

Peoples Republic of China

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The analysis of different phases of Chinese leadership indicates the key factors that have shaped the Chinese National Security Policy over the years. According to John Garnett, states learn by experience and from history. Thus, it can be said that the Chinese national security policy making does have an influence of the historical events like 'century of humiliation' at the hands of West and the opium war. Similarly a state's geographical location, territory and population strength also bears an influence on the policy making. This again is true in case of PRC as it holds a significant position in terms of its geographical location, size of territory and population strength and thus its significance in contemporary international politics cannot be denied. The policy makers are also constrained by the treaty obligations, the commitments they inherit from their predecessors, by alliances and by domestic environment that may include availability of the resources, the economic stability etc. Again, it can be established that all these factors have influenced the National Security Policy of PRC at different points in time (as it will be discussed later in the paper). Lastly, the ideology or a value system may also act as a constraint. For instance the influence of Mao's doctrines or the Confucius ideology is particularly relevant in case of China.

This paper thus aims at identifying the main interests and national objectives of PRC and then analyzes the decision making process in China by critically evaluating and analyzing the different phases of Chinese leadership. This paper also analyzes the decision making process and the major foreign policy trends of PRC and predicts its future course of action in the light of historical evidences, decision making models and theories.

National Objectives/Interests of the PRC

National interest is defined by Garnett as,

The common material and spiritual needs of all the people of a nation state. In material terms a nation needs security and development. In spiritual terms, a

nation needs respect and recognition from the international community. Especially for a big country spiritual needs can be as important as material needs.¹

China has devised its national security strategy mainly on the basis of its economic, political and security interests. The table below identifies the economic, security, political and cultural interest/objectives of the PRC, along with the threats and challenges that it has to face to achieve its objectives.

Table 1: China's Economic, Security, Political and Cultural Interests/Objectives and the threats and challenges ²

	Economic	Security	Political & Cultural
Interests/ Objectives	Foreign trade, absorption of foreign capital, technology acquisition, international tourism, international Contracting, export of labor, overseas investment, as well as participation in international stock markets, and patenting technology.	Safeguarding sovereignty and to become modernized strategically; for that its economy must not be disturbed by war, so it needs to stay out of military clashes and work for regional peace.	Maintaining sovereignty, to establish a new fair and rational world order in post- Cold War era and to preserve China's traditional outlook intact.
Threats/ Challenges	Protectionist measures of planned economy hinder its integration in international markets. Excessive governmental interference. Peaceful environment has intensified	Possible declaration of independence by Taiwan, secessionist movement in Xinjiang, Clash with USA, Asian Countries, Japan and India over disputed territories and	The clash of China versus West on issue of Human Rights and democracy, the questions of self-determination in regions like Xinjiang and Tibet, the western interference in name of

	Economic	Security	Political & Cultural
	economic competition. After Soviet disintegration, China and Western states have potential political conflicts.	islands may affect its flourishing economy and international trade relations.	humanitarian aid and democracy, the difference in Western and Chinese culture.

In view of the threats and challenges in the way of achieving its objectives and maximize its interests PRC has adopted a strategy where it is making use of ‘soft power’ as per Sun Tzu’s idea. Moreover, to counter Western efforts to contain China’s economic influence, China is also inclined towards making alliances with the countries that share economic interests in the region thus focusing more on economic development in order to attain the goal of strategic modernization.

Decision Making Processes

The Rational Actor Model

Allison (1971)³ proposed three ‘Decision Making’ models to explain the Cuban missile crisis; Rational Actor Model (RAM), The Organizational Process Model (OPM) and the Governmental Politics Model. Rational Actor Model is best suited to explain the Decision Making Process in China.

The RAM attempts at explaining the international events by recounting the aims and calculations of nations or governments. There are four key concepts of this model; goals/objectives, alternatives, choice and consequences.⁴

Objectives refers to the ‘interests and values of an agent’ which are translated in terms of utility or pay-offs. Alternatives mean that the rational agent must choose among a set of alternatives available to him/her in a particular situation. Choice means that each alternative has a set of consequences or outcomes that will follow, if a particular alternative is chosen. Consequences mean that the agent shall go for a value maximizing option (within constraints) on the basis of consequences and utility of that choice.⁵

John Garnett's view of rationality is identical to Allison's RAM. He talks about the predicament of the policy makers stating that the reality of the 'power politics' is one of the most obvious and intractable of the external forces that constrains the freedom of the policy makers. According to him "nothing defines the parameters within which a nation can or must act more than its relative power and attributed status in the international order".⁶ According to Garnett, there are four basic premises (other than policy makers' predicament) that may define or control the defense policy making i.e. history and geography, commitments/obligations/ domestic environment, value systems and the rationality.⁷

Decision Making Structure and Process

Graham T. Allison and John Garnett regard 'rationality' as one of the key elements of the decision making processes. The decision making process in PRC initially was in the hands of Paramount leader⁸, however, the post Mao era has seen the collective leadership trends especially during Jiang Zemin's and Hu Jintao's period. The trend, under Xi Jinping, is again shifting towards Mao's era when the paramount leader exercised the supreme authority.

The authority of national security decision-making in China is distributed and exercised by several government establishments, such as the National People's Congress, the President, State Council, and the Central Military Commission.⁹

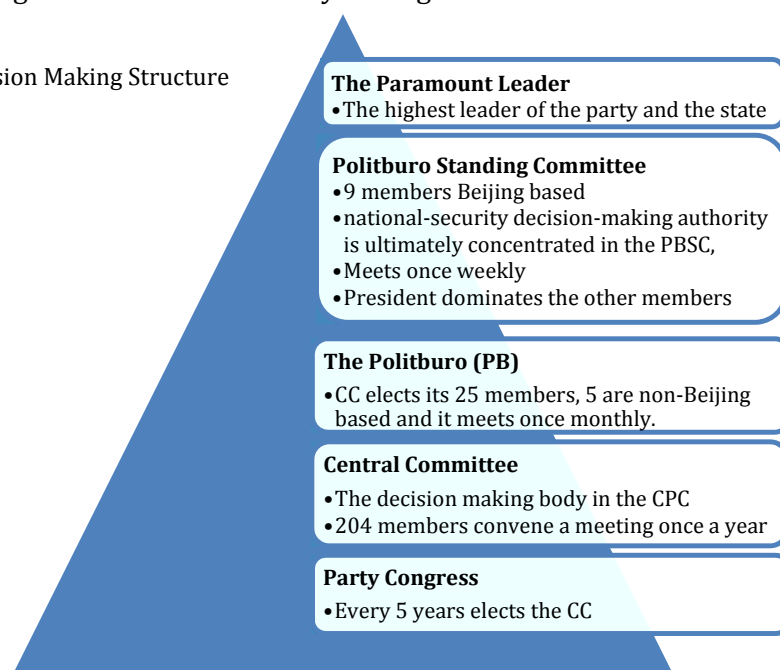
The National People's Congress has the supreme legislative and decision-making authorities by virtue of its power to approve the appointments of senior leaders, its control over the national-security budget, its legislative power, and the power to declare war. The President enjoys executive authority over personnel appointment, considerable decision-making power on non-critical and operational national security issues, and certain power over the processes. The State Council (cabinet) and the Central Military Commission are the key implementers of national security decisions. Their operational expertise and informational advantage also warrants their participation in the decision-making process, although not as the key decision-makers.¹⁰

The Communist Party of China (CPC) plays the central leadership role in China's national security affairs. Depending on the significance of the issue, the decision-

making authority could either reside with the paramount leader or require broader participation and approval from the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), Politburo, or even the Central Committee.¹¹

The idea of ‘collective leadership’ is practiced when, for certain strategic issues, the Paramount leader lacks full confidence in making an independent call. In that case the whole PBSC sits and takes a decision e.g. the time when PBSC had to decide whether China should change its policy toward the United States as a result of the 1999 bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade.

Figure 1: Decision Making Structure



The Paramount leader not only holds a superior position in CPC but also in the whole country, as the State Council and the Central Military Commission/State (CMC) also report to the paramount leader. The Foreign Affairs Office of Central Committee and the State Counsellor are there to assist the paramount leader.

China's National Security Policy—The Past, Present and the Future

Stephanie G. Neumann defines National Security Policy (NSP) with the help of a cob-web model where she regards defense and foreign policy as two of the various

sub-sets of the NSP. NSP is a broad term that articulates the national interests, objectives and the means (political, social, economic and military) that are used to protect and further those interests and objectives.¹²

The pattern of PRCs' Security Policy indicates that the decision making process has always been influenced by factors like history and geography, commitments/obligations/ domestic environment, values etc. Decision making is a deliberate and conscious effort usually undertaken by rational men. The decision makers (the paramount leaders and politburos) have been taken as rational actors. The notion is that the decision making process regarding the NSP is based on rationality. Thus although to an outsider the policy might not seem rational at all; but the way decisions are made reflects policymakers' or decision-makers' desire to maximize or at least satisfy most national interests at the lowest possible cost to the state. According to Robert Gilpin

...Rationality applies only to endeavor, not to outcome; failure to achieve an objective because of ignorance or some other factor does not invalidate the rationalist premise that individuals act on the basis of a cost/benefit or means/ends calculation.¹³

The First Generation

Mao had an ultimate goal of 'great harmony' for China and considered himself as an agent to rejuvenate China. His era was however marked with tensions with the outside world.¹⁴ China went through three wars (Korean War, Sino-Indian and Vietnam War) and faced crises over Taiwan with USA.

Chinese actions in Taiwan Strait Crises 1954-58, Indian border clash of 1962 and the Sino-Vietnam war of 1979 all had the common features of a sudden blow followed by a political phase. The Chinese believed that by restoring the psychological equation the genuine deterrence is achieved.¹⁵

Mao strived for initiative, wherever it was possible, as he rejected the posture in which China was obliged to wait for an attack. The offensive carried out by China was a preemptive strategy that was mostly against the dangers that had not yet materialized. Such preemption was different from the Western idea as it seeks to

change the psychological balance and was less about inflicting a decisive military victory.

Mao added a novel dimension to the power politics; instead of seeking support from any of the two superpowers as counselled by traditional balance of power theory, Mao exploited the Soviet-US fear of each other by challenging both the rivals simultaneously. He confronted US militarily and challenged Soviet Union ideologically.

In the Korean War, although US denied success to North Korea; China (a weak state at that time) was able to fight the nuclear super power to a standstill and oblige it to retreat from its earlier gains. China was unable to liberate the whole of Korea from American imperialism (as per China's initial propaganda) but Mao had gone to war for a larger aim of testing the 'New China' that Mao believed had to purge itself of its historic softness and passivity.¹⁶

In The Taiwan Crisis, Mao went as far as to the brink of nuclear war with the US. Impervious to the nuclear threat, Mao believed that China had achieved its goal by making a symbolic point; i.e. Beijing shelled Quemoy to reaffirm its claim to one China but restrained its action to prevent a two China solution from emerging. Another outcome of the war was the resumption of talks between the two countries i.e. China and the USA. There were 136 rounds of talks at Warsaw which ended in a deadlock. The US wanted China to resolve the Taiwan issue without using force while China believed that renouncing the use of force to establish its sovereignty over its own territory was not negotiable. The talks that started at ambassadorial level went back to first secretary level after facing a severe deadlock.¹⁷

What started off as irritations between PRC and Soviet Union over tones of interpretations (of Marxism), transformed into disputes over practice and theory and eventually turned into actual military clashes. When Khrushchev, in 1957, called for socialist bloc to strive for peaceful co-existence with the Capitalist West; Mao used the occasion to call his socialist colleagues to arms in the struggle against imperialism by declaring 'we should not fear war'.¹⁸

In the second Taiwan Strait crisis, Mao played another strategic game in which he goaded Moscow and Washington into threatening nuclear war against each other. He used Khrushchev's ambivalence to entice him into making a nuclear threat

which he had no intention of carrying out and later also was able to resume talks with the US which were suspended after the first Taiwan Strait crisis. However, the ambassadorial level talks again met with a deadlock that continued for almost a decade.

China exercised the strategy of “wei qi”¹⁹ in Himalayas against India in the 1962 war. China had an apprehension that USA may choose to unleash Taiwan against the mainland whilst it was preoccupied with India in a border clash. China chose the Warsaw talks to evaluate and determine US intentions in the Taiwan Strait. Though it didn’t occupy any territory, yet it continued to lay claim on the territory south of McMahon Line. At the end of this war too, Mao withstood and prevailed in another major crisis despite the famine in China.

Mao started slightly altering his tone towards the USA, in 1965. After the Shanghai Communique of 1972, there was an informal kind of an alliance between PRC and USA. The special feature of this was that both the partners sought to coordinate their actions without creating a formal obligation to do so. Kissinger called this a ‘quasi alliance’ which emerged out of an understanding after discussions between Chinese and American leadership. This understanding was dependent on whether Chinese and American leadership could come to share common geopolitical aims especially with regard to Soviet Union. In the last years of Mao administration, ideology was relegated to the domestic affairs as it took leave from the Foreign Policy. However, where the Chinese leadership used the rhetoric of collective security, there it also reserved the right to prescribe its content, by securing its freedom to maneuver and self-respect.²⁰

Second Generation

Deng Xiaoping did not hold any key office (Chairmanship of CPC and CMC and Premiership) and in every respect, he was a subordinate of Hua in the hierarchical structure of Chinese Communist Party. Despite this he prevailed because he had built connections over the decades within the party and especially in the PLA and operated with far greater political dexterity than Hua. He reversed Mao’s domestic policy but left his foreign policy in place. Deng introduced the reforms in the name of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ in which consumer goods were given priority over heavy industry, the ingenuity of farmers was liberated, the CPC was to become less intrusive and government had to be decentralized. Unlike Mao, he

downplayed his own expertise and entrusted his subordinates to innovate and endorsed their work. He too, was in favor of authoritarian conduct of politics, but abandoned the personality cult.²¹

During Deng's period the Third Vietnam War (1979) was the highest while the aftermath of Tiananmen Square incident (1989) was the lowest point in Sino-US relations. A joint communique was issued on the 1st January 1979 which established the formal relations between the two countries and PRC was officially recognized by the USA.

When USA was fighting the war in Vietnam, China perceived it as the encirclement policy of USA against PRC by deploying its troops first in South Korea and Taiwan and later in Vietnam. In view of this perceived threat it supported the China loyal N. Vietnamese communist leader to counter the US containment policy.

PRC was declared as a principal enemy by Vietnam after which it signed a treaty of Friendship and cooperation with Soviet Union. Later the same year it invaded Cambodia in response to which PRC launched an offensive against Vietnam following the earlier strategy of 'preemptive deterrence'. The coup in Afghanistan, the Iranian Revolution in which PRC saw Soviet Union's involvement and the new Soviet-Vietnam alliance was turning into China's strategic nightmare of encirclement. This particular phase brought China closer to USA. On account of Vietnam War; China evaluated its options carefully and assumed that the brief limited war and extreme weather conditions would make it difficult for Soviet Union to react.

China kept to its self-respect principle and declared that it was not afraid but the moral support from US was needed. Deng went to visit different countries unlike his predecessor who summoned foreign leaders to his residence like an emperor. During his visits, he stressed China's relative backwardness and its desire to acquire technology and expertise from advanced countries. At the same time he maintained that China's backwardness may stand in the way of resisting Soviet Union expansion but if required China will fight the Soviets alone. Deng visited US, Japan and countries in South East Asia at a very crucial time and gave an impression of support by countries that had not, in fact, agreed to support China. This tactic was similar to that of Mao's period when Khrushchev's visit to China was linked to Chinese shelling on Taiwan.

China's primary aim of attacking Vietnam was to preserve the strategic equilibrium in Asia. It undertook that campaign against its ally, Vietnam a fellow communist state and beneficiary of its military and economic aid with moral support, diplomatic backing and intelligence cooperation from the USA (the same imperialist power that Beijing helped eject from Indochina five years earlier). Though the war was a costly affair for PRC it also ushered in the closest collaboration between PRC and the USA for the period of Cold War. During this collaboration, China maintained its position on Taiwan stating that it was its internal affair in which no foreign country has the right to interfere.

Towards the end of Cold War however, both USA and PCR started edging away from their alignment in which they earlier saw themselves as strategic partners against the common Soviet threat. This turned the focus once again to their differences on certain matters like Human Rights issue which was raised and debated fiercely after the events of Tiananmen Square. After the incident the relations between the US and PCR got strained as US under the obligation of spreading the democratic ideals and safeguarding the Human Rights imposed punitive measures on the PRC. The high level government exchanges were suspended, the military cooperation was stopped and the new loans to the PRC were opposed.

In response to all these sanctions, Deng replied with the same rhetorical remarks 'we don't care about the sanctions. We are not scared by them. Americans must understand the history.'

Third Generation

Jiang Zemin was the leader under whom China saw the greatest per capita GDP increases in history, consummated the peaceful return of Hong Kong; reconstructed the relations of PRC with the USA and the rest of the world and launched China on the road to become the global economic powerhouse. Unlike Mao, Chou and Deng, he set a different pattern in domestic as well as international affairs. He was 'cosmopolitan' enough to realize that China would have to operate within an international system rather than middle kingdom remoteness or dominance. Jiang was also not as authoritative as his predecessors and formed a wonderful team

(Qian Qichen and Zhu Rongji) with the help of which the 'leadership collective' was able to set certain high goals.

On account of its relations with the USA, Jiang stated that both countries did not have any big problems except Taiwan. On issue of Human Rights and Political System, Jiang Zemin maintained that 'we do not export revolution but the social system of every country must be chosen by that country. The socialist system of China comes from our own historical position'. The domestic arrangements in his views were beyond the scope of foreign policy. In response to Western criticism and the US' reluctance for a rapprochement after Tiananmen, Jiang too reasserted traditional theme of Mao and Deng by stating China's imperviousness to pressure and its fearsome resistance to any hint of foreign bullying. The American and Western pressure was seen as an attempt to keep China weak by interfering in its internal affairs. To this Jiang Zemin stated 'we never submit to pressure. This is very important. It is a philosophical principle'.²²

The relations between the US and PRC started to mend but also faced certain upheavals because of the third Taiwan Strait crisis and the American bombardment of Chinese embassy in Belgrade. Jiang reemphasized 'the great PRC will never be bullied, the great Chinese nation will never be humiliated, and the great Chinese people will never be conquered'.²³ Throughout this period the economic interdependence increased between the USA and PRC. China was assuming a new world role with interest in every corner of the world and integrated to an unprecedented degree with broader political and economic international trends. In such a situation, Jiang avoided the rhetorical approach of 'imperviousness' towards the future of Taiwan and Sino-US relations rather he took the perspective that future of the world depended on the cooperation between China and the USA. He did not threaten or give a suggestion; simply asked the question 'how we can both compromise and get a satisfactory resolution'?

Fourth Generation

Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao were the main leaders of this generation who took Deng and Jiang's legacy forward. The main foreign policy objective of this generation was to aspire for a peaceful international environment including good relations with the western countries and access to raw materials in order to ensure economic growth. In a world where Leninism had collapsed, the PRC leadership defined their goals in

terms of building a 'moderately well off' society- a term with distinctly Confucian connotations, by turning to traditional Chinese wisdom.

There was a marked shift from utopian visions of Mao's continuous revolution to the traditional Confucius teachings as he was enlisted as a source of Chinese soft power on the world stage. USA opposed Taiwan's membership at United Nations under the same name in view of its three joint communiques with the PRC (1972, 1979 & 1982).

The incident of 9/11 renewed PRC cooperation with USA in which the former was not only quick to condemn the attack but also offered its intelligence and diplomatic support. Both the powers collaborated with each other although they had their differences rooted in history and geo-political orientation.

China emerged as a 'responsible stakeholder' of an international system which was backed by financial and economic realities. In the official Chinese pronouncements the term 'peaceful rise' has been replaced with 'peaceful development' suggesting that PRC seeks a harmonious world and making the point that China will pursue its goals peacefully and within the framework of UN Charter: 'China's development instead of hurting or threatening anyone, can only serve peace, stability and common prosperity in the world'.²⁴

Fifth Generation

Xi Jinping shares the idea with his predecessors for the 'economic development and growth' of China. However he emphasizes upon the glorious past and traditional Chinese ways- the Chinese nationalism. He talks about the 'Chinese Dream' and also refers to a 'strong army dream' and his resolve to strengthen the hold of CPC in politics which actually hints that he might take China on a different route than his predecessors. The ultimate aim is to make China (once again) the center around which the East Asian order revolves. Xi has adamantly opposed any genuine political autonomy in places like Hong Kong, vigorously opposed any expression of ethnic nationalism in places like Xinjiang, and refused to budge on territorial disputes with Japan, India, and neighboring Southeast Asian countries.

In a book 'China is Unhappy' (2010) by Song Xiao Jun, the author maintains that the West is much weaker than previously thought and that the foreigners are not

realizing that there has been a major shift of power in Sino-Western relations. In one of its chapters, the writer Song Xiaojun states ‘that it is a good opportunity to become comprehensively industrialized and to rise and change the world’s unjust and irrational political and economic system’.²⁵ In this context he states that unfortunately we lack elite at this point who can lead us to do that and makes an appeal to the nationalist youth of China to rise to the occasion. Perhaps, Jinping is the kind of elite he was referring to; a leader who is calling for China’s traditional role of Middle Kingdom on the world stage.

Conclusion

Xi Jinping’s well-known idea of “China dream” calls for the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” — and an ingredient of that also involve reclaiming of Chinese controlled territories which it believes were taken forcefully or “stolen” by other foreign powers in the region during periods of its frailty.²⁶ Here the question arises that under the leadership of Xi Jinping (who has a Chinese Dream of taking China back to its days of glory), will China rise/develop peacefully? What will be Chinas’ future course of action? Is it going to challenge the status quo of the present international system or not?

According to PRCs official version, China vigorously pursues an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defense policy that is defensive in nature. China opposes any form of hegemonism or power politics, and does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. China will never seek hegemony or behave in a hegemonic manner, nor will it engage in military expansion. China advocates a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and pursues comprehensive, common and cooperative security. It is a strategic task of China’s modernization drive as well as a strong guarantee for China’s peaceful development to build a strong national defense and powerful armed forces which are proportionate with China’s international standing and meet the needs of its security and development interests and enable it to defend national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.²⁷

Xiaoping before retiring, left a set of maxims for the guidance of his successor and future generations. He said, ‘Observe carefully; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership’. Based on this, many analysts have argued that

PRC is hiding its capabilities and biding time. Though the official Chinese stance rejects this notion and regards it as a 'groundless suspicion' and maintains that PRC would never claim hegemony as maintained during the rule of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. Dai Bingguo (the highest ranking official overseeing PRC foreign policy) has endorsed this official discourse by maintaining that 'the peaceful development of PRC is neither a ruse by which it hides its brightness and bides its time nor a naive delusion that forfeits China's advantages. Rather its China's genuine and enduring policy that serves its interest and comports with international globalized structure and strategic situation'. He further elaborates that China is still not in a position to be boastful or arrogant because it still faces several challenges domestically. China is seeking a democratized and equality based international system and is not going to claim hegemony ever.²⁸

Over the past 60 years, China's relations with the world have undergone historic changes. From isolation to wider contact, to deeper integration into the international community, China now sees her mutual understanding with other countries increasing, and her interest more closely converging with the rest of the world. After its estranged relations with USA, Russia, India, Japan and others in the past, PRC is now following the policy of engagement and economic cooperation. Cooperation with US on matters like Terrorism and economic and trade relations after the three joint communiques have set a new trend in bi-lateral relations where both states are focusing on their corporate interests rather than highlighting the ideologies or domestic political values they adhere to. With India, PRC has normalized its cultural and economic ties despite its territorial disputes with the former. With Japan, the hostility still remains, while with Russia, the relations have been improving continuously since the demise of USSR. China is also focusing on its relations with the developing world. But meanwhile it is focusing on strategic modernization agenda, readiness to play its part for bringing peace in Afghanistan and with Xi Jinping (with a dream to rejuvenate China) as the core leader of 5th leadership collective, the world should prepare itself to see China as a more active player in international politics.

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Endnotes

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²²Ibid

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²⁴Hu Jintao, "Build Towards a Harmonious World of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity", speech at the United Nations Summit (New York, September 15, 2005).

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