

1. Russia recognizes the primacy of the fundamental principles of international law.
2. The world must be multi-polar. Domination is something we cannot allow. We do not accept a world order in which a single country makes all the decisions, even if it is as serious and influential as the United States. A world of this kind is unstable and threatened by conflict.

In his speech about Georgia's attack against South Ossetia, Dmitri Medvedev stated that in the future, "it depends not only on us but also on our friends and partners in the international community. They have a choice."¹⁰ Stratfor's head of geopolitical analysis, George Friedman, thinks that this provides a basis in doctrine for intervening in these countries if Russia perceives an attack on its interests. According to Friedman, when Medvedev states that Russia has a special interest in certain regions, it is referring to the area of the former Soviet Union.

Thus, incursions by third parties to attempt to undermine pro-Russian governments in this region would be considered threats to Russian interests. Therefore, the Georgian conflict would not be an isolated incident, since Medvedev had stated that Russia was immersed in a geopolitical redefinition of the regional and global international system. In short, Russia is restructuring relations in this geographical area that it calls "abroad, but close to home," whose center is Moscow.

On the other hand, the European Union will have neither the military weight nor the determination to confront Russia. What is more, the Europeans are heavily dependent on Russian natural gas, something that will continue in coming years,

while Russia can survive without selling it to them. This means that the European Union is not a substantial factor in the equation, nor does it seem it will become one in the future. **MM**

NOTES

- ¹ Created in 1997, PNAC is an initiative of the New Citizenship Project. Its aim is to promote U.S. world leadership and hegemony through different actions, including war. A large part of its ideas and members are associated with the neoconservative movement, which is why its ranks have included well-known Republicans like former President George W. Bush. *Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol is PNAC president. Its leadership has seven permanent members, plus a group of directors. For more information, see <http://newamericancentury.org/>. [Editor's Note.]
- ² See <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9594.doc.htm>. [Editor's Note.]
- ³ "Tskhinvali is closed," declared the Joint Peacekeeping Command Major General Marat Kulakhmetov, August 8, 2008. See www.iraq.mirror.world.ru, p. 3.
- ⁴ "Departamento de Estado: en Georgia recae parte de la responsabilidad," available on line at www.iraqwar.mirror.world.ru, p. 1.
- ⁵ See several articles published on the Stratfor website at http://www.stratfor.com/node/22361/archive/sf_sitrep?page=121, August 10, 2008. Also, John Saxe-Fernández, "El Cáucaso: polvorín estratégico," *La Jornada*, August 28, 2008, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2008/08/28/index.php?section=opinion&article=028a1eco>.
- ⁶ Vladimir Putin, "Geopolitical Diary: Decision Time in South Ossetia," available on line at www.stratfor.com/geopolitical_diary/geopolitical_diary_decision_time_south_ossetia, August 8, 2008, p. 3.
- ⁷ According to Rogozin, Poland and the United States' signing of the DAM Accord confirms that the anti-missile shield is aimed at Russia. See Russian News and Information Agency, Novosti, September 15, 2008.
- ⁸ Interview with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin broadcast by Al Jazeera television network, September 28, 2008.
- ⁹ Immanuel Wallerstein, "Ajedrez geopolítico: el trasfondo de una mini-guerra en el Cáucaso," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), September 15, 2008, available on line at <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2008/09/13/index.php?section=opinion&article=032a1mun>.
- ¹⁰ The five points, plus Medvedev and Friedman's opinions can be consulted in George Friedman, "The Medvedev Doctrine and American Strategy," September 2, 2008, available on line at http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/medvedev_doctrine_and_american_strategy. [Editor's Note.]

A Prudent Power? China in the UN Security Council

José Luis León-Manríquez*

Two events in the 1970s frame the current importance of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly. In

1971, when what was then called *détente* began, China established relations with the United States and became a member of the UN, occupying the Security Council seat that had been filled by Taiwan since 1949. When Mao Zedong, the historic leader of the Chinese revolution, died in 1976, the Asian giant had already recovered the centuries-old status as a

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great power that it had lost in the middle of the nineteenth century.

This political power would soon be complemented with the development of impressive economic capabilities. Starting in 1978, the People's Republic of China, guided by Deng Xiaoping, began an ambitious —albeit uncertain— experiment of reforms to its productive structure, anticipating the frustrated Soviet *perestroika* by quite a while. In a short time, the changes in China's economic structure improved its productive efficiency and insertion into international markets. Thanks to these reforms, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, China became the world's third largest economy, following only the United States and Japan, and displacing Germany and England. According to the consulting firm Goldman Sachs, China could displace the United States as the world's main economy in the next three or four decades. More modest and accustomed to thinking in terms of very long historical periods, the Chinese often say that this process could take 100 more years.

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In any case, it is undeniable that the conjunction of political-diplomatic muscle with economic strength makes Beijing a rising world power. What is more, China is a latent super-power with political, diplomatic, military and even ideological power vectors that could eventually position it as the only nation capable of representing a force for equilibrium in the face of the United States' questioned hegemony. Therefore, Beijing will be a central force in the coming years that will contribute to slowing or accelerating changes in the international system and, with that, inside the United Nations.

Multilateralism is one of Beijing's central foreign policy concerns. But with regard to this issue, like others, the leadership bases itself on a form of pragmatic nationalism that has eliminated all ideological or doctrinaire considerations. While in the 1950s and 1960s, China sought to export revolution, today, it prefers to export its goods to international markets. This interest seems to be due to a determination



David Gray/Reuters

to maintain stability in the national and international conditions that have made its successful growth strategy possible. At the same time, it is attempting to strike a balance in the face of the uneven social growth brought on by economic growth.

CHINA AND MULTILATERALISM

The new China is navigating through the world trying to replace its fire-breathing-dragon image with the warm presence of the panda. The idea of “peaceful ascension” (*heping juequi*) articulated by the authorities and conceived in think-tanks close to the government states that the country's growth should not be seen as a threat to the world. Using a key concept from Confucius's thought, repudiated in the past by Maoism, today the official discourse emphasizes harmony. The China of today and tomorrow, they assure, will avoid repeating the mistakes made by Germany and Japan, the powers that emerged at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The message seems to be that though Beijing will not be passing out flowers like 1960s San Francisco hippies, it will also not destabilize an international system from which it has obtained very concrete benefits.

In the construction of China's foreign policy discourse, the concept of multilateralism is a much more effective tool, also backed up by historical evidence. While the People's Republic of China was excluded from the UN system as a collateral effect of the Cold War, the Maoist strategists led the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. China then considered itself —as it continues to— a developing country, despite its flirtations with the group of the world's more industrial-

ized nations (the G-8). To paraphrase the José Martí of “Guanamamera,” although with greater and greater ambivalence, China wants to throw in its lot with the poor of the Earth.

China’s close relations with the peripheral countries were one of the factors that, with time, facilitated its reincorporation into the UN and the resulting expulsion of Taiwan. As a member, Beijing has used the multilateral expedient as a pillar of its foreign policy. In the post-Cold-War period, China considers that the world is moving toward a multi-polar international order and that globalization and technological progress are contributing to decentralizing power. According to its vision of the world, in 20 years, a unified Europe will have matured as a power capable of countering the might of the United States. At the same time, countries like Russia, Japan, India and China itself will have reached the status of world powers. In this perspective, for the People’s Republic of China, Washington’s long-term declining hegemony is inevitable, although it takes no action to precipitate it.

If the world’s future is multi-polar, in China’s view, then, it would be a good idea to increase the role of multilateral bodies in global diplomacy to its full potential. In this sense, the UN General Assembly is a particularly good place for the exercise of Chinese diplomacy. Through delicate, continual diplomacy, Beijing has managed to consolidate a wide network of relations with the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, with which it is also linked through growing economic relations. The Security Council is another sphere of expression for Chinese foreign policy.

ON THE ART OF TRANSFORMING
CAUTION INTO POLICY:
CHINA IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Since its reincorporation into the UN system as one of the five permanent members, China has exhibited quite a moderate position in the Security Council. It has used its veto rights only six times since 1971. In all these cases, its main motivation has been the defense of its own interests more than a desire to play a hegemonic role. In 1972, it vetoed the admission of Bangladesh to the UN. That same year, in accordance with the USSR vote, it blocked a resolution about the ceasefire for the Six-Day War in the Middle East. In 1997, it vetoed the establishment of a mission to verify the ceasefire in Guatemala, since the latter still has relations with Taiwan. In 1999, also because of the “Taiwan factor,” China

refused to authorize extending a peacekeeping mission in Macedonia. In January 2007, together with Russia, it vetoed a resolution that called on the government of Myanmar to free all its political prisoners, improve its human rights record and initiate dialogue with the opposition. The joint Moscow-Beijing position was the first multiple veto in the council since 1989. In July 2008, just like old times, both powers once again joined forces to veto a Security Council resolution placing international restrictions on the free transit of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe and some of his collaborators, freezing their bank accounts abroad, and levying a weapons embargo on their country.

It is true that the People’s Republic of China was absent from the Security Council for more than two decades. However, its half dozen vetoes are frankly modest compared to the 18 times France has used its right of veto, or the United Kingdom’s 32 times, the United States’ 82, or the Soviet Union/Russia’s 123 times. As can be deduced from its behav-

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ior in the council, in matters that represent a potential conflict with other members, China prefers to abstain and use the veto very little.

This prudence, however, should not be interpreted as synonymous with innocence. In fact Beijing’s positions in this decade’s main international conflicts clearly illustrate its aforementioned nationalism and pragmatic defense of its national interests. For example, in the face of the invasion of Afghanistan after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, China voted for an international coalition led by the United States. At the same time, it took advantage of that situation to characterize Muslim separatism in the Xinjiang region as terrorist. China presented itself as another victim of terrorism and argued that, since Afghanistan was one of its neighbors, it could do no less than support the fight against this same phenomenon within its own borders.

Beijing’s apparent support for U.S. positions would begin to reach its limits in 2002 and 2003 around the issue of the

war in Iraq. From the start, China insisted that the resolution of the conflict be discussed in the Security Council. On November 8, 2002, the council passed Resolution 1441, calling on Baghdad to allow rigorous UN inspections and threatening Iraq with “serious consequences” if it did not fulfill its disarmament commitments. However, the resolution did not imply the automatic use of armed force against Iraq. In March 2003, Washington ordered the use of force against the Saddam Hussein regime with no further consultations. During the crisis, China supported France and Russia’s position favoring continued weapons inspections in Iraq. Despite expressing its opposition to the use of force, it was careful not to openly declare that it would veto a resolution on this backed by Washington. If the vote had final-

ly been taken, China might have abstained as it did during the first Gulf War in 1991 and not used its veto.

Chinese diplomacy has not shared Washington’s enthusiasm for forcing Iran to cancel its nuclear program. Its lack of support for the U.S. position on Iran is not only based on principle: China imports one-third of the oil and gas it consumes, and almost all of that comes from the Middle East. China’s main oil supply lines in the region are Iran and the United Arab Emirates, which partially explains its attitude. In addition, in the 1990s, China provided Teheran with inputs to facilitate uranium enrichment. It is no surprise, then, that with regard to Iran and Iraq, China’s position is much closer to Russia’s—and even France’s—than to the United States’. **MM**

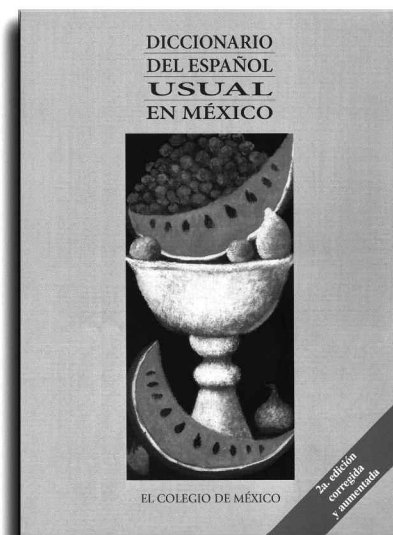
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DIRIGIDO POR
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Primera edición, 1996
Segunda edición, corregida y aumentada, 2009

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