

Conclusions

In dealing with the US withdrawal from the ABM, the Chinese are likely to continue to press for a treaty to arrest the weaponization of space. US resistance to the priority of such a treaty will likely be cast as opposition to the UN struggle for collective security. At the same time the Chinese have even less reason to be generous in their approach to American arms control initiatives and may impose an even stricter bilateral conditionality on such initiatives. Also, the Chinese will likely choose carefully selected areas of high tech where they might begin to compete over the long term with the US in the new era of high-tech local war. Given such strong and continuing emphasis on national economic development, they are wary of the costs associated with a more widely construed arms race that would excessively burden the economy and possibly generate domestic political instability. There is nothing extraordinary in their view that interests have to be squared with cooperation. What is perhaps odd is the extent to which a partial role reversal has taken place as the Chinese and Americans consider the neoliberal underpinnings of economic globalization. China's "peace and development" has been pitted against a "China threat", which the Chinese see as utterly polemical in nature.

The new Chinese multilateralism will attempt to encourage multipolarity and to consolidate political alignments against US "unilateralism" in the context of arms control diplomacy. Chinese foreign policy and strategic thinking has historically developed on the dialectical understanding of the positive and negative forces at work in any domestic or international political context. For sound national economic reasons, the Chinese prefer politics to an arms race. The underlying sophistication of Chinese dialectical analysis is not always appreciated, but this analysis is used to dealing cool headedly with contradictions between national interests and is capable of handling competing events and circumstances. Having said this, it is remarkable how coherent Chinese policy is even in the new pluralized context of developing professionalism, and it is still striking how rapidly the Chinese are adapting to globalization and multilateralism in international relations based on their relatively brief experience of regional security cooperation in the Asia Pacific.