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**CHINA AND KOSOVO  
Worries About a New World Order**

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## China and Kosovo

### Worries About a New World Order

#### Introduction

Although the Chinese were critical from the start of NATO's action in Kosovo, believing it to be an unwarranted intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, they appeared to have other priorities until their Embassy was bombed. Unlike Russian Prime Minister Primakov, who cancelled his trip to Washington upon learning that NATO would be bombing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji went ahead with his scheduled trip to the US in April, in the midst of NATO operations. During his meeting with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who explained the reasons why NATO was compelled to act, he appeared more concerned with questions relating to China's accession to the WTO, a matter that he continued to focus upon in public statements as well. For instance, *The Wall Street Journal* published a page-long interview with Zhu in which he devoted just four lines to Kosovo.<sup>1</sup>

Further, diplomatic sources serving in embassies in Beijing and in consulates around China reported that, by and large, while the Chinese were concerned, there was no particular identification with Kosovo, a problem that appeared far away, and in any case,

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<sup>1</sup> *Wall Street Journal*, April 8, 1999.

was one that they believed should worry the Russians more than them.<sup>2</sup> Some Chinese officials are reportedly said to have noted pointedly that, given its experiences in Korea and Vietnam, the West would think twice before intervening militarily in any area around China that Beijing believed was of strategic importance.

During the period leading up to NATO intervention, the principal point made by the Chinese was that Kosovo was an internal affair of Yugoslavia that should be sorted out by the parties involved there. There should be no outside intervention, and certainly no use of force. When NATO began its operations, attention shifted to the violation by the alliance of the principles of the UN Charter and accepted norms of international relations. Analyses of NATO strategy generally focussed on Europe, particularly on the ramifications for Russia.

However, when NATO missiles struck the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on May 8, the picture changed and China felt it had become an involuntary party to the conflict. As a consequence, it was now important for a re-evaluation of the implications of Kosovo for itself.

As distinct from the Gulf War, in which the United States had assembled a broad coalition of countries, it had now moved solely with its NATO allies, and seemed to be seeking to extend both the alliances' criteria for action and area of responsibility. Also unlike 1991, the war was not meant to reverse external aggression but to influence an internal problem in a sovereign country and was being justified by a newly formulated Western doctrine that put human rights above state sovereignty. Third, the United States

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It has been suggested that one of the reasons why Zhu did not detail China's views on Kosovo was because of distribution of work - President Jiang Zemin spoke on foreign affairs while Zhu's primary responsibilities were economic and commercial.

<sup>2</sup> Discussions with diplomats posted in China at the time.

and its allies had not sought the sanction of the United Nations, which both violated the UN Charter and challenged existing norms of international relations. Finally, the war starkly underlined the growing gap in military technology between the United States and the rest of the world, including its European allies.

The Chinese had to ponder the ramifications of these four factors. They were concerned by the predominance of the United States in the international system, its post-Cold War security arrangements, and by the debate on human rights and sovereignty that Kosovo spawned. They had to determine how these related to their worries over Taiwan, their political system and, to some extent, the South China Sea islands, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

Immediately after the bombing, anger swept through China, and the Chinese press wrote extensively on Western malevolence. Some have argued that part of the ruckus in the official media over the Embassy bombing was typical Chinese tactics to put the West on the defensive so that Beijing could extract concessions in different areas, be it on admission to the WTO or satellite sales, etc.

With the end of NATO operations, Kosovo slowly faded from the media. Whatever difficulties the Chinese may have envisaged in the evolving international situation, they made a surprisingly quick decision that their best interests, at least for the time being, lay in putting the bombing incident behind them. Notwithstanding what they considered to be a growing “strategic partnership” (essentially a weapons supply relationship) with Russia, they chose to continue to work with the West in the important areas of economic development, foreign investment, trade and technology flows.

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### **Chinese views until May 8, 1999.**

Though it was relatively indifferent at first, China became more concerned about Kosovo around mid-1998 when the prospect of NATO military intervention became real. On June 9, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhu Bangzao stated that the Chinese government believed that “Kosovo was an internal affair of Yugoslavia that should be addressed by relevant parties in Yugoslavia”<sup>3</sup>. On October 9, Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan, while expressing “deep concern” over Kosovo, reassured Yugoslav envoy Slobodan Unkovic that China viewed Kosovo as “an internal affair of Yugoslavia”, and that “the threat of use of force by some countries has caused intense worries”<sup>4</sup>.

For the PRC, the “central point” was that Albanian “secessionist forces” (described also at various times as “splittists” or “illegal armed forces”) were attempting to establish a “state within a state” with the ultimate objective of establishing a Greater Albania. The Chinese believed that the FRY was only defending its territorial integrity.<sup>5</sup>

On June 16, the *People’s Daily* cautioned that “military intervention is not a sound strategy” and that it would “infringe Yugoslavia’s sovereignty and breach prevailing international norms.” It would also “boost the arrogance of the ethnic Albanian groups” and further escalate the conflict. Furthermore, confrontation between NATO and

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<sup>3</sup> *Hong Kong AFP*, June 9, '98.

<sup>4</sup> *Beijing Xinhua* in English, Oct 9, FBIS-CHI-98-282

<sup>5</sup> *People's Daily*, "Double Standard with Aim of Suppressing Yugoslavia", Jan. 30, FBIS-CHI-1999-032

the FRY would touch off a new war and “threaten security in the Balkans and even Europe as a whole.”<sup>6</sup>

The Chinese played down allegations of human rights violations by the Milosevic regime. Commenting on NATO’s threat on the possible use of force after the Racak incident of January 15, 1999, a *Xinhua* report noted that NATO had “indiscriminately imposed complete responsibility for the massacre” on the FRY and Serbia “even before the incident was thoroughly investigated.” It asked, “[is] there any fairness and justice in this logic?”<sup>7</sup>

Instead, China squarely blamed the West for aggravating the crisis by following “double-faced” tactics. While declaring that they did not support Kosovo’s independence — since this would not have the support of the international community — the West exerted pressure on Yugoslavia through economic sanctions, an arms embargo, and military threats. Because of this, the “illegal Albanian armed forces” were able to capture 30% of Kosovo within a short time. When Yugoslavia fought back, the United States and the West “forced” the United Nations Security Council to adopt resolution 1199 on September 23, 1998, which was “mainly directed” against Yugoslavia.<sup>8</sup>

The Chinese saw differences in the approaches of the United States and the Europeans. While both wanted to position NATO forces in Kosovo, the Europeans were less inclined to use force and would have preferred a diplomatic solution. The French-sponsored conference at Rambouillet confirmed this perception. These talks, co-chaired by the French Foreign Minister and the British Foreign Secretary, “indicated the EU’s

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<sup>6</sup> *People's Daily*, June 16, "Military Intervention is not a Sound Strategy", FBIS-CHI-1998-168

<sup>7</sup> *Xinhua* Domestic Service in Chinese, Jan 31, 1999, FBIS-CHI-1999-0201

<sup>8</sup> See footnote 5.

positive attitude and initiative in solving the Kosovo crisis through political means.”<sup>9</sup> When the first deadline for the FRY to accept NATO’s conditions (30,000 NATO forces to be stationed in Kosovo, a referendum in the province after three years of substantial autonomy) passed on February 23 with no agreement, the EU “preferred to extend the talks rather [than] resort to force.”<sup>10</sup> The United States, on the other hand, influenced by its tactics in Bosnia, where it believed NATO bombing had forced the Serbs to the negotiating table, “insisted on using the bombing threat to force Yugoslavia to make concessions.”<sup>11</sup>

In any case, the Chinese saw the West’s policies in Kosovo as largely dictated by the United States. They further believed that the United States had entered the Kosovo negotiations early partly to ensure that the crisis there did not unravel the Bosnia peace accords, but also because it had a number of strategic considerations. The Chinese argued that “the United States is seeking to build a unipolar world under its leadership. And, an important strategic step toward realizing this intention is to endow NATO, which is under US leadership, with a new mission, turning it into a means to serve the global strategy of the United States.”<sup>12</sup>

NATO’s air strikes actually began while President Jiang Zemin was visiting Italy, a NATO country. His statement in response was relatively mild, presumably because he did not want to embarrass his hosts. He said he was “extremely concerned and worried upon learning that Kosovo had been air-raided.”<sup>13</sup> He appealed for “an immediate end to

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<sup>9</sup> *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service*, Feb 24, Xinhua Reporters View Kosovo Peace Talks, FBIS-CHI-1999-0225

<sup>10</sup> *People's Daily*, 25 Feb, '99 "Rambouillet Peace Talks Deadlocked but Not Dead", FBIS-CHI-1999-0225

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> *Beijing Xinhua* in English, March 24, FBIS-CHI-1999-0324



the air strikes and to put the Kosovo issue back on the track of a political solution.”<sup>14</sup>  
The PRC Foreign Ministry issued a statement along the same lines.

The Chinese media adopted a tougher tone. A Commentator’s article in the *People’s Daily* of March 25 accused NATO of “blatant” and “barbarous armed intervention” of Yugoslavia and called for its “strong denunciation.” The article continued, “NATO intervention in Yugoslavia does not accord with reason or have legal grounds. Yugoslavia is neither a member of NATO nor a peace partner of NATO. What right does NATO have to send troops to interfere in its internal affairs without its consent?” It argued that “NATO had openly and brutally trodden on the UN Charter and the norms of international relations.”<sup>15</sup>

The Chinese Permanent Representative to the UN repeated this theme when he told an emergency meeting of the Security Council that had been called to discuss the NATO strikes that “NATO’s military action brutally violated the UN Charter and the universally accepted norms of international law.”<sup>16</sup>

A *Xinhua* commentary on March 27, reporting the Security Council debate, counseled that “every country has an unshirkable responsibility and obligation to safeguard the UN Charter and the authority of the Security Council and no country is allowed to place itself above the UN Charter and international law. NATO member countries, as members of the Security Council, are no exception”.<sup>17</sup>

A long article in the *People’s Daily* laid out a series of alleged violations of international law by NATO: Articles 2 & 4 of the UN Charter on the use of force; the

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> *People’s Daily*, March 25, 1999, Commentator’s article “Armed Intervention Can Never Be Tolerated by Both Laws and Reasons”, FBIS-CHI-1999-0325

<sup>16</sup> *Beijing Xinhua* Domestic Service, March 25, FBIS-CHI-1999-0325.

principle of international law on non-interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state—the UN Declaration on Non-interference in Internal Affairs of 1965; the UN Declaration on “The Principles of International Law of 1970”; the 1980 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties which forbids the use of compulsory force to compel any state to sign a treaty or agreement; and, finally, even the language in NATO’s original Charter to use force only when its member states were threatened with aggression.<sup>18</sup>

### **The bombing of the Chinese Embassy**

On May 8, 1999, NATO missiles struck the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese personnel and wounding twenty others. China exploded in fury. Few Chinese believed that the missile strike against the Embassy was an accident, as claimed by NATO. The Chinese presumably did not know at the time that this was the only target vetted by the CIA, a fact which would certainly have made matters worse.<sup>19</sup> Responsible Chinese officials must have known, however, that the missiles hit the exact floor of the Embassy housing its intelligence section, reportedly China’s largest such facility in Europe.<sup>20</sup>

Protesters filled the streets as over 100,000 demonstrators poured into the diplomatic quarters in Beijing to stone the United States Embassy. The American flag was burned and its Consulate in Chengdu was set on fire. Demonstrations were also held in front of the British Embassy. While demonstrators were organized, with special buses

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<sup>17</sup> *Xinhua* Commentary, March 27, "NATO Cannot Stay Above the UN Charter", FBIS-CHI-1999-0328

<sup>18</sup> *People's Daily (Guangzhou South China News Supplement)*, April 12, FBIS-CHI-1999-0413

<sup>19</sup> Owen Harris(Editor), *The National Interest*, Winter 1999/2000, "A Year of Debating China", p.144

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

provided, thousands also came spontaneously. Students marched on the Embassy with placards that read “Down with Fascism,” “Down with US Imperialism,” and so on. Vice President Hu Jintao expressed strong support for the demonstrators, saying that they reflected the Chinese people’s “strong indignation” at the NATO attack and their “keen patriotism.”<sup>21</sup>

The Chinese Government did not accept NATO explanations that the attack was an accident, and the press interviewed missile and defense experts, who maintained that the attack could not have been anything but, deliberate.<sup>22</sup> To this date, the Chinese have refused to accept that the bombing was an error.

Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yingfan summoned US Ambassador James Sasser to deliver “the strongest protest against US-led NATO.”<sup>23</sup> A Government statement declared that “the Chinese Government and people express their utmost indignation and severe condemnation of the barbarian act and lodge the strongest protest...US-led NATO should bear all responsibilities arising therefrom. The Chinese Government reserved the right to take further action on the matter.”<sup>24</sup> Condemnations of the bombing were made by China’s State Council, various political organs and Ministries, the PLA, and other groups. China also called an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council.

On May 10, Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan called in the US Ambassador to demand that NATO make an open and official apology to the Chinese Government, the Chinese people, and relatives of the Chinese victims. He also demanded that NATO

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<sup>21</sup> *Hong Kong AFP* Report, May 9

<sup>22</sup> *Beijing Xinhua*, May 9, “PRC Defense Specialists Say NATO Bombing No Accident,” FBIS-CHI-1999-0509.

*Beijing Xinhua* Domestic Service, May 10, “PRC Missile Experts Say Embassy Attack Premeditated”, FBIS-CHI-1999-0510

<sup>23</sup> *Beijing Xinhua* Domestic Service, May 8, FBIS-CHI-1999-0508

<sup>24</sup> *Beijing Xinhua*, May 8, FBIS-CHI-1999-0508

should carry out a complete and thorough investigation of the missile attack on the Embassy, to publicize the results of the investigation, and to punish those responsible for the attack.<sup>25</sup> The Foreign Ministry also announced that the PRC had decided to postpone high-level military contacts between the armed forces of China and the US; postpone consultations with the US in the field of non-proliferation, arms control and international security; and suspend its dialogue with the US on human rights issues.<sup>26</sup> China, however, did not recall its Ambassador from Washington or from any other western capital.

In the Security Council, the Chinese wanted the President of the Council to issue a statement on the bombing while the Council debated the matter. Such a statement normally comes after the debate, if it is the decision of the Council to issue one. The Chinese probably surmised (correctly) that with five Western powers in the Council (Canada and Holland were the non-permanent members), the Council would never vote to condemn NATO. In fact, during the debate several Western delegations did take the view that in light of an impending investigation (on how NATO bombed the Embassy), it would be inappropriate to apportion blame. The Chinese counter was that there was no denying the fact that lives had been lost. In the end, a statement was issued which “expressed the deep regrets” of the Council at the loss of life and authorized the Council to follow up on the matter.

In the midst of all this, an interesting commentary appeared in the mainland-owned Hong Kong paper, the *Ta Kung Pao*. On May 9, the paper said that the Chinese Government was in a “dilemma” on how to react to the bombing. On the one hand, China must appear strong. Although it was no military match for NATO, it could take strong

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<sup>25</sup> *Beijing Zhongguo Xinwen She*, May 11, FBIS-CHI-1999-0511

diplomatic action such as downgrading its diplomatic relations (presumably with the US), or even breaking them off. Yet, it needed the West for its economic development, and any drastic move on its part could jeopardize its progress. If the protests continued, the paper commented, popular indignation could become “a surge” and “it was hard to predict what might happen.”<sup>27</sup>

In fact, an AFP report from Beijing on May 11, reported that the PRC was “moving to cool nationalist fury” and quoted President Jiang Zemin as saying that “the Chinese people have expressed their strong indignation in various forms...this had demonstrated the enthusiasm, will and power of the Chinese people...it was now time to turn a new page in the name of economic stability.”<sup>28</sup> The state media then broadcast NATO’s apology for the first time. *Xinhua* listed apologies for the bombing by President Clinton and other NATO leaders, and state TV showed pictures of President Clinton’s public apology,<sup>29</sup> and a police cordon was put around the diplomatic quarters where the US Ambassador lived. Only small groups of demonstrators were allowed to enter under escort, and they were not allowed to carry stones.<sup>30</sup>

On May 12, President Jiang Zemin attended the memorial services in Beijing of the three Chinese nationals killed in the Embassy bombing. Indeed, the full panoply of the Chinese leadership was present, including Vice President Liu Peng and Prime Minister Zhu Rongji. The next day, at a ceremony in the Great Hall of the People to welcome Embassy personnel from Belgrade, Jiang called for a return to normalcy. China,

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<sup>26</sup> *Beijing Xinhua*, May 10, "Foreign Ministry Spokesman Announces China's Major Decisions", FBIS-CHI-1999-0510.

<sup>27</sup> *Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao*, May 9, "What Happens Next Between China and the US", FBIS-CHI-1999-0510

<sup>28</sup> *Hong Kong AFP* in English, May 11 "PRC Moves to Cool Nationalist Fury on Bombing"

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

he reiterated, must continue to “unswervingly take economic construction as the central task...advance its policy of reform and opening up, maintain social stability and pursue an independent foreign policy.”<sup>31</sup>

The demonstrations, which had allowed the angry populace to let off steam, ended in just three days. Not only were the nationalist credentials of the Communist leadership fortified, but they had also provided the opportunity to divert attention from the tenth anniversary of Tian Anmen. The Government had no interest in prolonging the unrest that might resurrect the ghosts of 1989.<sup>32</sup>

Later, Jiang was to further confirm China’s resolve not to disrupt domestic reform or its relations with the West. He is reported to have said in an internal speech “although we know perfectly well that the wolf is going to attack man, we still need to deal with the wolf. That is, we must dance with the wolf.”<sup>33</sup>

The media, however, continued its analyses of the motivations behind the Embassy strike. A *People’s Daily* Commentary on May 9 hinted that China had been punished for taking an “independent” stand.<sup>34</sup> This reporting was often strikingly intemperate. An Observer article in the *People’s Daily* of June 22, for example, likened the US to Nazi Germany.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, the press settled on two basic themes: explicating the strategic goals of the United States, and examining the emerging debate on human rights versus state sovereignty.

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<sup>31</sup> *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service*, May 13, FBIS-CHI-1999-0513.

<sup>32</sup> In fact, before the bombing, China had begun its annual practice of rounding up "dissidents." See *Hong Kong AFP*, May 2, 1999: "PRC Steps Up Crackdown Before Tian Anmen anniversary"

<sup>33</sup> Yu Qingsheng: Jiang Zemin Repeatedly Expounds China's Domestic and Foreign Policies in Three Internal Speeches giving a Quick Response and Winning the Support of the Public", *Qing Pao*, July 1, 1999, FBIS, July 9, via Internet.

<sup>34</sup> *Beijing People’s Daily*, May 9, FBIS-CHI-1999-0509

<sup>35</sup> *People’s Daily*, June 22, Observer, " We Urge Hegemonism Today To Take a Look in the Mirror of History" FBIS-CHI-1999-0622

## **Chinese media analysis of US post-Cold War Strategy**

As the Chinese saw it, with the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, NATO too should have been disbanded. Instead, the United States, in pursuit of its strategy for “world hegemony,”<sup>36</sup> expanded and strengthened the alliance. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US saw a period of “strategic opportunity” when it would have no rivals until 2015 or so, after which it could face “unexpected challenges” from a “revived Russia and a rising China.”<sup>37</sup> Hence its post-Cold War strategy is geared to building a world order in which the US would be the dominant power well into the twenty-first century.

In the Chinese analysis, the first step in this strategy was the eastward expansion of NATO. This would bring all of eastern and central Europe under Western influence and “further squeeze Russia’s strategic space.” Equally important, an expanded NATO, with the United States as its dominant member, would prevent the United States from decoupling from European security affairs. It would also discourage Europe from proceeding on an independent course, and would continue to justify the American military presence in Western Europe.

NATO’s network of bases in Europe has a direct bearing on American interests. The United States can rely on them to control oil lifelines in the Persian Gulf. If it were

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<sup>36</sup> this is a constant theme in Chinese analysis of US aims and can be found in reports discussing US strategy in Kosovo

out of Europe, both the speed of deployment and the strategic deterrence of US forces would be compromised.<sup>38</sup>

Kosovo is important as it is situated in the Balkans, which is of strategic importance to NATO. Taking control of that region would mean that the alliance would be in a position to push westward into the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic, consolidate its “southern wing,” and link up with the Middle East. It would also help NATO to expand eastwards to the Black Sea and Caspian regions such as the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, to further weaken Russian influence. An article in the *Liberation Army Daily* put it graphically:

The ultimate aim of the United States in launching air strikes against Yugoslavia is to remove the last obstacle on the ‘crescent frontier’ surrounding Russia and to further narrow Russia’s strategic space. Sticking a knife in Russia’s traditional sphere of influence not only contains Russia but gives Eastern Europe and the former Soviet countries a sense of crisis, making them realize that they are lacking military security assurance and forcing them to throw themselves more resolutely into the NATO fold. This move really kills two birds with one stone.<sup>39</sup>

With the admission of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic into NATO (a month earlier than scheduled), and the other states in the region becoming members of the “Partnership for Peace” programme, the Chinese believed that the West considered

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<sup>37</sup> Chinese analysis of US “Report on National Defense”, 1998, and “National Security Strategy in the New Century”, 1998. See *People’s Daily, Guangzhou China News South Supplement*, May 12, FBIS-CHI-1999-0512.



the Milosevic regime the last obstacle to its eastward expansion. Hence, the FRY was subjected to political pressure, economic sanctions, and, finally, military intervention.

As so much of NATO policy concerns Russia, there was a fair amount of Chinese writing on the Russian position. When the crisis began, the Russians were active in the “Contact Group,” and given their (Russian) national interests, the Chinese were hopeful that the Russians would be able to prevent NATO intervention. After NATO intervened despite Russian objections, Chinese analyses on the subject ascribed Russia’s lack of influence to its dire economic situation. Typical in this regard, was a piece in the *People’s Daily* of June 23, which went into some detail on Russia’s wavering policies over Kosovo:

The fact that Russia has continually changed its role during the Kosovo crisis shows that when US-led NATO encroached on Russian interests in Kosovo and affronted its dignity, Russia could not but declare its hard-line stance of defending state and national interests, but at every key moment, Russia showed that, for economic reasons, ‘the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak’, and it had no alternative but to retreat; and the reason why the United States made certain concessions to Russia was because Russia is still a military power that cannot be lightly ‘stirred up’<sup>40</sup>

The Chinese also saw Kosovo as significant for the precedent it set for the implementation of NATO’s “New Strategic Concept”, announced at the summit meeting

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<sup>38</sup> *Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao*, May 26, "US World Strategy Viewed in Kosovo Crisis", FBIS-CHI-1999-0619.

<sup>39</sup> *Liberation Army Daily*, May 26, 1999, p5, FBIS-CHI-1999-0609

in Washington to mark the Alliance's fiftieth anniversary. According the *People's Daily*, the "core" elements of this were:

to extend NATO's defense zone to territories outside its member states, to expand NATO's functions from defending its members to defending the 'common interests' and 'common values' of its members, preventing conflicts, and dealing with crises. In accordance with this 'new concept', NATO's military intervention actions can be authorized by itself without it being endorsed by the Security Council. In this way, anywhere in the world that incidents occur concerning so-called 'democratic values' that the United States wants to defend, or incidents that could lead to crisis or conflict, it can use NATO to deliver a 'military response'. This shows that NATO has changed from a collective defense organization into an adventurist, expansionist, and aggressive military bloc.<sup>41</sup>

After the Embassy bombing, Chinese sources gave full vent to their long-stated suspicions that the United States was attempting to prevent China, which "has the advantages of oil resources on its west and the Pacific on its east," from attaining great power status. The bombing was an example of "strategic misdirection", an attempt by Western forces "to drag China into the mire of an arms race ...[so that]... China will consume its national power, and collapse without a battle."<sup>42</sup> A similar theme had appeared two weeks earlier in the *People's Daily*, which reported that the "attack on our

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<sup>40</sup> *Beijing People's Daily*, June 23, 1999, "Why Has Russia Changed Its Role?," FBIS-CHI-1999-0624. The concessions by the US that the paper refers to are the acceptance of Russian forces at Pristina airport, and their taking orders only from Russians.

<sup>41</sup> *People's Daily*, May 27, "On the New Development of US Hegemonism", FBIS-CHI-1999-0527

Embassy” was “absolutely not an accident . . . certain western anti-China forces ...are racking their brains in a bid to throw into the abyss of chaos and division a China that is united and advancing, and that faces fine prospects.”<sup>43</sup>

There was also a perceived effort to encircle China and prevent it from gaining access to Central Asian oil resources. Zhang Wenwu of the China Institute of Contemporary International Resources feared that the US would promote the future independence of Tibet from China. He suggests that if there is internal turmoil in Tibet or farther north in Muslim Xinjiang, the US will set up an international no-fly zone as it did in Iraq following the Gulf War, in effect, splitting these provinces from China and blocking China’s access to Central Asian oil.<sup>44</sup>

On China’s east, the US continues to maintain 100,000 troops in the Asia-Pacific region and it has recently strengthened the US-Japan military alliance. The Japanese Diet has passed laws relating to the “new guidelines” on US-Japan military co-operation, which expands their co-operation to the entire Pacific region, “including China’s Taiwan.”<sup>45</sup> Japan and US had also decided to co-operate in developing a “Theater Missile Defense” (TMD) system, which the Chinese consider will be destabilizing.

The United States continues to spend massively on defense and “vigorously develops high-tech weaponry,” and has announced the development of a “National

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<sup>42</sup> *Sing Tao Jih Pao (Hong Kong)*, May 28, 1999 "China Must Be Ready to Fight a World War - PLA Believes the West is Hatching Six Major Conspiracies Against China".FBIS-CHI-1999-0528

<sup>43</sup> *Beijing People's Daily*, May 14, 1999 "The Most Effective Counter-Attack" FBIS-CHI-1999-0514

<sup>44</sup> Zhang Wenwu : "America's geopolitical oil strategy and the security of china's Tibet and Xinjiang", "Strategy and Management", 27 no.2 (1998) pps.100-104. Referred to in Michael Pillsbury "China Debates the Future Security Environment", p.xlii.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

Missile Defense” program. All these “show that the US regards military strength as a major means of promoting its global strategy.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Human Rights and State Sovereignty**

The Chinese feel that in parallel to its military strategy, the US and its western allies have now come up with the theory that human rights have a higher priority than sovereignty as another measure to put pressure on countries opposed to their policies. According to a commentary put out on Beijing Radio, some Western figures have given the following explanation:

[S]ince the end of the Cold war, the possibility of large-scale wars between the two major military groups no longer exists; however, a humanitarian disaster that may be caused by some autocratic regimes’ infringement on human rights and some regional conflicts would become the main threat to world peace and stability. Therefore, to protect human rights and stop humanitarian disaster, it is necessary for the West to interfere in actions that infringe upon human rights and cause humanitarian disasters, even to the extent of not hesitating to overthrow other countries’ regimes.<sup>47</sup>

The Commentary termed this a “pretence for the Western countries to wantonly interfere in other countries’ internal affairs. This is purely gangster logic and an indication of hegemony and power politics under the new situation.”

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid*

Xinhua interviewed a number of experts on international law. All of them agreed that “human rights cannot be superior to sovereignty under any circumstances.” Professor Liu Wenzong of the Foreign Affairs College, for instance, felt that “international protection of human rights should coordinate its actions with the sovereign state concerned.” Another expert was emphatic that “sovereignty was a country’s most basic and most important right in international law which forbids a country from interfering in another country’s sovereignty using a certain excuse as a pretext. Facts clearly show that a country without sovereignty will be trampled on and become another country’s appendage or colony. Its people cannot enjoy human rights or any other rights.” And a researcher at the Law Institute under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, had this to offer: “The UN Charter has never regarded human rights as superior to sovereignty. Instead, it stressed that while safeguarding human rights; we should also respect state sovereignty. Furthermore, no international treaties governing human rights ever stipulate that human rights issues can be resolved through the use of force or war.”<sup>48</sup>

In any case, the Chinese saw the West as being hypocritical. A *People’s Daily* article recalled that in the past, “waving the banners of democracy, freedom and human rights, imperialism had built a vast colonial structure atop the heaped bones of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.”<sup>49</sup> China itself was a victim when it experienced “aggression by the Eight-Power Allied Forces 100 years ago. At that time, American and European big powers relied on their strong ships and sharp guns and

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<sup>47</sup> *Beijing China Radio International*, May 12,1999, Commentary -"State Sovereignty is Sacred and Inviolable", FBIS-CHI-1999-0516

<sup>48</sup> All the quotations are from interview from Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service, May 10, 1999 "Xinhua interview with Beijing legal experts: Legal Principle Will Not Stand a clear-cut Savage Act". FBIS-CHI-1999-0512

<sup>49</sup> *People's Daily*, May 12,1999. Article by Long Fusi "Ugly Features of 'Defenders of Human Rights'",FBIS-CJI-1999 -0513

looked for excuses to send a huge army to invade China. They burned, killed, and looted in China, forced a poor and weak China to sign unequal treaties of national betrayal and humiliation, and carved up spheres of influence in China.”<sup>50</sup>

And now, the article continued, because of NATO’s “savage bombing, more than 1200 people in Yugoslavia have lost their lives, 5000 seriously injured, and 1 million people were left destitute and homeless.” Was this “humanitarianism” and “safeguarding human rights?”, it asked.

A *Xinhua* commentary argued that NATO had three reasons to assert that it was defending values:

First, it is to export and practice its values by force in various parts of the world, completely ignoring the basic principles governing international relations and disturbing the normal order of the international community. Second, it is to create a new pretext for its aggression and expansion and to play the trick of cheating the international community in its attempts to turn more sovereign countries of the world by force into dependencies of the western powers. Third, it is to create public opinion to defend the aggressor war it has waged or will soon wage in an attempt to avoid the condemnation by international just public opinion and punishment by history. In the final analysis, ‘fighting for values’ is only a pretext for US-led NATO to practice hegemony.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *People's Daily Observer* article, May 16, 1999: "Humanitarianism or Hegemonism?" FBIS-CHI-1999-0516

<sup>51</sup> *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service*, May 20, "Fight for Values - the Fig Leaf of NATO for Practicing Hegemony", FBIS-CHI-1999-0520

### **Chinese Views on the Impact of Kosovo on the International System:**

On June 9, 1999, the *People's Daily* reported that President Jiang Zemin had told President Ahtisaari of Finland that Kosovo had raised the “fundamental question of what kind of international order should be established and in what direction the 21<sup>st</sup> century should go.” In this, Chinese analysts have generally focussed on at least five issues of importance.

The first casualty of Kosovo was “the relationship between the great powers”, which became severely strained. On one side were “US-led NATO” and on the other Russia, China and other nations. Russia was unable to prevent NATO military action and in the process showed its weakness. Sino-US relations suffered a setback, particularly after NATO missiles hit the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. This feeling of mistrust between the Western powers and countries such as Russia and China will be counterproductive towards building a stable world order.

The second negative feature from the Chinese point of view, was that the “process of multipolarization” had become “more tortuous and complicated” with the “US scheme to monopolize the world.”<sup>52</sup>

Third, the “activities of national secessionism will intensify on a global scale”, given that there were around 190 countries and over 2500 ethnic groups in the world.<sup>53</sup>

Fourth, a “global armament race over nuclear weapons and WMD is likely to escalate.”<sup>54</sup>. An important reason why the FRY came under attack was that it was not

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<sup>52</sup> Sa Benwang, "The Impact of the Kosovo war on International Situations", *International Strategic Review*, No 1, 2000.

<sup>53</sup> Special Commentary by Xiao Feng, *People's Daily*, June 1, "World Trends Under US Global Strategy" FBIS-CHI-1999-0601.

protected by nuclear weapons: “many countries will learn from this and think that they will meet the same fate as the FRY if they do not step up their research and testing of this kind of weapon.”<sup>55</sup>

Finally, the UN has been undermined. By bypassing the UN, NATO had “further impaired the authority of the UN and shaken the principle of unanimity.” While the US and European states will not completely turn away from the UN since it was not in their interests to do so, the fact remains that the “prestige and role of the UN are obviously on the decline.” While international relations should be based on international law, the UN Charter and accepted norms of international behaviour, “in reality, international relations go hand in hand with strength. With the hegemonist lust of the United States swelling like never before, international relations will depend more on strength. A weak country has no foreign relations.”<sup>56</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Perhaps more than most nations, the Chinese regard their country’s stature in the world as an important element of their national identity. This is not surprising, given China’s historical belief that it had a self-sufficient civilization, and that for the greater part of its imperial past, China was the ruling hegemon in East Asia. This search for status has been rendered more acute by the backdrop of what the Chinese themselves refer to as a century of humiliation by the West.

During the Cold War, China was bequeathed Superpower status without “first having acquired the reach or the requisite normative or material resources of a global

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid*

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*



power,”<sup>57</sup> due largely to its position as the swing player in the US-Soviet Union-China balance of power. After the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, this position was no longer particularly relevant. In 1989, following the Tian Anmen demonstrations, the United States and the West imposed sanctions on Beijing, signaling that other concerns had come into play in the relationship and the older geopolitical order was changing. The PRC had to find its place in a new global system that appeared to be increasingly dominated by the United States.

China’s post-Cold War quest for great power status has been based on a number of different elements. The rapid expansion of the Chinese economy in the 1990s allowed it to influence nations seeking access to its markets. As a Permanent Member of the Security Council with a veto, it ensured that its views were taken into consideration in the highest councils. As a “rising power”<sup>58</sup> it has bargained over the terms of its entry into a system that it did not shape. In exchange for cooperation on issues that are important to the West, like nonproliferation, narcotics, and human rights, it has extracted concessions vital to China’s national interests. For example, Chinese restraint on nuclear and missile exports to the Middle East, an area of strategic interest to the United States, was traded for Western accommodation on Taiwan. It has deliberately invested in areas of defense

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid*

<sup>57</sup> Samuel Kim: China's Pacific Policy: Reconciling the Irreconcilable", *International Journal* 50:3 p.466  
In fact China was primed for great power status even before 1949, when President Roosevelt named it as one of the Four Policemen the US would consult on policy regarding the Axis Powers. A surprised Winston Churchill was told that this would prevent China from signing a separate peace with Japan, and that it would pin down Japanese troops in the Far East.

Later the ROC became a member of the Security Council, again not for any intrinsic strength of its own, but due to US policy.

When Nixon and Kissinger visited Beijing, the Chinese were told that China, along with the US, the Soviet Union, Europe and Japan were the five important powers in the international system.

<sup>58</sup> According to political theory, when rising powers join the international system, they want to remake some of the rules to serve their interests, which usually involves violence/war. The usual examples given

—nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles— that would provide it with military reach, one of the trappings of great power status. China has presented itself as a “responsible” member of the international community by playing constructive roles on issues ranging from the situation on the Korean Peninsula to the Asian financial crisis.

Equally important, China has vigorously pursued policies to help establish a multipolar world by consolidating its ties with the major powers, culminating in the signing of a number of “partnership” agreements.<sup>59</sup> Because it is still weak, Beijing would rather play “a balancing role in a world of several powers than have to deal with a single, dominant Super Power.”<sup>60</sup>

China has thought in terms of “poles” in the international system for quite some time. After the death of Mao and Zhou, China’s foreign policy makers looked at the world in less ideological and more pragmatic, balance-of-power terms. Its position in the triangular US-Soviet-China relationship had given it a certain sense of power and confidence. In the beginning of the 1980s, it toned down criticism of the Soviet Union and in 1982 announced that it was following an “independent” foreign policy. The discussion on poles in the press became more frequent, and the prevailing consensus was

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include the rise of Athens, the Hapsburg Empire, France and England in the past, and Germany, Japan and Russia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>59</sup> There is a clear hierarchy to these relationships. China has "strategic" agreements with the US and Russia, "comprehensive partnership" with the UK and France etc. A list of some of the agreements:

"Cooperative Strategic Partnership" with Russia (April, 1996)

"Constructive Strategic Partnership" with the US (Oct., 1997)

"Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership" with France (May, 1997)

"Enhanced Comprehensive Partnership" with the UK (Oct. 1998)

"Good-Neighbourly Partnership of Mutual Trust" with ASEAN (Dec. 1997)

"Long -Term and Stable Constructive Partnership" with the EU (April, 1998)

"Partnership of Friendship and Cooperation for Peace and Development" with Japan (Nov 1998)

"Cooperative Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" with the ROK (Nov. 1998)

<sup>60</sup>David M. Lampton and Gregory C. May: *Managing US-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, p

that “the trend of multipolarization has further unfolded” year after year.<sup>61</sup> In 1987, a book reflecting the official view noted that “Japan’s mighty economic power will definitely be transformed into mighty political forces...this is bound to weaken the two Super Powers’ abilities to monopolize world affairs and...to intensify the internal economic friction and conflict of interests within the Western alliance.”<sup>62</sup>

The book argued that the economic integration of Western Europe would create a state that was capable of matching the United States and Japan. It saw the power of the United States and the Soviet Union declining and so-called Third World countries improving their position. Soon after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, it was a “popular observation in China that the Cold War had reduced the two Super Powers to ‘one dead, the other seriously wounded.’”<sup>63</sup> Paul Kennedy’s *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* and other works that described the United States as a declining power attracted more attention than their counter-arguments in Chinese discussions.<sup>64</sup>

Not all Chinese analysts, of course, endorsed this view of the United States, and many conceded that by strengthening NATO and the US-Japan security alliance, the United States had actually become stronger. A general consensus appeared to be building around the view that the world currently had “one Super Power, several great powers” but on the way to genuine multipolarity. Jiang Zemin’s report to the 15<sup>th</sup> National

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<sup>61</sup> According to some, it was Deng Xiaoping’s national security advisor Huan Xiang who around 1986 expounded on multipolarity most authoritatively See Michael Pillsbury “*CHINA Debates the New Security Environment*” pps 3-25 chapter on “the Multipolarity Debate”.

<sup>62</sup> *Editorial Board of Diplomatic History*, the PRC Foreign Ministry, Chinese Diplomatic Survey, Beijing, World Affairs Press, 1987. PP 9-11.

<sup>63</sup> I have taken this from a Weatherhead Center paper by Wang Jisi “Multipolarity versus Hegemonism”, p5.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* Wang Jisi had this bit of information in his footnote - Paul Kennedy’s book was translated and published separately by two Chinese publishers in 1988. In contrast, works emphasizing US vitality and leadership role such as “Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power”(1992) by Joseph Nye, received much less publicity. Nye’s volume was translated in 1992 but its circulation was limited.

Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in September 1997, held that “the trend of multipolarization has developed further globally and regionally in the political, economic, and other fields.”<sup>65</sup>

One result of Kosovo and the Embassy bombing was a “reevaluation of previous assessments of the pace of US decline and the rate at which the world is moving toward multipolarization.”<sup>66</sup> In fact, some Chinese analysts predict that the US will not decline rapidly but will instead become more powerful:

The United States, as the sole Super Power, occupies a relatively prominent, single, superpower position of domination, and it will for some time maintain the momentum of expansion...right now, multipolarization has lost its momentum for “accelerated development”. Multipolarization in the course of history may be more complicated and tortuous than once thought. It would be more appropriate for us to describe today’s world as “single superpower pluralism” rather than “multiple powers with one superpower.” The early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may see a situation characterized by ‘single superpower domination, and pluralistic disputes.’

China’s assumption that the world was moving towards multipolarity was thus difficult to sustain. Instead, the international system was becoming increasingly unipolar with the United States predominating. Even Germany and Japan, the next two leading economic powers, needed the United States if they wished to play global roles.

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<sup>65</sup> Jiang Zemin's Report to the 15<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, *China Daily*, September 23, 1997

<sup>66</sup> Michael Pillsbury, see note 60, p 25 in that chapter.

A unipolar world functions according to its own rules. The decision to intervene in Kosovo was taken by the G-7 when the Security Council was bypassed and China was not consulted. Russia, by contrast, had been an active member of the Contact Group and was in the middle of developments throughout. The conditions to stop the bombing were negotiated by the G-8, and China was the only Permanent Member of the Security Council not involved. When the issue was finally brought to the Council, the Chinese precondition for its support, that NATO first cease bombing, was not accepted and the Council went on to adopt UNSC Resolution 1244 (14 for, none against, China abstaining)<sup>67</sup>. In any case, the UN Security Council had been brought in after arrangements had been agreed upon in the G-8. The diminished importance of the Security Council, the only organization where China, with its veto power, stands equal with the other great powers, impinges on an important instrument of foreign policy.

There is a related issue. Some have felt that, given China's growing stature, it should be invited to join the G-7. Beijing has long held that unlike Russia, which was initially invited to join for discussions only on political issues, if China joins, it should do so as a full member and participate in both the political and economic agendas. G-7 membership would provide China with another badge of great power status, but many in Beijing remain concerned about the obligations that membership may entail. Joining the G-7 also means accepting its value system. What would China have to accept on Taiwan, for example, or on human rights issues, Tibet, Xinjiang, dissidents and free elections? Ever since its Embassy was hit — in Chinese eyes by the aircraft of countries belonging

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<sup>67</sup> China's explanation was that since the FRY had accepted the resolution, it obviously could not vote against it.

to the G-7 — China has refused to deal with the G-7 as a group. The decision on joining the group has now become more complicated.<sup>68</sup>

China actually has an ambivalent view of the American role in the world. On the one hand, it has little reason to be unhappy with the international system as it has evolved, even with the lead position of the United States, as long as Chinese interests are recognized.<sup>69</sup> It has enjoyed its longest period of peace and tranquility in 150 years and its economic growth and foreign trade have both benefited from the current regime. It is cooperating with the rest of the world in the IMF, the World Bank, and other international organizations. It is seeking accession to the WTO. With the exception of the issue of Taiwan, China behaves more and more like a status quo power, to the extent that it has shown no great enthusiasm for the expansion of the Security Council and has joined the Western powers in condemning nuclear tests in South Asia. Did Kosovo challenge the existing status quo?

There is certainly Chinese concern at the predominance of the United States. In their view, during the Kosovo intervention, the United States carried its 18 allies to war for seventy-five days without UN authorization on the pretext of human rights violations, which indicated a continuation, since Desert Storm, in Chinese eyes, of an increasingly reckless “neo-interventionist” foreign policy that could have direct implications for Beijing. The more powerful the United States becomes, the more likely it is that it will operate outside the UN, where China is a permanent member of the Security Council, and hence have less need to worry about Chinese sensibilities.

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<sup>68</sup> China does not believe that G-7 will replace the Council. G-7 has no international support for that. Besides, if the G-7 continues to take decisions, replacing the Council, the urgency for G-7 members—Germany and Japan — to join the Council would fade.

The doctrine of “humanitarian intervention” that Kosovo emphasized is unacceptable to China, which believes that state sovereignty is supreme, and that governments have the right to take any measures to maintain internal order, fight separatist tendencies, and stop challenges to state authority. In this respect, Kosovo was a disturbing precedent for Tibet and Xinjiang. One scholar with the Chinese International Institute of Social Studies categorically stated that “the impact of Kosovo on China’s security is reflected in the following two aspects: first, *the support by US-led NATO to the Albanian splittist forces in Kosovo could encourage a handful of ethnic splittist forces in China.* [Secondly, hegemony and power politics pursued by US-led NATO have disturbed world peace and complicated China’s surrounding environment]”<sup>70</sup>

The mainland-owned *Ta Kung Pao* warned that:

[W]e cannot rule out the possibility that in the future, Western forces headed by the United States will take measures, including the threat of force and even limited attacks, to interfere in matters involving China’s internal affairs, especially ethnic conflicts similar to what has happened in the FRY... in the days to come, the development of ethnic issues in Tibet and Xinjiang may follow the same pattern, that is: internal rebellion - formation of illegal armed forces or an illegal government - internationalization of the ethnic issue - involvement of foreign forces.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Some Chinese scholars have mentioned to me at that the US could prolong the 'unipolar' system by *coordinating* its policies with "regional" hegemons.

<sup>70</sup> Sa Benwang; "The Impact of the Kosovo War on International Situation", *International Strategic Studies*, CISS, No 1, 2000.

<sup>71</sup> Article by Ai Yu, *Ta Kung Pao*, June 2, B8, FBIS-CHI-1999-0624

In fact, during Kosovo, a series of articles on Tibet appeared in the Chinese press to “prove” that, historically, Tibet had always been a part of China. The articles went on to detail the great improvements that had taken place there in the lives of the people since the Chinese overran it, and the conspiracies to dislodge Tibet from the PRC.<sup>72</sup> A Chinese scholar even told me that the conflict in Kosovo had its roots in Milosevic’s changing of its political status, while Tibet’s status had never been changed!<sup>73</sup>

Then there were the military lessons from Kosovo. If Desert Storm had been a wake-up call, Kosovo was a snooze alarm in demonstrating how far US military

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<sup>72</sup> See, for example the following: *People's Daily*, May 24: "A Brief Account of Sovereignty Jurisdiction of Various Central Governments Over Tibet", FBIS-CHI-1999-0603.

*Xinhua*, July 16: "Historical Progress in Guaranteeing Human Rights in China", FBIS-CHI-1999-0715. The mainland-owned Hong Kong press was particularly strident and considers Tibet being absolutely necessary for China's security:

*Ta Kung Pao*, March 31: "Tibet: the Soft Rib of China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", FBIS-CHI-1999-0427:

"...in the event Tibet achieves independence and has no choice but to form an alliance with India, India can make a long drive of several thousand kilometers without firing a single shot, position its military forces right in China's hinterland, and fire all its missiles at all Chinese territories from the Tibetan plateau. Without the shield provided by Tibet's natural barrier, and the tortuous Tibetan plateau that is not prone to the flames of war, wars could take place in China's hinterland, and there will be great losses of life and property. It goes without saying that without such an extensive shield, China's "soft stomach" will be fatally exposed, and this is unacceptable from the perspective of national security."

<sup>73</sup> It is difficult to say what direct influence Kosovo has had on Tibet, but there is an interesting report from Ian Buruma in the *New York Review of Books*, July 20, 2000. The following is an excerpt from "Tibet Disenchanted."

Mr. Buruma is in a Tibetan nightclub, where he is drinking his beer and watching couples on the floor :

"I felt a tap on my on my shoulder. "Where are you from?" asked a neatly dressed man of about thirty. He looked Han Chinese, which was indeed what he turned out to be. He had been living in Lhasa for three years and was almost due to go home. He wanted to know what I thought of the Tibetan situation. Not knowing who he was, I made a banal remark about every place having its own problems. He nodded gravely. Then he asked what I thought about human rights in China. Again I erred on the safe side. And what about democracy? Well, living in a democracy myself, I had to say I was rather in favour of it. He nodded, and said the one party system was no good. There was too much corruption and abuse of power. China needed more political parties.

I was surprised to hear this, especially when he told me he was a Communist Party member and had been sent to Tibet by the government. But nothing had prepared me for the next question. Did I think Tibet was like Kosovo? I gulped, took a long sip of beer, recalled the nationalist fervor in China after the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, and asked him whether he meant China was like Serbia. He looked me in the eye, and nodded quickly. That is what he meant. Living in Lhasa had opened his eyes to many problems, he said, problems of nationality and human rights. "In the West," he said, "people are allowed to chose their own government. Here in Tibet, the government chooses its people".



technology had moved ahead of the rest of the world, including even its European allies. In a year-end report, Xie Guang, Vice-Minister of the Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense noted that information warfare was the focus of the future, and the use of stealth weaponry and precision-guided weapons will grow. He further stated that “the precision-guided weapons used during the Vietnam War accounted for only about 0.2% of the total weaponry used, but in ‘Desert Storm’... this figure had risen to 9%, and in ‘Desert Fox’, the figure stood at 70%. In the Kosovo conflict, the number had skyrocketed to 98%.”<sup>74</sup>

Whatever the accuracy of those figures, the Chinese were certainly impressed and concerned over its implications. So-called RMA technologies were achieving effects previously thought possible only through WMD. David Shambaugh, writing in *International Security* relates the dilemma facing the People’s Liberation Army (PLA):

The extensive use of cruise missiles and other precision-guided munitions from ranges outside Yugoslav point defenses had a major impact on PLA planners (although they had witnessed similar displays of power during the Gulf War), they were particularly impressed by the increased accuracy of such weapons. This prominence of “smart weapons” impressed upon the PLA the fact that wars can be prosecuted from great distances, far above the horizon, without visual range targeting or encountering anti-air and ballistic missile defenses, and without even being able to engage enemy forces directly. Even the Gulf War involved ground forces and force-on-force engagements—but not in Yugoslavia. This was a stark realization for PLA commanders whose whole orientation and doctrine to

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<sup>74</sup> *People's Daily*, Dec 27 : "Wars Under High-Tech" Xie Guang FBIS-CHI-2000-0130

date had been one of fighting adversaries in land battles on China's soil or in contiguous territory. PLA analysts were profoundly disturbed by the very idea that, in modern warfare, an enemy could penetrate defenses and devastate one's forces without the defender's ability to see or hear, much less counter-attack the adversary.<sup>75</sup>

The Kosovo conflict appears to have stirred a debate within China's military establishment on doctrine.<sup>76</sup> The issues are both on weaponry and doctrine. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been a spatial shift in China's defense posture. No longer afraid of a land invasion, China has focused on "local wars under high-tech conditions," presumably with her neighbors and Taiwan in mind.

Some China-watchers refer to three schools of military thought in the PRC.<sup>77</sup> The fact that FRY forces were so successful in camouflaging and conserving their military assets in the face of NATO's high-tech war was underscored by those who maintain the continued relevance of People's War. Nevertheless, even that doctrine's strongest proponents must wonder how relevant it is in circumstances other than an actual invasion of China.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> David Shambaugh: "China's Military Views the World", *International Security*, Vol.24, no3 (winter 1999-2000) p.58.

Also, James D. Perry: "Operation Allied Force, The View from Beijing", *Aerospace Power Journal*, Summer 2000.

<sup>76</sup> In 1999, the PLA was asked to jettison a number of high-profile businesses and civil-military relations had been fairly bad. Kosovo came at a fortuitous time. The armed forces could ask for more money not just to compensate for the loss of income from businesses but also to modernize.

<sup>77</sup> See Michael Pillsbury: *CHINA: Debates the Future Security Environment*, PPS 268-299.

<sup>78</sup> Actually, since Mao's death, the efficacy of People's War has been questioned, but as a legacy of the liberation war, never been repudiated. Instead, theorists have come up with "People's War Under Modern Conditions", a different doctrine altogether.

The second group, the so-called RMA school, suggests that China must do all it can to catch up with the very latest in modern military technology and doctrines. Many argue for the eventual shift to so-called network-centered warfare and the building of a “system of systems” to link computers on the ground, sea, and air through satellite communications. This echoes much of what has been written in the West on the subject. But any changes in technology and doctrines will necessarily have to be long-term, given the expense involved. In fact, a number of Chinese analysts have warned that China should not fall into the same trap that the Soviet Union did, when, by trying to compete with the US Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars) program, it destroyed its economy and accelerated its collapse.

A third group, therefore, advocates the optimal use of existing equipment and selective modernization combined with the gradual acquisition of modern equipment, something that is presently being accomplished through purchases from Russia and Israel. They suggest that China need not try to catch up in *all* areas with the West, suggesting instead that:

In a situation of ‘one low and five insufficiencies’ (the information component of armaments was low and there were insufficient numbers of high-powered armaments; weapons for launching attacks; precision-guided weapons; means of reconnaissance, early warning, command and control; and electronics armaments), certain trump card weapons (*sashou*

*jian*) were urgently needed. These trumps would enable China to defeat the more technologically advanced enemy.<sup>79</sup>

Some in this group advocate what is being termed as ‘asymmetric’ warfare and ‘unlimited warfare’.<sup>80</sup> If these theories appear unrealistic, this probably reflects the pressures on the PLA to find answers on what to do about “local wars under high-tech conditions” over Taiwan, for instance, given the capabilities available to the West for this type of warfare, as demonstrated in Kosovo.

While these differences in capabilities are worrying, China is equally apprehensive about US post-Cold War security policies in general. Beijing sees them not just as measures to perpetuate US domination, but with the strengthening of the US-Japan Alliance, as measures specifically designed to “contain” China. When the Japanese Diet approved the “new security guidelines,” the PRC feared a more militarized and assertive

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<sup>79</sup> An Aiping, *Liberation Army Daily*, April 6, 1999,6,FBIS, April 23, 1999 via Internet, quoted in "The PLA and Kosovo : A Strategy Debate" by June Teufel Dreyer, *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 36, Number 1, Jan/Feb 2000.

<sup>80</sup> There are writings on the fringe about so-called "asymmetric" warfare, which supposedly is about exploiting selective weak points - blinding satellites with lasers, computer virus propagation, etc. - to neutralize an enemy's superiority.

There is also talk about "unrestricted warfare". Two Chinese Air Force Colonels wrote a book with that name which became a bestseller in China, suggesting , amongst other things, terrorism, drug trafficking, environmental degradation, computer virus etc. See report by John Pomfret: "China Ponders New Rules of 'Unrestricted Warfare'", *Washington Post Foreign Service*, Sunday, August 8, 1999, A 1. Pomfret characterizes the book as an "expression of China's feelings of helplessness when confronted by US might".

Pomfret, who interviewed the two authors, Col. Qiao Liang and Col. Wang Xiangsui, continues: "These concerns have become all the more urgent following the war against Yugoslavia and the May 7 bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade by NATO warplanes, two events that prompted nationwide hand-wringing at China's weakness. They received a further boost during the latest crisis in Taiwan, which began July 9 when President Lee Tenghui announced he wanted China to treat Taiwan's government as an equal.

Last week the United States announced a \$550 million weapons sales to Taiwan, further infuriating China. To military men such as Qiao and Wang, there is a direct connection between Kosovo and Taiwan and Tibet. "If today you impose your value systems on a European country, tomorrow you can do the same to Taiwan and Tibet", Wang said

Also see article by James D. Perry referred to in footnote 75, p 30.

Japan, which given the historical animosity between the two, they did not consider a good augury. The *People's Daily* saw a qualitative change in Japan's defense posture, and posed a hypothetical crisis in which this new, less restricted Japan could work with the United States:

First, the main function changes from 'pure defense' to armed intervention in regional conflicts; second, the military space expands from the 'far east' to the 'periphery'; third, cooperation with the United States changes from passive participation by providing military bases to active cooperation in war, involving an increase in over 40 military cooperation projects . . . In a certain month of a certain year armed conflict 'breaks out' or 'will break out' on Japan's periphery, and the United States will circumvent the Security Council and use armed force, and demand that Japan take part; if the Japanese Government defines this as a "peripheral situation", it will formulate a plan for cooperation with the United States.<sup>81</sup>

China, of course, suspects that the definition of 'periphery' could also include Taiwan. The new guidelines with Japan and the renewal of defense relationships with a number of South East Asian states, including Australia, has raised questions in Chinese eyes about the intentions of the United States in the region. Regardless of the accuracy of this view, the US, in any case, would not like Beijing to have too favorable a balance

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<sup>81</sup> *People's Daily*, April 30, Lu Zhongwei; "What is the Purpose of the 'New Guidelines?'" FBIS-CHI-1999-0430.

across the straits as evidenced by its recent pressurizing of Israel not to sell a sophisticated airborne radar system to China.<sup>82</sup>

Beijing has offered an alternative to American policies on maintaining international stability with its own “New Security Concept”, which purportedly provides a blueprint for relations between states in the next century. In contrast to the United States’s policy of strengthening its bilateral and multilateral security alliances (characterized by the Chinese as “Cold War thinking”), the Chinese proposals, first spelt out in the State Council’s White Paper “China’s National Defense” in July 1998 (although mentioned by various Chinese leaders since 1997), call for relations among states to be based on the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”, non-discrimination in trade practices, and the use of the military in a number of transnational problems such as the drug trade and terrorism.<sup>83</sup> A Chinese scholar summarizes the philosophy of the new concept this way: “... ‘comprehensive security’ means the manifold broadening of the connotation of security, ‘cooperative security’ points out the right way to guaranteeing security through cooperation, and ‘common security’ emphasizes the international character and interdependence of national security.”<sup>84</sup>

This new formulation seems obtuse but unexceptionable and will probably be increasingly referred to by Chinese leaders and appear in “joint communiqués” and similar statements signed between China and other countries during foreign visits. Taken together with the various “partnership” agreements, they provide a theoretical roadmap for China’s foreign relations. But how practical they are or whether they will cause any

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<sup>82</sup> *The New York Times*, July 13, 2000, "Israel Drops Plan To Sell Air Radar to China Military", p1.

<sup>83</sup> For an analysis of the security concept see David Finkelstein: "China's New Security; Reading Between the Lines", *Washington Journal of Modern China*, Spring, 1999, pp.37-49.

modifications to the security architecture being put in place by the United States is another matter.

China's angry reaction to the bombing of its Embassy was understandable, but it perhaps hinted at Beijing's frustration at seeing the world move in a manner somewhat at variance with what it had hoped for. Kosovo was not just about a unipolar world. International norms are shifting as well, and some of the changes relating to human rights and state sovereignty will keep the PRC on the defensive. In addition, events in Kosovo developed without Beijing's involvement, confirming the PRC's status as a regional, rather than a world power. And even though, the Japanese Diet's approval of the new guidelines in April 1999 may have had more to do with the Taepodong missile fired by North Korea and Parliamentary scheduling than with Kosovo,<sup>85</sup> it still confirmed Chinese fears that an overall security order was being put into place that was not necessarily to Beijing's advantage.

An immediate casualty of Kosovo was the China-US relationship. Few Chinese believe that the Embassy bombing on May 8 was an accident. Instead, they considered it a sinister attempt to put China in its place, or to at least determine how Beijing deals with superior force.<sup>86</sup> Chinese irritation would have been aggravated when, also in May, the Shelby and the Cox Committee Reports were put before the United States Congress.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Luo Renshi, "The Struggle Between Two Security Concepts— Observations on the Old and New Security Theories", *International Strategic Studies* CISS, No 2, 2000.

<sup>85</sup> Japan's post-Cold War responsibilities, as defined in the new guidelines, emanated from its role, or rather non-role during the Gulf War. Japan has been cautious, but once the Taepodong was fired, it was easier for the Japanese public to accept an enhanced defense profile.

<sup>86</sup> Bao Hongjun and Qi Xiaohua, *People's Daily (Guangzhou South China News Supplement)*, May 12, "NATO Atrocity Warns Our People: Cast Aside Illusions and Work Hard To Make Our Country Strong", FBIS-CHI-1999-0512

<sup>87</sup> The Shelby Committee's (Senate) "Report on Impacts to U.S. National Security of Advanced Satellite Technology Exports to the People's Republic of China, and the Report on the PRC's Efforts to Influence US Policy" alleged a pattern of damaging technology leakage.

Then there is the issue of Taiwan. Beijing has maintained that the Taiwan situation is an internal matter and therefore it has the right to use force, if necessary, to reunite it with the mainland. Kosovo seemingly provided a precedent on how the West could react to an attempt to settle internal problems through the use of force, and thus complicated China's position on Taiwan. Furthermore, the military power demonstrated in Kosovo is capable of frustrating a mainland military invasion, should the United States assist Taiwan in any capacity. Meanwhile, Taiwan has moved on to democracy, increasingly accepting a value system espoused by the West, in contrast with the PRC.<sup>88</sup>

For Beijing, the issue is one of credibility. The Chinese have let it be known that they will invade Taiwan, if the island declares independence. An invasion will certainly take place if any such declaration threatens the survival of the Beijing regime. On the other hand, Taiwan could maintain the appearance of the status quo, while in reality, with the PRC military threat looking less ominous, continue to move away from the mainland, making the prospect of reunification ever more distant. This is the dilemma facing Beijing.

Overall, the PRC thus sees three major external threats. First, Taiwan could seek de jure independence backed by the United States and possibly also by Japan. Second, political dissension could emerge at home, inspired by the United States and other Western powers, as exemplified by the Tian Anmen incident in June 1989. Finally, the

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The Cox Committee (House) Report on "U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the PRC" alleged a long-term and large-scale PRC effort to divert and steal military, dual-use, and civilian US technology.

Losses and diversions were said to include design information on nuclear war-heads and anti-submarine, missile, guidance, and aviation-related technology and hardware as well as high-performance computers.

I have taken the above summary on the reports from David M. Lampton and Gregory C. May: "*Managing US-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century*", Nixon Center, September 1999.



rise of religious forces, especially in China's minority areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang, might reinforce separatist movements abetted by foreign elements.<sup>89</sup>

Kosovo touched upon all these issues in some form or the other. The Embassy bombing and the resulting loss of life may have triggered the high emotions that swept China, but their coincidence with the Japanese Diet's approval of the US-Japan security guidelines and the presentation of the Shelby and Cox reports (all while the Kosovo operations were on), often removed the fine line between geopolitical analysis and paranoia that marked Chinese reaction at the time. Nevertheless, the underlying issues are real and the PRC has to tackle them.

Even after its embassy was hit, China decided very quickly that its best course of action at the domestic level was to move forward with its economic reforms and policy of "opening up." This has already been referred to earlier in the paper. In external relations, it acted to ensure that the events of Kosovo did not cloud the big picture. In the UN, although it had been unhappy with how the US dealt with China on Kosovo, it shortly thereafter voted with the West on a resolution to send a UN Mission to examine the separation of Timor from Indonesia (UNSCR 1246, June 11). It was also supportive of a resolution against abetment of terrorism by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (UNSCR 1267, Oct 15). If it did not wish to cooperate, China could well have considered these to be internal matters of the states concerned<sup>90</sup>. The Chinese consider the meeting between

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<sup>88</sup> In 1987, martial law was abolished, a competitive party system was put in place in the 1980s and 1990s, the first direct, popular election of the President in 1996 and the second Presidential election in March, 2000.

<sup>89</sup> A good summary which I have taken from a Weatherhead Center paper prepared by Wang Jisi: "Multipolarity versus Hegemonism: Chinese Views of International Politics"

<sup>90</sup> The PRC, like the rest of the world does not accept the annexation of Timor by Indonesia. In addition, there could have been a tactical problem. Shortly before, Macedonia had switched diplomatic recognition from Beijing to Taipei in return for development funds from Taiwan. If Timor should become independent,

Presidents Bill Clinton and Jiang Zemin in Auckland in September 1999 as marking the gradual normalization of relations between the two countries.<sup>91</sup> China also moved to consolidate relations with Russia and the Central Asian nations—a fourth Summit meeting taking place between the leaders of Russia, China, Kazhakstan, Kirgызstan and Turkmenistan in August 1999. This gathering was not only important for oil resources, but to prevent any possible encouragement to Uighurs seeking independence in Xinjiang. China settled its land border with Vietnam and seems increasingly constructive in the Korean peninsula. In general, there appears to be a more activist and more focussed Chinese foreign policy to clean up border disputes so as to concentrate on Taiwan and South China Sea maritime issues.

The United States and China compensated each other for the damages to their respective Embassies.<sup>92</sup> Official contacts, broken off after the Embassy bombing, have gradually been restored, including those between the two militaries<sup>93</sup>, although, for the time being, China does not refer to the US as a “strategic partner.” While the psychological scars will remain, the two states will move quickly to mending their broader relationship.

In the final analysis, whatever shape the international system takes, by its sheer size and population, China is too important a country to be left outside it. It is already a major player in the world by virtue of being one of the largest trading nations. While China's military strength continues to grow, it has so far followed a careful path of giving priority to economic development so as to emerge as a *complete power*. In this respect,

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it too could seek funds from Taiwan. Any PRC reluctance at the Security Council could help the Taiwanese later.

<sup>91</sup> In November, the two countries reached an agreement on China's entry into the WTO.

the extended discussions in the Chinese media on “comprehensive national strength” are indicative of the lessons Beijing learned from the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, as its economy expands and the standard of living of its people rises, its requirements of food and energy, capital and technology, and advanced managerial and technical skills will grow. Today, even the most fervent votaries of national chauvinism are being hollowed out by an increasingly interdependent world, with its changing mores, rapid communications, globalization of manufacturing processes, international capital flows and voluntary surrender of aspects of sovereignty (as exemplified by the EU). China has not remained untouched by these movements as evidenced in its increased interest in global multilateral cooperation.

I have referred to China behaving as a status quo power but some analysts would describe this as merely a tactical accommodation while the Chinese build up their strength. If the residual consequences of Kosovo imply the emerging of a differently evolved consensus on the international system, how will the Chinese cope? Kosovo certainly suggested, at least if we are to go by official pronouncements, that international norms regarding sovereignty and human rights are changing. How far will China go to adjust its internal and external policies to take into account these new norms? And what effect will they have on China's economic progress, Communist Party rule and other aspects of the internal political situation. Indeed, much will depend on the PRC's change of a mind-set that often characterizes its behaviour.

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<sup>92</sup> According to some sources the White House over-ruled a strict legalistic approach recommended by the State Department.

<sup>93</sup> During Defense Secretary Cohen's visit to China in July 2000.

<sup>94</sup> See Michael Pillsbury: "*CHINA Debates The Future Security Environment*"

Ian Buruma has described China as “the last great power to try to run an empire.”<sup>95</sup> Whatever the truth of this assertion, China’s political system is not without some uncertainties, and its lack of transparency at times appears to be against the general trend of international relations. Kosovo may not have been one of the decisive conflicts to define the values for the next millenium, given some of the hypocrisy and incompetence on all sides in that tragic part of the world.<sup>96</sup> But a debate has been opened<sup>97</sup> amongst other matters, on what shape the international system is likely to take in the coming years and on the responsibilities of governments both in their internal and external policies. None of these issues started with Kosovo, but that conflict provided an opportunity to revisit the questions involved. As an aspiring great power, China will have to make a contribution to that discourse.

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<sup>95</sup> Ian Buruma, "Tibet Disenchanted", *New York Review of Books*, July 20,2000.

<sup>96</sup> The UN/the West did precious little about the humanitarian disaster in Rwanda.

<sup>97</sup> The issue of "humanitarian intervention" dominated the plenary debate in the General Assembly of the UN in 1999, coming as it did immediately after Kosovo. China and others, such as India, Indonesia, Cuba etc., the so-called "Bandung Patriarchs", with their strong sense of nationalism championed the absolute sovereignty of states. At the other end of the spectrum, were a number of European countries espousing the doctrine of "humanitarian intervention". They were, surprisingly, supported by many small countries, especially from Africa, who took the view that with the problems they have, outside intervention was necessary. In between these two groups, was a third, which wanted to examine "humanitarian intervention", provided rules were laid out, was non-discriminatory and was authorized by the UN. In short, the majority of nations look at "humanitarian intervention" with a great deal of suspicion, although even they feel that there is a debate underway on the issue, which must be addressed.

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