged. In

hindsight, the signals in 1958 over Taiwan indicated the opening of tacit negotiations with Washington and Taipei, which was confirmed in the Shanghai communiqué by an expression of convergent interests between the US and China to keep the peace.

However, there are several ifs in the US-China-Taiwan relationships which affect China's strategy and her diplomacy. Will Taiwan join the mainland and under what conditions? Will the US Congress abandon its policy that was announced in the Taiwan Relations Act and stop providing self-defence arms and moral support to Taiwan and the Taiwanese people? Will the US Navy abandon the region around the Taiwan Straits to the Chinese forces and accept the pre-eminence of the Chinese Navy in the Western Pacific and the South China Seas? Will the US-Japan military guidelines, which currently maintain that Taiwan and open sea lanes are vital for American and Japanese national interests, be amended to exclude Taiwan outside the defence sphere of the US and Japan? These are open questions. Their existence indicates that the Taiwan issue is part of a strategic China-US-Taiwan-Japan equation which makes it more of a form of an elusive bargaining situation with one going manoeuvres by all sides.

These examples suggest that China's approach to the use of her diplomatic tools to pursue her strategic aims

has evolved from an all or nothing package deal with the USA to one with incremental gains. Maoist China had sought the defeat of American imperialism in official declarations between the late 1940s and the 1960s but that aim was abandoned in favour of making a deal with the arch imperialist where their interests converged. This occurred when both sides recognised that they could not pursue their strategic interests unaided vis-à-vis the USSR in the 1970s. The importance of diplomacy in China's statecraft has also grown. Compare the thinking of the 19th century when the Emperor and his advisers saw no value in diplomatic discourse with the inferior West and recognised at best the need of temporary concessions to placate the barbarians.

Now, diplomacy is an essential part of the Chinese state machinery and it has acquired a global reach. China's diplomatic machinery now has an institutional base and legitimacy in the state apparatus and in the attitude of the political establishment. In the imperial past, the role of diplomacy was irregular and secondary and its aim was to stabilise commercial relations with the Chinese traders. Following the Opium war, however, the establishment of treaty ports in favour of Western traders and governments, the cessation of Hong Kong and the acceptance of resident missions in Beijing, forced China's rulers to adopt Western diplomatic principles under duress including the

acceptance of territorial concessions and extra-territoriality which scarred the Chinese psyche by a memory of victim-hood and unjust treaties at the hands of Western colonialism. The post-1949 aim of Chinese diplomacy in the expert hands of China's premier and foreign minister Chou Enlai and the military strategist Mao was to undo, by force and diplomacy, the consequences of these unjust actions. The push back in Tibet and Xinjiang in the south, and Manchuria and Mongolia in the northeast, occurred in the context of the pattern of Chinese thought which stressed the dangers of foreign encroachments and threats to her frontier areas. These actions were based primarily on Chinese military actions but diplomacy was required to explain China's policies to the non-Chinese world- which Chou Enlai did, to justify military actions (as in Tibet, Korea and Taiwan and the Sino-Indian border), to build temporary or long term alignments with foreign powers and negotiate friendship and peaceful co-existence agreements (as with Soviet Russia, India, at Bandung and the Indo-China accords, and Pakistan among others), to negotiate border agreements with Nepal, Burma, Pakistan and other nations. With Chou Enlai, Chinese diplomacy was pursued to develop the dual character of China's strategy: to push China's strategic presence in its southern frontiers where a powerful military and diplomatic counter-force did not exist to undermine China's interests, and to seek a balance of power in its northern, western

and eastern areas where Japanese, Russian and American power threatened Chinese interests in the 1950s and the 1960s. In this perspective, the foundation of contemporary Chinese diplomacy was laid in the Mao-Chou-Enlai eras. Post-Mao and post-Chou, diplomacy of China continues to function in this dual framework, and this gives China both opportunities and challenges which we will discuss in the concluding section of this paper.

China's Array of Negotiating Tactics

China has displayed a rich array of negotiating tactics.

(a) When pressed to receive Western envoys to the Chinese court, the courtiers used charm diplomacy and delaying tactics on the theory that one could wear down the barbarians. There was a close link between Chinese manners vis-à-vis the visitors and the dignity of the Chinese court. The aim was to draw cultural lines around the demanders and to decline diplomatic contact that would undermine the cultural and temporal superiority of the Chinese court.

(b) Following the Opium War, the acceptance of Western terms was the result of a military defeat. There was nothing to debate in these circumstances because military defeat equalled diplomatic surrender.

(c) In the Korean armistice negotiations, Communist China's negotiating tactics were revealed in the

following way. China's negotiators loaded the agenda items. The sequence of their consideration and the conclusion was pre-determined had the American negotiators accepted the Chinese agenda. For China's negotiators the agenda was the desired conclusion. China's tactics failed because the American negotiators agreed to the armistice and prisoner of war exchange and then walked out. Here, Chinese manners and dignity which had characterised imperial diplomacy was abandoned. China's chief negotiator called the American negotiators capitalist crooks, murderers etc. Such rudeness was a feature in the early part of the Maoist era but it did not last long.

(d) In the Indo-China accords, China's charm diplomacy returned and the peaceful co-existence theme was played up.

(e) In the ambassadorial talks with the US since 1954, with over 120 meetings, a formal channel of communication was established. These were free of polemics, without a formal agenda. The agenda consisted of an opening statement by each side which showed their interests, and an opening argument, and there was an opportunity to discuss and explore nuances of each side's positions. This format may be akin to elusive bargaining or/and tacit manoeuvring. Even without

formal agreement they were useful because they established an official channel of discourse to engage each other and the process and the willingness of both sides to interact in a professional manner revealed Beijing's professionalism when it suited her interests. The implication is not that elusive or tacit negotiations necessarily lead to convergent interests and agreements but they may if the circumstances change in favour of a political settlement.

China's negotiating tactics in the early 21st century depends on her estimate of *shi* or the direction of the world and regional situation but we must also note that her 'strategy' and 'diplomacy' tracks are not well integrated; the trajectories of the two have different drivers. For diplomacy, the driver currently is to seek a peaceful environment to pursue her modernisation goals. But the strategy track has different drivers. Let us connect the dots in Chinese thinking since the 1800s. Prince Dong (cited earlier) instructed his officials to remember that peace was a temporary expedient and war was the policy. The caveats are that a peace position is dictated by circumstances beyond China's control and war policy is based on an enduring attitude. Mao dipped into the thinking of Sun Tzu and the ancestors, and armed struggle was his guiding principle with peaceful accommodation when circumstances so required. His declared rule was to despise the enemy strategically but respect it tactically (The implication for the enemy dealing with China

is that policies must be in place to ensure that China respects it tactically in the foreseeable future.) In pushing the four modernisations which included military development, Deng Xiaoping was following the line first established by Chou Enlai about these modernisations but he added the following instruction: "Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capabilities and bide our time; be good in maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership." These instructions are quite elaborate but they are consistent with Mao's prescription to use deception and surprise attack to defeat the enemy. In China's recorded behaviour 'friendship' and 'peace' are an essential part of the 'talk agenda' while managing enmities and teaching them a lesson is the standard rule which has been applied to India (1962), Vietnam (1979), the USA (Korean war) and the Soviet Union (Ussuri border clashes which Kissinger reports were initiated by China). The 'action agenda' thus follows different rules. The institutional drivers are also different. China's Foreign Ministry is the driver of the peace and harmony line. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Party leadership is the driver of the strategy line. The two lines run in parallel fashion when the environment is in a sub-critical mode but in a critical mode the strategy line has been predominant as in the case of China's war with India, Vietnam, the Soviet Union and the USA.

Currently, China's '*shi*' points to a flux in Asia and the world situation which triggers debates among the institutional

champions of the diplomatic and the strategy lines within China. Presumably, the Chinese Foreign Office is the champion of the peaceful accommodation line, the PLA is the champion of the strategy line and the Party leaders must balance the two. However, this is a simplistic statement that requires testing as there are no official histories of Chinese decision-making and the role of these institutions or factional groups in crises, and their actions and thinking in subcritical times is not known publicly. It can, however, be confidently asserted that Communist China has been in a manoeuvring mode but still there are a few instances of inter-governmental agreements that reflect convergent interests. But ongoing manoeuvring indicates that Beijing's decision makers have not arrived at an equilibrium point that favours either a war or a peace settlement with known rivals. The contention is that ongoing manoeuvring indicates the use of elusive bargaining which differs from either war or a peace settlement. Elusive bargaining engages the rivals and is process-oriented and 'talk, talk' is preferable to 'fight, fight'. It implies a lack of decision at the highest level and points to stalemates as the norm in China's conduct and a commitment to maintain relationships in a sub-critical mode. Elusive bargaining and manoeuvring prevails when common interests do not exist to negotiate peace or permanent settlement with rivals. At the same time elusive bargaining is useful, and indeed necessary, to keep the rivals engaged on a regular basis. Note the proliferation of dialogues between China and her neighbours: Japan, North and South

Korea, Taiwan, Southeast Asian governments, Australia, Myanmar, India, South Asian governments and so on. Most of these are signs of the prominence of elusive bargaining on all sides. At the same time, China's military modernisation and the use of offensive military action for self-defence purposes, a formula used by China to explain her actions in Vietnam, has triggered military buildups among China's neighbours. Elusive bargaining situations are likely a permanent feature of the Asian diplomatic landscape unless stalemated situations that involve Chinese and non-Chinese core interests are settled by war and military defeat of one side or both agree to a comprehensive peace settlement.

Military modernisation in Asia-Pacific today by China and her neighbours is justified as a quest, a desired aim under current circumstances, to stalemate contentious issues and to avoid war. Stalemate is not peace but it is comparatively peaceful, narrowly defined it means the absence of war. But it does not imply the existence of an inter-state equilibrium between China and her neighbours. According to this analysis, 21st century China will be preoccupied by her involvement in manoeuvres and elusive bargaining unless it integrates her strategy and diplomacy lines which in turn depends on the internal debates among the main champions of China - the PLA, the Party leaders and the Foreign Office along with those who must guard her economic and social modernisation. 'Bidding time' may require a long wait for China's leaders because time moves in a linear manner

but nations such as China's geographical neighbours and other major powers are affected by historical memories and they are mindful of the boomerang effect of weak and failing policies.

Diplomacy of the New China: 'Groping Around the Pebbles to Find a Way to Cross the River'?[16]

A historical review of China's diplomatic conduct between the mid-1800s and the Maoist era shows the continuous importance of manoeuvres as a cardinal principle of China's approach to strategy and diplomacy. For China, manoeuvring is preferable to other methods of negotiation like seeking a permanent peace settlement where both sides make concessions, or seeking a settlement through military victory where the enemy agrees to the victor's terms, or by elusive talks which prolong the internal and external deliberations. These methods are different ways to grope around the pebbles. However, these methods have not provided China with the satisfaction of her core interests which include frontier security in Tibet and Xinjiang and international acceptance of its claim without ongoing foreign interference by the US Congress which supports the Tibetan call for autonomy and respect of human rights, and Europe-based Western groupings continue to support the human rights campaign in Xinjiang. Return of Taiwan to mainland control is another core interest. This has been delayed. Maintaining the dominance of the Communist party and the one party system in China is yet another core interest which is not accepted by the

international community in perpetuity. In the first round of the China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Washington in July 2009, State Counsellor Dai Bingquo made the following statement at a press conference with US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton:

> To ensure that the bilateral [US-China] relationship will move forward on the track of long-term and sound development, a very important thing is that we need to support, respect and understand each other, and to maintain our core interests'. He pointed out that the major concerns include 'safeguarding its basic systems and national security, maintaining its sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as ensuring its sustained economic and social development.[17]

Following China's rise as an economic and military power since the 1970s and 1980s and following her active participation in international commerce and international security affairs, the question now is whether China is still groping with the pebbles or whether it has found ways to cross the river?

China's economic and diplomatic record since the early 1970s justifies the consensus view about her rising power and international status. There is consensus about China's diplomatic and economic activism especially in the Asian, Indian Ocean and African spheres. Briefly the significant changes may be noted. First, the Nixon-Kissinger visit to Beijing ended China's introverted approach to international relations and with a common problem (Russia), Washington

and Beijing ended their Cold War. This opening intensified China's belief that it could not pursue her strategic and diplomatic interests unaided; it needed a strategic partner in the USA which did not have territorial claims in China and which had a network of alliances which could tame for example, the danger of Japanese militarism in Asia. However, the opening with the US intensified the manoeuvring process with the US stakeholders involved in China affairs (various branches of the US government, China traders, arms controllers and academic specialists). Following the establishment of ties with the US and the U.N., Beijing practitioners have found that the number of 'pebbles' relating to bilateral, regional and international issues have grown and there are no easy solutions, for instance, with Tibet, Xinjiang, the border with India, the North Korean nuclear and missile programme, controversy about China's claims in the South China Seas, her naval and space development and even about the meaning and implication of her 'peaceful rise'. In the past, Imperial China could adopt an introverted stance because of a sense of sufficiency and cultural superiority. But now the option to revert to an introverted position does not exist in the foreseeable future because her social and economic development depends on active and continuous participation in the global economy, and her national security depends on engaging the major powers in Asia and China's regional neighbours.

Secondly, the return of Hong Kong (1997) and Macau (1999) showed the power of a negotiated settlement in both

cases. While the manoeuvring with the UK has ended and both are under Chinese administrative control and sovereignty, there is widespread unrest in the Hong Kong population about China's policy. The evolution of the 'one country two systems' approach in Hong Kong affects public and party views in Taiwan. The manoeuvring over the return of Taiwan continues because of the proliferation of players involved: Taiwanese democrats want independence and Taiwanese nationalism exists and is in play in Taiwan politics although the current government with a KMT orientation favouring close economic and cultural ties with the Mainland. Japan and the US have a declared interest in the security of the Taiwan Straits and Taiwan itself and for this reason the US and Japan have extended the scope of their military guidelines to include the region. China acknowledges that the guidelines complicate China's agenda; her leadership is compelled to manoeuvre internally with the hawks and externally with the US Congress which sanctions arms sales to Taiwan through the Taiwan Relations Act, which is the basis of US arms sales to Taiwan. How will this core interest be satisfied?

Thirdly, the Maoists had manoeuvred between first tilting towards Moscow in 1949 after Washington had rejected Mao's effort to build bilateral ties, and then tilted towards Washington when the Sino-Soviet rift occurred. By the Nixon-Mao handshake, China's manoeuvres had helped it shape its position as a member of a global strategic triangle. But her value as a

strategic partner, the third leg of the triangle, ended with the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. The China-US relationship has moved between 'strategic partners' in the early 1970s to 'strategic adversaries' to 'strategic competitors' and now to candid, constructive and cooperative powers. The dynamics of the American politics post-Cold War have pressured the Chinese leaders to manoeuvre along these lines and at the time of writing (2012) the Obama campaign to make Asia a pivot of America's international policy suggests that the two are adversaries or competitors, and there is mistrust in the relationship. In this environment, 'groping the pebbles' remains a Chinese imperative.

As the Cold war has ended, ideology is less of a factor in China-US and China-Russia relations as it was in the past but mistrust among the major powers and between China and her regional neighbours continues to percolate in a sub-critical way. Such a situation merits continuous manoeuvring vis-à-vis the major and minor powers in Asia. The danger of the third World War no longer exists and consequently nuclear and conventional disarmament is less urgent. However, with sub-critical mistrust among the powers in Asia, nuclear and conventional armament is required to develop the manoeuvrability of China's neighbours, and they too need to participate in elusive bargaining pending a permanent peace settlement of their territorial disputes with China.

China's opening up to the world has reduced but not eliminated her introversion and a Sino-centric view of the

world. However, the author believes that changes in Chinese declarations and style suggest that Chinese diplomacy and strategy are in transition. How much of China's approach in the Himalayan area (Tibet, India and Pakistan) is historically, geopolitically and culturally conditioned by an emphasis on hierarchical and Sino-centric views of her core interests in her southern zone? Or does the willingness to maintain tranquility on the border reveal a sensitivity and acknowledgement of the other side's interests? Until recently the government of China believed in teaching lessons to erring neighbours (India, 1962; Vietnam, 1979). China's hard line press, the Communist paper *Global Times* still uses such language to teach a lesson about China's claim to 'Southern Tibet' (Arunachal Pradesh). Is this internal manoeuvring by the PLA oriented people in China and are the targets India, China's foreign office and the Chinese embassy in Delhi which believe in the promotion of harmony and tranquility in the border area and seek to advance trade and cultural ties? A similar set of questions about China and her neighbours who have competing claims in the South China Sea indicates that Chinese diplomacy is in transition, emphasising Socialism and development at home and peace and her core interests abroad.

The opening up of China's international relations and Chinese trade has produced a rich and growing literature on Chinese foreign affairs by Western and Chinese scholars. Qian Qichen's 'Ten Episodes in China's Diplomacy' (2005)

offered useful insights about the development of China's diplomacy along pragmatic lines but the work is not definitive. It adopted a big power approach in dealing with international problems which suggests a belief in a mixture of Sino-centric, hierarchical relationship approach among Chinese officials in relation to lesser powers and a co-management approach with the US. Qichen was the Chinese Foreign Minister from 1988 to 1998 and his views refer to an important phase in China's rise as an economic and a military power and as an international diplomatic practitioner. Other recent works are helpful in explaining the development of inter-governmental relations with many countries in the world today. The writings by Chinese specialists reveal a confidence in China's rise and her future as well as challenges. The view about 'groping the pebbles to find a way to cross the river' comes from Zhang Baijia, senior fellow and deputy director of the Party History Research Centre of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. His analysis is balanced and it notes the challenges which face China.[18]

My hypothesis is that China's leaders and specialists are still groping pebbles because they are slippery, i.e many major and minor powers are manoeuvring vis-à-vis China. The river is getting bigger with the entry of many players in the strategic and commercial game and the river changes course at times as other powers change their diplomatic and military policies, increase their economic and military weight and some

unexpected developments put pressure on Chinese interests. The challenge before Chinese decision-makers and analysts is to secure their footing in areas of tension and not to be taken by surprises. This requires high quality and timely intelligence as the basis of decision-making by their leaders. China has a tradition of relying on her secret service and has a history of commitment to intelligence work for decades. But there are instances of intelligence failures. Two recent cases illustrate the point. In one case, Beijing was surprised at the strong reaction of the non-Chinese practitioners to China's assertion of her claim to the South China Seas as a core interest. Instead of the co-management system it sought with the US as per Qian Qichen's book, the emergence of Asia-Pacific as the pivot in the policies of China's neighbours and the US. has increased diplomatic and military pressures on China and her 'core interests'. In another case, the military government in Myanmar postponed the construction of a major dam that was meant to serve China's energy needs. The Myanmarese action, along with the opening of Myanmar to Western diplomatic and commercial initiatives, was unexpected and put a dent in the hierarchical-transactional nature of the China-Myanmar relationship which Beijing was promoting since the 1980s. These examples show that as China's diplomatic engagement with the non-Chinese world has grown since the 1970s, competing inputs from her diplomatic and military services have contributed to intelligence failures.

In conclusion, the polarities within China's political and social system and between China and the non-Chinese governments are likely to result in a continuous preoccupation with manoeuvres – within China among contending groups and between China and the non-Chinese powers. In this case, the historical approach to strategy and negotiation is relevant to the study of diplomatic practices of contemporary China even though the situational and the relational setting today differ from those of the past.

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ENDNOTES

1. I have drawn on C. P. FitzGerald, *The Chinese View of Their Place in the World*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965, pp. 18-19 and 51-53.
2. See Henry Kissinger, *On China,* The Penguin Press, New York, 2011, pp. 20-29 (hereinafter cited as 'Kissinger on China').
3. A useful collection of articles on *China's negotiation experiences is in Peking's Approach to Negotiation: Selected Writings* Subcommittee on National Security and International Operations of the Committee on Government Operations, US Senate, US Government Printing Office, Washington, 1969 (hereinafter cited as 'US Congress report on China'; also, 'Kissinger on China'.
4. From the Secret instructions to the Chinese army, April 1961, cited in the 'US Congress report on China', p.76.
5. *Ibid*., p. 75.
6. *Ibid*., p. 79.

7. This was thoroughly analysed by Donald S. Zagoria, 'Choices in the Postwar World(2): Containment and China', in Charles Gati, ed. *Caging the Bear*, the Bobbs-Merrill Co., New York, 1974, pp. 110-111.
8. Noted in 'Kissinger on China', p. 21.
9. Kissinger calls the Korean war as 'something more than a draw'. It established China as a military power, a centre of Asian revolution, and an adversary worthy of fear and respect for several decades. *Ibid*., pp. 145-146.
10. For Chinese views of the Indo-China crisis 1953-54 see the analysis in 'US Congress report on China', pages 21-26; Kissinger argues that the 1979 Sino-Vietnam war was the 'high point of Sino-American strategic cooperation during the Cold War'. See 'Kissinger on China,' p. 340.
11. The ideas about different types of Chinese bargaining are mentioned in the 'US Congress report on China,' p.68.
12. 'Kissinger on China' pp. 2, and 186-187.
13. Cited in 'US Congress report on China' p. 1.
14. Cited in 'Kissinger on China', p. 70.
15. *Ibid*., pp. 172-174.
16. The 'groping around in the pebbles…' phrase was expressed by Zhang Baijia, "Overview: The Evolution of China's Diplomacy and Foreign Relations in the Era of Reform, 1976-2005" in Yufan Hao, C. X. George Wei, and Lowell Dittmer, editors, *Challenges to Chinese Foreign Policy: Diplomacy, Globalisation, and the Next World Power* The University Press of Kentucky, 2009, p. 22. Z. Baijia is a senior Chinese communist party researcher.
17. 'Senior Chinese official calls on US to respect China's core national interests'. www.chinaview.cn, 7 July 2009.
18. The literature on China's diplomatic affairs is growing. The participation of Chinese scholars, based in Hong Kong, Macao and the Mainland as well as the West is noteworthy and reflects

confidence in China's internal economic growth and modernisation and her rising military power and diplomatic engagement with the various regions in the world today. For a sample of recent works see: Zhang Yunling, *Rising China and World Order*, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 2010; Bates Gill, *Rising Star: China's New Security Diplomacy*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC.,2007; Sujian Guo and Shiping Hua, eds, *New Dimensions of Chinese Foreign Policy,* Lexington Books, New York, 2007; and Zhiqun Zhu, *China's New Diplomacy: Rationale, Strategies and Significance,'* Ashgate Publishing Co., UK, 2010.

About the Author

Dr. Ashok Kapur is Distinguished Professor Emeritus in Political Science, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. He is author of 15 books dealing with Indian politics, nuclear proliferation in India and Pakistan, the political crises in Pakistan, the pattern of India's diplomatic development, the implications of China's rise, and the politics of the Indian Ocean. He was a member of the United Nations Committee to study Israel's nuclear armament, 1980-81 and the head of Department of Political Science, University of Waterloo, Ontario. Dr Kapur's recent major works include *India – From Regional to World Power, India and South Asian Strategic Triangle* (2011), co author of *Government and Politics in South Asia* (7th edition forthcoming) The author can be accessed: ashok_kapur@hotmail.com

Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi- 110 001