

for instance, that fact the CSCE/OSCE has been more than twenty years in the making, while one of the earlier, more serious efforts—the North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue (NPCSD) initiative—had its origin merely six years ago, and the Asia-Pacific version approximate to CSCE/OSCE—the ARF—only began less than two years ago, we may begin to assess China's progress in quite a different light.

Chinese approaches toward multilateralism should be judged within the broader contexts of its past experiences, its current concerns, and the dynamics of its domestic politics. China has been cautious about adopting multilateral approaches out of a number of reasons: the limited and negative experience; the fear of small states ganging up against China (China bashing); and the concern that multilateral security forums may give Taiwan legitimacy. China's limited experiences in the past with multilateralism were far from positive. A few examples will suffice: The League of Nations and its acquiescence in Japanese invasion of China in 1931; the Soviet attempt to control China through both the 3<sup>rd</sup> Communist International and later the Comecon. China also suspects, (and has tried to stop), that the territorial disputes in the South China Sea and China's military buildup may be turned into *the* issues at regional security forums.<sup>61</sup> Finally, Beijing is highly sensitive about *de facto* recognition of Taiwan's legitimacy through participation in some of the regional security dialogues. The stalemate concerning membership of both China and Taiwan in the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific (CSCAP) to a large extent is due to Beijing's objection to Taiwan's participation.<sup>62</sup>

Domestic politics has always featured prominently in China's foreign policy making; indeed, there are discernable linkages between domestic politics and foreign policy behavior.<sup>63</sup> Such linkages become all the more pronounced during periods of uncertainty due to leadership succession and power transition, which makes flexibility difficult. The current leadership does not wield the kind of power held by the old generation of revolutionaries and consequently initiatives on their part are less of a possibility than negotiated compromises. Within such a framework, important foreign policy decisions that touch upon important and sensitive issues such as state sovereignty and territorial integrity will normally not be subject to multilateral considerations. Another factor that must be considered is that external environment exerts less of a direct impact on Chinese policy making. While international system acts to encourage certain behaviors and discourage others, the defining variable remains domestic.<sup>64</sup>

Another way of understanding Chinese approaches to multilateralism is what Samuel Kim regards as the tension between rhetoric and practice, theory and praxis. China tends to propose principles well beyond its capabilities; at the same time, there is the practical side

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<sup>61</sup> Shirk, *Chinese Views on Asia-Pacific Regional Security*, p.11.

<sup>62</sup> Paul M. Evans, "The New Multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific and the Conditional Engagement of China," in James Shinn, ed., *Weaving the Net: Conditional Engagement with China* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1996), p.261.

<sup>63</sup> Wang, "Comparing Chinese and American Conceptions of Security," p.5.

<sup>64</sup> David Bachman, "Domestic Sources of Chinese Foreign Policy," in Samuel S. Kim, ed., *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp.42-59.