

**FOREIGN POLICY COURSE OF THE PRC: EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT  
TRENDS**

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**ABSTRACT:** The article examines the evolution of the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Various definitions and strategems are presented step by step, leading to the conclusion that China's foreign policy is aimed at increasing its international influence. At the same time, foreign policy is no longer secondary when compared with the priority directions of domestic development.

**Key words:** China, foreign policy, CCP congresses.

Today, there is no doubt that China is gradually becoming one of the major powers in the world. At the same time, for the Chinese in general, the perception of the world is characterized by the inseparability of the state's foreign and domestic policies. Domestic policy, in turn, is interpreted so broadly by Chinese researchers that it in fact includes issues of foreign policy and the international agenda. A similar approach can be observed in China's acceptance of globalization: Beijing recognizes only its economic component. This is to a certain extent explained by the nature of China's reforms.

In general, several stages can be identified in the formation of the PRC's modern foreign policy concept. From the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1978 until approximately 1989, the period of Deng Xiaoping's "reform and opening-up policy" continued. During this period, China's foreign policy was rather passive and "responsive" rather than "proactive", and was characterized by pragmatism and a focus on providing the country's development with the necessary external resources.

At the 12th CPC Congress in 1982, Beijing proclaimed a course toward an "independent and self-reliant foreign policy." The meaning of this statement at that time included, among other things, maintaining balanced relations with the two superpowers—the USSR and the United States. At the same time, the PRC Constitution adopted in 1982 (which remains in force) does not contain a declaration that the country does not claim the status of a "supreme power," unlike earlier documents.

Nevertheless, by emphasizing internal development and the neutrality of its foreign policy, China continued to lay claim to becoming a center of power in the long term. The Constitution defined specific directions of foreign policy: linking China's future with universal development; independence of the foreign policy course; adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence; focus on economic and cultural exchanges; rejection of imperialism, hegemonism, and colonialism, and others.

The next stage covers the period from 1989 to 1999 and is associated with significant changes in the world order. Although no single foreign policy document was developed during this time, a number of innovations appeared in China's policy. For example, the PRC began to focus on creating a "good-neighborly zone" around its borders, pursuing multidirectional diplomacy, and intensifying its activities within global and regional multilateral institutions.

This was reflected in practice: China succeeded in reunifying with Hong Kong and Macao, deepened cooperation with neighboring countries (in particular Russia and the states of Central Asia), and began to participate more actively in international processes. In addition, during this period Beijing initiated the creation of new interstate cooperation mechanisms (for example, the “Shanghai Five,” which was transformed into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001).

China did not single out any of its new partners as special. Overall, this produced positive political results, which was particularly important after the events of 1989, and made it possible to diversify foreign economic ties, including by strengthening its position in the post-Soviet space.

M. V. Mamonov characterizes China’s policy during this period as a “strategy of preventing external threats,” which made it possible to avert threats to national interests through cooperation with states that could potentially serve as sources of such threats.

In 1997, Jiang Zemin proclaimed the concept of multipolarity. This corresponded to the country’s interests, although Chinese leaders at that time did not yet consider “multipolarity” to be an established reality. For example, according to PRC Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, the world was then in a transitional phase, and only the initial signs of a transition to a multipolar system of international relations were visible, since one superpower was already interconnected with and, to a certain extent, competing with other major powers.

Up to the present day, the strategy formulated in the late 1990s—“rely on the North, stabilize the West, advance to the South”—has been preserved, which in particular confirms the importance of the Russian direction in China’s foreign policy. From the late 1990s onward, Beijing began to demonstrate more actively its rejection of the US-led unipolar model of world order.

It can be said that by the early 2000s, the PRC had already begun to see the foundations for transforming itself into a dynamically developing regional center of power and even into one of the global centers of influence within the emerging multipolar world.

From 1999 onward, the “fourth generation” of Chinese leaders gradually came to power, which also led to certain changes in the foreign policy course. Beijing now focused on ensuring that the country would not merely respond to processes within the international system, but would participate in shaping it and acquire the status of a great power.

As a result, the PRC became more sensitive to the positions of the international community. China ceased to view itself solely as a regional state, which was reflected in the policy of “good neighborliness” from the late 1990s. Foreign policy no longer remained secondary and became directly linked to the rise of the PRC.

The 16th Congress of the CCP (2002) defined the traditional tasks of foreign policy: independence and sovereignty, a peace-loving character, the priority of state sovereignty and security, adherence to the Five Principles, and criticism of hegemonism and the policy of using force.

Following the results of the congress, it was decided to “promote the creation of a just and rational new international political and economic order,” as well as to “strive to ensure a peaceful international situation and a favorable external environment.” The latter was

particularly important in the context of China's unprecedented development pace, which Jiang Zemin indirectly emphasized in his report to the congress:

> "The first 20 years of the 21st century are a period of great strategic opportunities for us, which must be firmly grasped and which make it possible to achieve many objectives."

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