

## China, Sovereign Internationalism, and Silent Pragmatism

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*Until the early 1990s, transnational institutions of which the United States (US) and the Soviet Union (SU) were the respective epicenters were formed. Sovereign nation states transferred increasing amounts of decision-making power to these institutions. Post-Second World War internationalization, globalization, and interdependence thus created the bipolar world order of the Cold War era. An important effect of the demise of the SU and the disappearance of the Soviet-led institutions has been that the currently existing institutes of global governance are part and parcel of the liberal democratic world order. The growing economic and geopolitical clout of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has given this country the possibility to reposition itself vis-à-vis this liberal world order. This repositioning has, in its turn, also impacted the foreign policies of the European Union (EU) and its member states. All this makes it worthwhile to reassess the observation of Henry Kissinger who, looking back at the 1950s, stated that "from the outset, Mao [Zedong] had no intention to accept an international system in the design of which China had no voice" worthwhile.<sup>1</sup>*

### SOVEREIGN INTERNATIONALISM

When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established the PRC on the Chinese mainland in 1949, most of the Western world continued to recognize the government of the Kuomintang (KMT) led by Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) on the island of Taiwan, as well as some islands off the coast of Fujian and in the South China Sea, as sole legal inheritor of Chinese rule. In these circumstances, and despite the deep distrust that had been instilled in

the core of the CCP vis-à-vis the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the 1920s,<sup>2</sup> Mao Zedong (1893–1976) signed the 'Sino-Soviet Agreement for Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Help' (*Zhong-Su youhao tongmeng huzhu tiaoyue*<sup>3</sup>) on 14 February 1950. Judging from the nature of this agreement, it is likely that it was first and foremost the dire state of the Chinese economy that made Mao Zedong take this pragmatic step.<sup>4</sup> Although it had primarily been economic motivations that had made the PRC enter the bipolar world order as member of those countries that adhered to the SU's revolutionary internationalism, it were also economic motivations that made the SU decide to discontinue the Sino-Soviet Agreement in 1958: the disastrous outcome of Mao's 'Great Leap Forward' (*da yue jin*<sup>5</sup>) and the ensuing 'three years of great famine' (*san nian da jihuang*<sup>6</sup>) were devastating also for the Soviet investments in the PRC.<sup>7</sup> After the West had already lost most of its normative clout in China with the outcome of the 1919 Versailles Treaty,<sup>8</sup> the same now applied to the SU as well. This affirmed the PRC in its ideological support of the independence movements and revolutionary groups that opposed different established African and Latin-American regimes.<sup>9</sup> The instrumentality of this strategy became significant on 25 October 1971, when the PRC was voted into the United Nations (UN General Assembly Resolution 2758), thereby replacing the Republic of China (ROC) as representative of 'China'.<sup>10</sup> The votes of the African countries in particular were important in the voting result. From February 1974 the PRC, unsurprisingly, started to formulate its own ideas on 'three worlds' (*san ge shijie*<sup>11</sup>) and to portray itself as a model in its own right. This new portrayal was especially aimed at the African and Latin-American countries – the 'Global South' – that were then in midst of the decolonization processes.<sup>12</sup>

With the PRC disconnecting from the SU but not yet being the economic powerhouse it is now, the division of the world in a US-led liberal democratic world order forming a bipolar ‘balance’ with that part of the world that adhered to SU-led revolutionary internationalism continued. Henry Kissinger has argued that in the absence of a balance between legitimacy (both the US and the SU claiming their legitimate rights as sovereign powers and as epicenters of their respective world views) and power in a bipolar setting, power takes over.<sup>13</sup> This is exactly what happened in the early 1990s with the demise of the Soviet Union and the concomitant end of revolutionary internationalism. It was an unavoidable consequence of the disappearance of the Soviet-led institutions that the currently existing institutes of global governance are part and parcel of the liberal democratic world order. This has bolstered the position of liberal internationalism and has, arguably, made the liberal international order appear as “synonymous with order itself”.<sup>14</sup> This helps to explain two important developments: the first is the development of the concept of contingent sovereignty, and the second is the development of transactional and mercantile internationalism. According to the principles of contingent sovereignty – of which (US) neoconservatism is an important proponent – a nation state’s sovereignty is not absolute: when a certain nation state’s government is perceived as violating the rights of its citizens or not to be able to protect its citizens against incursions by others, intervention by the international community is justified. In its ‘interventionist’ claim, contingent sovereignty deviates from the peaceful, ‘soft power,’ approach that characterizes the liberal democratic view that builds on the principles that then Democratic US President Woodrow Wilson (presidency from 1913 to 1921) had expounded at the end of the First World War. According to liberal ‘Wilsonian’ internationalism, conflicts in the world are caused by the undemocratic nature of international politics.<sup>15</sup> This explains the liberal internationalist endeavor to expand democracy, promote human rights, and foster practices of free trade, whereby the interdependence the latter brings about is seen as conducive to stability and world peace. Building and maintaining peace through economic interdependence also lays at the heart of the approach the EU advocates both inside and outside of

Europe.<sup>16</sup> Equally different from the Wilsonian focus on the importance of interdependence, is so-called transactional and mercantile internationalism. According to this approach, international relations are only an extension of the market: all international transactions follow the power-logic of the battle for market share and conform to a zero-sum logic.<sup>17</sup> It is obvious that agencies of global governance or international alliances have no place in this view of the world.

In this context of a rising focus on contingent sovereignty and growing transactional and mercantile internationalism, the PRC is increasingly perceived as aligning with principles of sovereign internationalism, an approach to world order that focuses on national decision making power in matters a given nation state deems proper to itself (for the PRC, the ‘cross-strait issue’ that the country has come to define as one of its ‘core interests’ is one of these matters<sup>18</sup>), but that equally leaves open possibilities for dealing with global issues (climate change, food security, global health) in an internationalized context (domains the PRC repeatedly mentions for possible cooperation with the Western world).

### THE CROSS-STRAIT ISSUE

The post-Second World War division of the world in a US-led bloc and a SU-led bloc has had important ramifications for the *de facto* existence of the political entities on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Near the end of the Chinese civil war between the troops of the CCP and those of the KMT, more precisely on 15 March 1949, the CCP for the first time declared that it must “liberate Taiwan”.<sup>19</sup> Taking over control over Taiwan was, at that point, more a matter of fully establishing its legitimacy than it was a matter of geostrategic importance.<sup>20</sup> Also for the US, Taiwan was, at that moment, not considered of geostrategic importance.<sup>21</sup> This would change dramatically, however, when the North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung (1912–1994) crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on 25 June 1950. The UN interpreted this as an invasion of South Korea, and, ratified by a resolution of the United Nations Security Council (Resolution Nr.82), President Harry S. Truman dispatched troops to force

the North Korean army to retreat. On 27 June 1950, he also ordered the American Seventh Fleet to neutralize the Taiwan Strait.<sup>22</sup> This order was motivated by the fact that, just as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) did not mutually recognize each other's existence, also the two Chinese political entities did not recognize each other. The fear thus existed that if Kim Il-Sung could not be stopped, this might inspire Mao Zedong to likewise bring the strategically located Taiwan under Communist control.<sup>23</sup> A net result of the Korean War was that the PRC regarded the US intervention in the Korean War as part of a deliberate strategy to preempt the unification of China,<sup>24</sup> and that the ROC became aligned with the US, thus revealing the geopolitical importance of Taiwan to the US. The cross-Strait issue has remained a question of geostrategic importance for the PRC and for the US ever since. Bolstered by the democratization process in Taiwan, it has also developed into an ontological question both for the government in Beijing and Taipei.<sup>25</sup> In a confrontation with the liberal world order, the PRC's alignment with principles of sovereign internationalism – focusing on national decision-making power in matters a given nation state deems proper to itself – therefore risks to instrumentalize the Taiwan-issue as an element in a zero-sum ideological conflict. Leeway for a renewed balanced approach is, however, present.

### SILENT PRAGMATISM

In the years following the accession of the PRC to the UN, most European countries exchanged their diplomatic relations with the ROC for diplomatic relations with the PRC.<sup>26</sup> The EEC formally established diplomatic ties with the PRC on 8 May 1975, and the US on 1 January 1979.<sup>27</sup> After the debacle of the 'Great Leap Forward' had made it clear that more pragmatic economic policies were needed, this change within the bodies of global governance made it possible for more moderate economic voices within the CCP to eventually come to the foreground in a rapprochement to the Western world (be it only after a new setback due to the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution') (*wuchan jieji wenhua da geming*<sup>28</sup>). Mao Zedong's 'revolutionary nationalism'

was thus exchanged for Deng Xiaoping's (1904–1997) 'developmental nationalism': the policies of 'reform and opening up' (*gaige kaifang*<sup>29</sup>) that were launched in 1978 had to transform China into a strong nation state through economic development. It is also in this period, more precisely on 30 September 1981, that Marshal Ye Jianying (1897–1986), the then President of the Standing Committee of the CCP formulated his 'nine points' concerning 'Taiwan's return to the motherland and the realization of peaceful reunification' (*Taiwan huigui zuguo heping tongyi de fangzhen zhengce*<sup>30</sup>). These points can be considered as the precursor of the 'One country – two systems' (*yi guo liang zhi*<sup>31</sup>) policy, first formulated by Deng Xiaoping on 26 June 1983.<sup>32</sup>

The negative consequences of the Western sanctions that followed the Tiananmen crisis of 1989 in a domestic context of economic conservatives coming close to seizing power permanently, motivated Deng Xiaoping to undertake his famous 'southern tour' (*nan xun*<sup>33</sup>) in 1992. As part of this 'southern tour,' he, among others, appealed to the overseas Chinese – including Taiwan – to invest in the 'mother country' – an appeal that was in line with the 'nine points' of Marshal Ye Jianying. The pragmatic approach towards the cross-Strait issue that the 'southern tour' entailed is also visible from the – retroactive – interpretation of the so-called '1992 consensus' (*jiu er gongshi*).<sup>34</sup>

After, at first, primarily China's Eastern and South-eastern coastal regions had been economically developed – in line with Deng Xiaoping's famous statement "Let some people get rich first" (*Rang yi bufen ren xian fuqilai*)<sup>35</sup> of 23 October 1985 in a meeting with a delegation of senior American entrepreneurs<sup>36</sup> – the so-called 'go west' (*xi qu*<sup>37</sup>) policy gradually shifted the focus to the west of the country. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the 'go west' policy further evolved into China's 'periphery policy' (*zhoubian zhengce*<sup>38</sup>). The creation of the 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization' (*Shanghai hezuo zuzhi*<sup>39</sup> or SCO) in 2001, can be seen as a logical expansion of these former economic policies. At first an organization that was primarily focused on demilitarization of frontier areas and countering extremism and drug trafficking,

it gradually developed into an instrument of economic development and, increasingly also, political cooperation. China's regional importance has further enhanced through the adherence to the SCO of Pakistan and India in 2017, and of Iran in 2023. Since 2008, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, Cambodia, Azerbaijan, Nepal, Armenia, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Maldives, Myanmar, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain have become 'dialogue partners' of the SCO.

The same developmental path is visible in initiatives such as the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (*yi dai yi lu changyi*<sup>40</sup>) launched by President Xi Jinping in 2013, as well as in the expansion of the number of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) countries: in 2023, the BRICS+ concept was created with addition of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>41</sup> All these developments can be interpreted as the outcome of Deng Xiaoping's 'southern tour' which also introduced a reorientation towards the 'Global South,' countries that had been first targeted by the PRC in its concept of 'three worlds' and that were henceforth foremost seen as economic partners.

The PRC can be seen to have taken and continues to take, a very pragmatic approach in all these initiatives and to have grasped opportunities when they occurred. This 'silent pragmatism' is characterized by a total absence of any ideological preference. More than being out to destroy the Bretton Woods institutions or later organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the functioning of which have been of major importance for the country's economic growth, the PRC therefore appears to be out to reform these institutions so that they are more in accordance with the current balance of (economic) power. In this respect, the country's arguable alignment with principles of sovereign internationalism leaves open possibilities for cooperation with the EU and its member states. As stated by Jasper Roctus, "Only in the event of a total decoupling between the West and China do I see the country working more intensively with Russia and Iran".<sup>42</sup>

## REBALANCING IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN 'ONE WORLD'

Henry Kissinger's assessment that "from the outset, Mao [Zedong] had no intention to accept an international system in the design of which China had no voice" remains true to this day. Contrary to expectations of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, China's political culture is unlikely to fuse into the liberal democratic view of the world. The current geopolitical, geostrategic, and geo-economic features of the global world therefore have the potential to develop into two directions: either a decoupling and return to a bipolar world order (with the US and EU on the one side, and China and Russia on the other), or a rebalancing of interests.

That the EU continues to see the PRC as a "partner" and a "competitor", in addition to a "rival" – as stated in the document *EU-China – A strategic outlook*<sup>43</sup> – provides ample possibilities for avoiding a decoupling and forging a rebalancing. That the PRC is, in an era characterized by rising views of contingent sovereignty and transactional and mercantilist internationalism, appearing to align with principles of sovereign internationalism can only be conducive to this aim. Economic and ideological conservatives may have a strong voice in the PRC, but the country is so far not seeing its relations with the EU as a zero-sum choice. The 7 March 2024 decision to add four more EU-countries to the list of five of December 2023 whose citizens get the possibility to travel visa-free to China for a period limited to 15 days at once testifies of the continued openness of the PRC to the world, and of the country's awareness of its economic reality.<sup>44</sup> The EU and the PRC are and will remain important trading partners, and to overcome its current economic crisis, the PRC needs cooperation with Europe.<sup>45</sup> The EU does have a trading deficit with the PRC in goods, but it has a surplus in trade in services (and a surplus in Direct Foreign Investment (FDI)).<sup>46</sup> This gives the EU ample possibilities and the necessary leverage (provided it speaks with one voice) to solve existing trade disputes through dialogue. The urgency of dealing with such issues as climate change, food security, and global health, domains which require technological

advancement, can be a motivation to shift the focus of the current disputes on subsidized manufacturing and trade to a more forward-looking discussion on investments in research into technologies of the future. A joint approach between the EU and the PRC should not be excluded in advance.<sup>47</sup>

Grasping opportunities also applies to the cross-Strait issue. The PRC's position here appears to be – for the time being – one of postponement of a solution – an 'agreeing to disagree' in line with the '1992 consensus'.<sup>48</sup> In the current state of EU-China relations, this makes simultaneous negotiations on a reviving of the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) with the PRC or negotiations on a new treaty, and on a Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA) with Taiwan, a like-minded partner of the EU, not impossible.

Rebalancing through (silent) economic pragmatism is to the benefit of maintaining 'one world,' and is in the interest of the EU and its citizens.

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## Endnotes

- 1 Henry Kissinger, *On China*. London: Allen Lane, 2011, p.132.
- 2 In the early 1920s, the ‘First United Front’ (*di yi ci guogong hezuo* 第一次國共合作) was forged between the CCP and the KMT on the instigation of Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924). In 1927, this front collapsed with the purging of CCP members by right-wing KMT members. See Lucien Bianco, “Seigneurs de la guerre et revolution nationaliste”. In *La Chine au XXe Siècle. D’une revolution à l’autre (1895-1949)*, ed. Marie-Claire Bergère, Lucien Bianco, and Jürgen Domes, 123-159. Paris: Fayard, 1989, pp.155-156.
- 3 中蘇友好同盟互助條約.
- 4 According to the agreement, the PRC would, among others, receive credits for developing industrial installations, joint Sino-Soviet companies were established, and engineers were detached to the PRC. See Werner Meissner, “La voie orthodoxe (1949-1955)”. In *La Chine au XXe siècle. De 1949 à aujourd’hui*, ed. Marie-Claire Bergère, Lucien Bianco, and Jürgen Domes, 9-33. Paris: Fayard, 1990, pp.15-16.
- 5 大躍進.
- 6 三年大饑荒
- 7 Economic motivations were therefore more likely the reason for discontinuation of the Sino-Soviet Agreement than the ideological dispute that had erupted through the de-Stalinization that had started under Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971), a policy that was perceived in the PRC as potentially also undermining the position of Mao Zedong.
- 8 Against the expectations that China’s participation in World War I would lead to the restoration of China’s territorial integrity, the 1919 Versailles Treaty stipulated that the territorial possessions Germany had acquired through the ‘unequal treaties’ (*bu pingdeng tiaoyue* 不平等條約) would not be returned to China, but had to be transferred to Japan. In 1922, Shandong was returned to China, but the ‘normative damage’ had been done by then.
- 9 See Bruce Larkin, *China and Africa 1949–1970. The Foreign Policy of the People’s Republic of China*. Berkeley, etc.: University of California Press, 1971.
- 10 A US-sponsored motion that pursued “dual representation” and would have allowed Chiang Kai-shek’s delegation to retain a seat under a different formula while the PRC would take the “China” seat was defeated by 59 votes to 55, with 19 abstentions. On October 25, 1971, this led to a roll-call vote on an Albanian draft to grant the “China” seat to the PRC instead, which passed by 76 votes to 37, with 17 abstentions. See United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/192054>. Accessed 13 March 2024.
- 11 三個世界.
- 12 The Chinese version of the ‘three worlds’ differed from the Western version in this sense that according to the Western version – in accordance with the actual Cold War situation – the first world consisted of the US and its allies, the second world of the SU with its allies, and the third world of other unaligned developing countries. In the Chinese version, the first world consisted of the US and the SU, the second world of the US and SU allies, and the third world were the developing countries.
- 13 Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*. London: Allen Lane, 2014, p.66.
- 14 Richard Sakwa, “BRICS and Sovereign Internationalism”, *Strategic Analysis* 43/6: 456-468, 2019, p.456 states that liberal internationalism has, in the post-1945 era, “been the most vigorous international order [...] transforming much of the world in its image”.
- 15 See John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p.111.
- 16 French foreign minister Robert Schuman (1886–1963) who, together with German chancellor Konrad Adenauer (r. 1967–1976) was the initiator of the so-called ‘Schuman plan’ of 1950 stated that the European Coal and Steel Community’s “solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible”. [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59/schuman-declaration-may-1950\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59/schuman-declaration-may-1950_en). Accessed 10 March 2024.
- 17 On this: see Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, *National Populism: The Revolt against Liberal Democracy*. Pelican: London, 2018.
- 18 See Avery Goldstein, “China’s Grand Strategy under Xi Jinping, Reassurance, Reform, and Resistance”, *International Security* 45(1): 168-179, 2020, p.191.
- 19 See “一定要解放臺灣” (Taiwan must be liberated). Renminwang 人民網 <http://cpc.people.com.cn/BIG5/64162/64170/4467358.html>. Accessed 10 March 2024.
- 20 See Steve Tsang, “From Japanese Colony to Sacred Chinese Territory: Taiwan’s Geostrategic Significance to China”, *Twentieth-Century China* 45(3): 351-368, 2020, p.362.
- 21 In January 1950, Democratic President Harry S. Truman and his Secretary of State Dean Acheson reaffirmed the earlier declaration in the US’ China White Paper, stating that Taiwan was outside of the American global defense perimeter and that the US would not interfere with a Communist takeover. See Roderick MacFarquhar, ed., *Sino-American Relations, 1949-71*. New York: Praeger, 1972, pp.67-69; Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Uncertain Friendships: Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States, 1945–1992*. New York: Twayne, 1994, p.30.
- 22 Harry S. Truman, ‘June 27, 1950 Statement by the President, Truman on Korea’. Wilson Center. Digital Archive International History Declassified. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116192.pdf?v=31e383a7e226b441e40fb0527a828da0>. Accessed 10 March 2024.
- 23 It is important to note that, in order to avoid a declared war with the US, the People’s Liberation Army (*Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun* 中國人民解放軍) formed the People’s Volunteer Army (*Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun* 中國人民志願軍; PVA). It is this PVA that entered the Korean War on 19 October 1950.
- 24 On 28 June 1950, Zhou Enlai declared that Taiwan is an unalienable part of China, a fact that was confirmed in the Cairo Communiqué, the Potsdam Declaration, and the very reality since Japan’s surrender, and that the PRC would “liberate” Taiwan from the “American aggressor”. See Guo, Rongxing, *中共獨臺政策資料選集 1949–1991* (Selected Materials on the Independent Taiwan Policies of the Central Committee of the CCP, 1949–1991). Taipei: Lifework, 1992.
- 25 See Bart Dessein, “China and Geopolitics as Ontology”, *Egmont Policy Brief* 328, January 2024.

- 26 At the moment of writing, the ROC only has diplomatic relations with Belize, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guatemala, Haiti, the Holy Sea, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Paraguay, Sint Kitts and Nevis, Sint Lucia, Sint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Tuvalu.
- 27 The US also promulgated the ‘Taiwan Relations Act,’ in this way maintaining the ROC within their geopolitical and geostrategic realm. Note that the ‘Taiwan Relations Act’ was signed by Democratic President Jimmy Carter (presidency 1977–1981) on 10 April 1979, and was entered retroactively into force, effective 1 January 1979. For the full text of the ‘Taiwan Relations Act’: see “H.R.2479 – Taiwan Relations Act”. <https://www.congress.gov/bills/96th-congress/house-bill/2479#:~:text=Taiwan%20Relations%20Act%20%2D%20Declares%20it,other%20people%20of%20the%20Western>. Accessed 10 March 2024.
- 28 無產階級文化大革命.
- 29 改革開放.
- 30 臺灣回歸祖國和平統一的方針政策. For the full text: see Taiwan Info: <http://www.china.org.cn/english/7945.htm> Accessed 10 March 2024.
- 31 一國兩制.
- 32 See Deng, Xiaoping, 鄧小平文選 – 第三卷 [Part Three of the Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993, pp.30-31.
- 33 南巡.
- 34 九二共識. Actually, the name ‘1992 consensus’ was coined only in the year 2000 by Su Chi 蘇起, who served as Secretary-General of the Taiwanese National Security Council from 2008 to 2010. After a meeting in Hong Kong in November 1992 between representatives of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) of the PRC and the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) of the ROC (at which no real ‘consensus’ was reached), ARATS Chairman Wang Daohan 汪道涵 and SEF Chairman Koo Chen-fu 顧振甫 met in Singapore on 27 April 1993. In 1998, another Wang-Koo summit was held in Shanghai, but the 1999 summit was called off because of the PRC’s disapproval of KMT President Lee Teng-hui’s (1923–2020) half-heartedness and strategic ambiguity on the meaning of “special state-to-state relations” (特殊的國與國關係), a position that was in line with his concept of “eventual reunification” (終極統一), which comprised a recognition that while there *de jure* existed only one China, there were *de facto* two political entities (一個中國, 兩個政治實體) representing the Chinese. After the 2008 failed referendum to enter the UN as ‘Taiwan’ during DPP President Chen Shui-bian’s 陳水扁 second term in office (presidency 2000–2008), KMT President Ma Ying-jeou 馬英九 (presidency 2008–2016) returned to recognizing the ‘1992 consensus,’ be it that he stressed the ROC’s *de facto* independence and proposed “one China, respective interpretations” (一中各表). The ‘1992 consensus’ was again stressed by both Ma Ying-jeou and Xi Jinping 習近平 during a meeting in Singapore in 2015. After her election as President in 2016, DPP’s Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文 stopped adhering to the ‘1992 consensus’. In contradistinction, the PRC keeps on referring to the ‘1992 consensus’.
- 35 讓一部分人先富起來.
- 36 See “鄧小平: 讓一部分人先富起來” (“Deng Xiaoping: Let some people get rich first.”, *Renminwang* 人民網 <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/34136/2569304.html>) Accessed 10 March 2024.
- 37 西去.
- 38 週邊政策.
- 39 上海合作組織.
- 40 一帶一路倡議.
- 41 Note that, in 2023, Argentina also signed up to the platform, but the newly elected President Javier Milei retracted membership soon after his election in December 2023. Richard Sakwa, *op. cit.*, p.460 stated that “All BRICS countries are conservative when it comes to preserving their sovereignty, but they all recognize the value of international cooperation”.
- 42 Jasper Roctus in Maarten Rabaey, “China is gewoon al de winnaar van de globalisering”, *De Morgen* 9 March 2024, p.31.
- 43 *EU-China – A strategic outlook*, Strassbourg 2019, p.1. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>. Last accessed on 29 January 2022.
- 44 “China extends visa-free entry to four more European countries in a bid to boost tourism”. <https://www.euronews.com/travel/2024/03/08/china-aims-to-boost-tourism-by-giving-visa-free-entry-to-these-five-european-countries> Accessed 13 March 2024.
- 45 A remarkable speech in this respect was given by Premier Li Qiang on 4 March 2023. Under the heading of the three ‘signals,’ Li appealed for a continuation of tax-cuts in line with former Premier Li Keqiang’s policies, an enhanced attention for foreign investments and open pursuit of the liberalization of the economy, and a focus on the manufacturing industries (with an important focus on the green economy and the digital economy). Under the heading of the three ‘urgent tasks,’ he appealed to restore trust in the government among private companies, to attract FDI and restore investors’ trust, and to avoiding the ‘middle income trap’. See “李强: 中国新总理上任23天的三个信号和三到难题” (Li Qiang: The three ‘signals’ and three ‘urgent tasks’ of China’s new Premier after 23 days in office”. <https://www.chinaaffairs.org/gb/detail.asp?id=192928> (last accessed on 19 November 2023). Another remarkable statement made on 5 March 2024 on the occasion of the National People’s Congress is the further loosening of the *hukou* (household registration) system, which would make it easier for rural worker to settle in the cities. See “What you should know from the opening of China’s legislature”. <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/518831.aspx> Accessed 13 March 2024.
- 46 “EU trade relations with China. Facts, figures and latest developments”. [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china_en). Accessed 13 March 2024.
- 47 See, e.g., the EU flagship initiative on Climate Change and Biodiversity (CCB). [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/europe-world/international-cooperation/bilateral-cooperation-science-and-technology-agreements-non-eu-countries/china\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/europe-world/international-cooperation/bilateral-cooperation-science-and-technology-agreements-non-eu-countries/china_en). Accessed 15 March 2024.
- 48 See Jasper Roctus and Bart Dessein, “China, the West, and the Rest: Who is Enjoying the Shadow of Whom?”, *Egmont Policy Brief* 333, February 2024





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