

CONDITIONS FOR CHINA-US STRATEGIC COOPERATION

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From the “Five-clause Agreement Draft” of 1944 to the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972, the strategic relationship between the United States (US) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) went through a cycle from partners to foes then back to partners again. Since the end of World War II, a huge number of books and articles on CCP-US relations have been published both in the United States and China. Because of their different political background, Chinese and American scholars often came to different conclusions after analyzing the same historical facts. However, Chinese and American scholars agreed on at least one point, namely that the change of the CCP-US strategic relationship was due to the change of their mutual strategic interests. The logic of this argument is irrefutable but such an analysis alone cannot provide a full understanding of the strategic cooperation between the CCP and the US.

Common strategic interests between the CCP and the US exist on two levels—the foundational level and the functional level. The former refers to the objective existence of mutual strategic interests and the latter refers to mutual understanding of those interests. In other words, without shared understanding of mutual strategic interests these objective interests can not automatically produce strategic cooperation. For this reason, this article attempts to analyze the subjective understanding of mutual strategic interests by American and Chinese policy makers from the end of World War II to the early 1970s, and to summarize some historical lessons for the development of China-US strategic cooperation. This study is expected to deepen our understanding of the basic conditions for future strategic cooperation between China and the US.

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CCP-US Relations on the Eve of the Civil War

During the final stage of World War II, the objective strategic interests of the US and the CCP were quite similar. That was to say, they both hoped for an early victory over Japan and for a strong and stable China. In these two respects, the US interests were different neither from those of the CCP nor the Kuomintang (KMT) government. It was obvious that China needed to establish a democratic coalition government and to prevent civil war after the World War II in order to become stable and strong. In terms of establishing a coalition government, American strategic interests were objectively closer to those of the CCP than to those of the KMT, because both the US and the CCP wished for a coalition government in China while the KMT hoped to retain its one-party rule, even at the price of a civil war. The CCP and the US might have different reasons for a coalition government but a coalition government was then a necessary step for preventing civil war and establishing a democratic system in China. Although Roosevelt disliked the corruption of the KMT government and its policy, as he still regarded Chiang Kaishek, the Chairman of KMT and the head of China, the only Chinese leader having the power to protect the US interests in China as well as in East Asia. He placed too much store in the power of Chiang and chose a policy of supporting him and pressing the CCP. This policy diverted the US and CCP from strategic cooperation toward strategic confrontation.

On July 4, 1944, the Liberation Daily in Yanan published an editorial under the title “Best Wishes for the US National Day—A Great Day for Freedom and Democracy”. Contained in the editorial were the following phrases:

Democratic America now has its partner and the work of Sun Yat-sen now has its successor. They are the CCP and other democratic forces. The work that we communists are now undertaking is the same work previously undertaken by Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and others in the US. The US is and will continue to be sympathetic to our cause. It is making great efforts to aid China in the resistance war against Japan and her democratic campaign. We are grateful for this. . . . Long live democratic America!

This editorial was personally vetted by Mao Zedong.^① It shows how deeply convinced the CCP leaders were at that time that the political goals of the US were

similar to theirs.

On November 7, 1944 American Special Envoy Patric J. Hurley arrived in Yanan and began discussions with CCP leaders about establishing a coalition government. Their discussions concluded with the “Agreement between the Chinese Nationalist Government, the KMT and the CCP” (also known as the “Five-Clause Draft Agreement”). The core stipulations of the agreement were: 1) The KMT and the CCP will work together to unify the military forces in China, quickly defeat Japan and rebuild China. 2) The Nationalist government should reorganize itself into a coalition government comprised of all factions fighting against Japan and the military committee should reorganize itself into a joint military committee comprised of representatives from all armies fighting against Japan. 3) Based on the principle of establishing a government of, by and for the people, the coalition government should encourage progress and democracy, should ensure the establishment of justice and should guarantee freedom of thought, freedom of publishing, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, personal freedom, freedom to live where one chooses and the right to appeal unjust detainment. 4) All armies fighting against Japan should carry out the orders of the coalition government and the joint military committee, and also should be recognized by that government and that military committee. 5) The coalition government recognizes the legality of the KMT, the CCP and all anti-Japanese factions.^② Mao Zedong also affirmatively replied to Hurley’s question whether Chiang Kaishek should continue his role of Chairman of the government.^③ From its language to its contents, the Five-Clause Draft Agreement reflected American political desires. Rereading this agreement in the 1990s, people find it almost unbelievable that the political goals pursued by the CCP at that time were so similar to those by the United States.

It was precisely because the CCP leaders believed the US shared their political goals so that they regarded the US as a strategic partner. After the Agreement was concluded, on November 10th Mao Zedong sent President Roosevelt a letter full of high praise for both of Hurley and the President himself. In it he said:

We have always been willing to conclude an agreement with Chairman Chiang that would be used to further the interests of the Chinese people. Today, with the help of General Hurley, we have the hope of realizing this goal. We are extremely happy and grateful to your representative’s superior talents and sympathy for the Chinese people…… I also

want to thank you for the enormous efforts you have made on uniting China for defeating Japan, and on creating the possibility of a united and democratic China…… I deeply hope that your successful efforts make the great nations of China and the US together defeat imperialist Japan and march toward the future hand in hand forever in terms of rebuilding lasting world peace and establishing a democratic China. ④

In the late stage of the World War II, the US and the CCP had such similar strategic interests but why did these common interests not engage them into strategic cooperation? It would be too simple to attribute this result to the obstruction of the KMT government. At that time, the US government had an alternative of working with the CCP and pressing the KMT to accept the coalition government plan. If the US had adopted a policy of providing military aid to the party which supported the coalition government plan, it would have been almost impossible for the KMT to reject the Five-Clause Draft Agreement. But instead, the Roosevelt administration gave up its original aspirations for a coalition government and turned to a policy of supporting Chiang and pressing the CCP when the KMT rejected the Five-Clause Draft Agreement. It was this policy that led to 26 years of strategic confrontation between the US and the CCP until the breakthrough in 1971.

There were different views about post-war China policy within the Roosevelt administration during the late stages of World War II. The Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Chief of the US Military observation group at Yanan David D. Barrett, Chief of the China Desk at the State Department John Carter Vincent, a diplomat stationed in China John S. Service and others felt that the US post-war interests in China would be best served by building a united, democratic, friendly China. They did not feel that the CCP participation in the government was detrimental to American interests. In a memorandum, John Carter Vincent wrote: "Our plan is to use our influence to create both short and long-term unity within China. This does not necessarily mean that China should be united under the leadership of Chiang Kaishek…… As for our long-term goals, we wish to maintain a certain degree of flexibility, so that we may cooperate with whichever Chinese leader who is most capable of creating a united, democratic, friendly China."⑤ Five political officials of the American consulate in China send the State Department a report warning that Hurley's policy had heightened Chiang Kaishek's sense of his own power and made him unwilling to compromise with the CCP, which might

lead to civil war in China. In the report, they made the following suggestion, “The President should tell the Committee Chief in very clear language that our military needs require us to aid the communists and all groups helpful to the war against Japan and that we will take direct steps”.^⑥

Another faction consisted of Roosevelt, Hurley and Albert C. Wedemeyer. After Hurley failed to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to accept the “Five-Clause Agreement Draft”, he dropped the idea of organizing a coalition government and instead tried to pressure the CCP into accepting the KMT suggestion of reorganizing the Communist troops. Hurley received the support of Roosevelt and his idea became the US official policy towards China, although his policy of unconditional support to Chiang Kaishek was severely criticized by his colleagues and reports detailing the dangers of such a policy were sent to the policy-making circle.

Many people, including even the leaders of the CCP, felt that the US policy of supporting Chiang and suppressing the CCP had nothing to do with Roosevelt. In July of 1945 Mao Zedong wrote an commentary for the New China News Agency under the title “The Dangers of Hurley’s Policy”, in which he said:

When President Roosevelt was alive……in the interests of the US, he did not choose a policy of helping the KMT go on the military offensive against the CCP. In 1944, when Hurley came to Yanan as a personal representative of Roosevelt, he approved of the CCP proposal to eradicate the one-party rule of the KMT and establish a democratic coalition government. But later Hurley went back on his word, betraying what he had said at Yanan…… Roosevelt passed away and Hurley returned to the American Embassy in Chongqing extremely satisfied with himself.^⑦

Perhaps we will never know whether it was Roosevelt or Hurley who was the initiator of the policy of supporting Chiang and pressing the CCP, but history showed that Roosevelt’s China policy was based on the principle of supporting the government of Chiang Kai-shek. Even though the State Department made their objection to Hurley’s China policy very clear and it was quite obvious that this policy was incompatible with American strategic interests, Roosevelt still supported it. On March 8, 1945, after Hurley and Wedemeyer had briefed Roosevelt on China mission, Roosevelt made no criticism of their China policy, and decided that Hurley should continue his mission.^⑧ Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. On May 7, Hurley received an instruction from the Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew not to

promise Chiang Kaishek lightly that the US would give him military assistance after the war. Hurley was extremely dissatisfied with this instruction. In a memorandum he never sent, Hurley argued against this order, saying that the President's instructions to him had been "to prevent the collapse of the Nationalist government, but not to support the KMT only if it cooperates well with us".^⑨ No matter whether Hurley got his Presidential instructions from Roosevelt or from Truman, they certainly reflect Roosevelt's thinking of China policy, because Roosevelt's prestige was so eminent that Truman could not make major changes of Roosevelt's China policy within one month after assuming the presidency.

The main reason for the US government to change its policy from establishing a coalition government to supporting Chiang and constraining the CCP was that political goals were not the only standards Roosevelt used to measure the mutual strategic interests between the US and the two Chinese parties. Beside consideration of political goals, Roosevelt also emphasized the importance of power in judging mutual strategic interests. Even though the CCP strategic political goals were more in line with those of the US than those of the KMT, Roosevelt felt that the KMT had more power than the CCP to realize US strategic interests in China. Although he did not like the dictatorship of Chiang Kaishek and the corruption of his government, Roosevelt did not believe that Mao Zedong would be able to replace Chiang very soon. Even the CCP itself at that time did not realize the opportunity of coming to power in just few years. Roosevelt thought that KMT political power could be used to mobilize more Chinese resources for realizing China-US mutual strategic goals. Because of this, he gave less consideration to the Chinese people's objection to the autocratic rule of Chiang or their support to the CCP democratic political program. He relied on Chiang's personal power in the Chinese personal-rule-society and believed Chiang's friendship to the US was central to continuing good relations with China. Roosevelt's standards for analyzing common strategic interests were actually representative of the political mainstream in the US. Admiration for power is a basic characteristic of American strategic culture. This characteristic not only influenced Roosevelt himself, but had a general influence on the US government in making foreign policy.

The fact that Hurley went back on his word caused the CCP leaders to feel cheated and to become suspicious of the US political purpose in mediating the military conflict between the CCP and the KMT. By 1945 the CCP no longer regarded

the US as a strategic partner or a model of democracy but an anti-democracy reactionary power. On June 11 of that year, at the CCP 7th Congress, Mao said: "The American policy of supporting Chiang and suppressing the CCP shows how rampant reactionaries run in the US. But all attempts of reactionaries inside and outside China to obstruct the victory of the Chinese people are doomed to fail. In terms of world trends, democracy is the mainstream and anti-democracy reactionaries are only a counter-current."^⑩ By August of 1945, the CCP had referred the US as "American imperialism" because the CCP had believed that "American imperialism wanted to aid Chiang Kaishek in the civil war and turn China into an American dependency. It established this policy long ago".^⑪ Within a year, the CCP understanding of mutual strategic interests with the US underwent a 180 degree change. The CCP felt that it shared no common strategic interests with the US because they had opposite political goals.

This period of history illustrates that the objective existence of mutual strategic interests between the US and the CCP is not enough to encourage them to engage in a strategic cooperation. Although policy makers on both sides recognized their mutual strategic interests, they did not share the same views on the importance of these interests. Because the US policy makers did not realize that its mutual strategic interests with the CCP was so important that it linked with the problem of whether the US will "lose China" to the Soviet Union, it chose a policy of supporting Chiang and constraining the CCP. This indicated that there was no chance to develop Sino-American strategic cooperation until the leaders of the CCP and the US both realized the importance of their mutual strategic interests. During this period, one of the main obstructions to valuing the importance of their mutual strategic interests was that the two sides did not use the same standards for making judgments. The CCP judged the importance of their common strategic interests according to the degree of similarity of their political goals and did not give enough concern to its weak position; while the US gave more consideration to the factor of power than its political value when making its judgment. Because Roosevelt felt that the power of the CCP could not surpass that of the KMT and he did not believe the CCP could ever wrest power from the KMT. Therefore, he placed his hopes for the realization of American strategic interests on a policy of supporting Chiang Kaishek.

CCP-US Relations During the Civil War

The war against Japan was ended in August of 1945 and the KMT began to move troops towards the CCP areas in September. Following that, military clashes occurred between the CCP and the KMT in October. Facing the danger that a civil war might bring Soviet political influence into China, the US needed to prevent the potential civil war in China. Before the civil war erupted, neither the CCP nor the KMT wished to see the Soviet Union enlarge its influence in China and the CCP was still trying to force Chiang Kaishek to establish a coalition government. However, bolstered by the American policy of supporting Chiang and pressing the CCP, Chiang determined to eradicate the CCP with military might and gave no consideration to a coalition government. There would still have been opportunities to prevent the civil war if the Americans had used their military power to prevent Chiang from fighting it. Nevertheless, Truman moved from Roosevelt's policy of supporting Chiang and pressing the CCP further to supporting Chiang and opposing the CCP. This policy made George Marshall's mediation in China failed and all hopes of avoiding civil war disappear.

After Hurley resigned at the end of 1945, Truman appointed George Marshall his special envoy to China to mediate the CCP-KMT conflict. Marshall's mission (December 1945—January 1947) was to push for a cease-fire and establish a coalition government. This policy goal was basically a continuation of Roosevelt's, with no major changes. Nevertheless, Truman could not achieve this goal unless he changed Roosevelt's China policy. That is to say, he had to abandon the policy of supporting Chiang and pressing the CCP in favor of a policy creating military balance between the CCP and the KMT. The fact was that the greater the military gap between the CCP and the KMT, the harder it would be to get Chiang Kaishek to accept the idea of a cease-fire. It would only be possible to pressure Chiang to stop fighting and work toward building a coalition government when the military capabilities of both sides were comparable.

The CCP and the US shared common strategic interests in terms of stopping the civil war and organizing a coalition government. Meanwhile, the CCP was willing to share the leadership of the country with the KMT in a coalition government since it was militarily the weaker of the two sides before the advent of all-out civil war. If Truman had halted military aid to Chiang or even diverted the aid to

the CCP, the US would have had a chance to achieve its strategic goals of preventing a civil war and establishing a coalition government in China. But the US chose instead a policy that subverted its own strategic goals. It continuously upgraded the level of military support to the KMT, which strengthened Chiang's determination to fight a civil war.

After the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff suggested that the US send an American military advisory group to the KMT government, John Carter Vincent, who had been promoted to Assistant Secretary in charge of Far Eastern Affairs, clearly pointed out: "If we do so, it cannot guarantee the implementation of our desire of not supporting a civil war in China. Chiang Kaishek has already shown his intention to settle the domestic struggle militarily. American military assistance on such a scale will just encourage his intention and strengthen his unwillingness to resolve the military conflict between the CCP and the KMT peacefully."^⑫

On September 5, 1945 Truman approved the Lend-Lease policy. On January 19, 1946 he extended the effective period of the Lend-Lease Act to June 30, and later extended it again to October 31. The purpose of the Lend-Lease Act was ostensibly to provide financial assistance to the KMT government for the repatriation of Japanese prisoners-of-war. In reality, its purpose was to provide military aid to Chiang Kaishek. Of the nearly US \$ 800 million of material aid, only about US \$ 3 million was used to repatriate Japanese prisoners-of-war and the remainder was military aid to the KMT.^⑬ There were three key elements in the Lend-Lease policy: 1) Assisting the KMT to move troops into the north and northeast for taking over territory from the CCP. 2) Help the KMT equip 39 army divisions and an air force and supplying the navy with ammunition and maintenance funds. 3) Funding the training of KMT military officers.^⑭ On August 31, 1946, the US signed another agreement with the KMT, the "China-US Surplus Wartime Property Agreement", which transferred US \$ 900 million of American materials left in China, India and Pacific islands to the Chiang Kaishek government. The KMT government paid only US \$ 175 million for this materials.^⑮

After the war against Japan, Truman did not change Roosevelt's China policy. There were, however, major changes in the international environment and in Chinese domestic politics. During the Roosevelt era the US and the Soviet were allies in the fight against Germany and Japan. After the war they embarked upon their strategic competition, each seeking to expand its sphere of influence. During

the Roosevelt era, the need of collectively fighting against the Japanese enabled the CCP and the KMT to cease their military confrontation, which was a factor in favor of establishing a coalition government. After the Japanese surrender, the common external threat to the CCP and the KMT no longer existed and the contradictions between them became insurmountable. The conditions necessary for establishing a coalition government deteriorated. Roosevelt was unable to achieve his goals with his China policy even when conditions were still fairly conducive to the establishment of a coalition government toward the end of the war against the Japanese. It was no surprise that Truman repeated Roosevelt's failure when he continued Roosevelt's China policy as the situation became worse for establishing a coalition government after the war.

In short, one principal reason that the Truman administration ignored interests shared by the US and the CCP was that Truman, like Roosevelt, focused on the power standard in judging mutual interests. A second important reason was the growing East-West ideological conflict. After World War II, ideology became a popular standard used by American politicians to judge American strategic interests. Not long after the end of World War II, the struggle for world dominance between the US and the Soviet became an open affair. In February of 1946, George Kennan sent an 8,000-word telegram to the State Department, suggesting that Communism was the greatest threat to the US and that the US and the Soviet Union could not possibly coexist peacefully. He proposed that the US pursue a policy of containing the Soviets. The ideas of this report quickly spread among American policy-makers. In March of that year, Truman went with Churchill to his home state of Missouri, where Churchill delivered the "Fulton Talks", in which he exhorted the English-speaking world to destroy the "iron curtain", free Eastern Europe and contain the Soviet Union. This is considered to be the opening shot of the Cold War. In March 1947, Trumanism was unveiled and it called for US military support to anti-communist regimes in order to deal with the threat to American security posed by the global expansion of communism and to protect the security of the free world.^⑩ By then, the basic thinking behind the American containment policy had been formed.

Using ideology as the standard to judge strategic interests made it very difficult for the Truman administration to see any strategic interests in common with the CCP. The Truman administration naturally regarded the CCP as an ally of the

Soviet Union. Since comprehensive containment of the Soviet Union was its top strategic interest in China, the Truman China policy was to foster a pro-US and anti-Soviet government. Prevention of a civil war and establishment of a coalition government became secondary interests to Truman. Those Americans who felt that preventing a civil war and establishing a democratic government were still the main US strategic interests in China could not understand why their government chose a policy of military support to the Chiang Kaishek government. For example, when Wen Yiduo was murdered by the KMT, John Fairbank, the director of a branch office of the US Information Agency in China in 1946, wrote:

Professor Wen was a graduate of the University of Chicago, a product of American education, a symbol of American interests in China…… Revolution endangers one of our interests, liberty, but at this moment reactionary forces are damaging that interest …… Chinese intellectuals widely believe that the CCP is a party of reform and is the current leading force of revolution…… If we continue to use American military force dressed up as the “Lend-Lease” program, or provide the KMT with other assistance, we will only succeed in arousing forces hostile to us, making it impossible for us to carry out our work. ⑰

Due to their anti-communist ideology, American policy-makers saw the CCP as a dependent of the Soviet Union. Because of this, the US government fell into the awkward situation of supporting Chiang Kaishek while at the same time trying to prevent a civil war. In October 1945, when Hurley and Wedemeyer returned home to report, Truman clearly told them: “Our policy is to support Chiang Kaishek, but we cannot let ourselves be sucked into China’s civil war, fighting for Chiang.”^⑱ Truman’s instructions to Marshall also contained this principle. On December 14, 1945 Marshall received Truman’s letter and the declaration of his China policy. These two documents comprised Truman’s instructions to Marshall regarding his China mission. In a memorandum Marshall wrote:

I say…… it is still necessary for the US, within the parameters of the American government policy that has already been declared, to go through me - through the Committee Chief - to support the Nationalist government of China…… the President said this correctly summarized his instructions under all conceivable circumstances. ⑲

The CCP was a party of strong ideology. When the US began using ideology

to judge common strategic interests with the CCP, this determined that the CCP would in turn use ideology as its standard as well. All-round civil war erupted in China in June 1946, coupled with the global ideological confrontation. Therefore, ideology became the standard by which both the US and the CCP determined their strategic interests. This shared standard for determining strategic interests brought them to a mutual understanding, i. e. that they had far more conflicting than coinciding strategic interests, or perhaps only strategic confrontation and no strategic interests in common. The CCP felt that American ideology represented the autocratic politics of the capitalist world and that it wanted to contain democratic forces around the world. Because of this, the CCP believed that the Americans must necessarily support the dictatorship of Chiang Kaishek in China and oppose the CCP questing for democracy. This kind of ideological analysis strengthened the CCP's determination to fight against the Americans. In August of 1946, Mao Zedong told Anna Louise Strong:

There is a great swath of land between the United States and the USSR. In it there lie many capitalist countries, as well as colonies and semi-colonial states, stretching across the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. Until the US has conquered these countries, American reactionaries have no hope of attacking the USSR..... At the present time, the first to be invaded by the US is not the USSR, but rather these countries turned into military bases.....the American reactionaries have a deep hatred for the USSR, and certainly dream of destroying this socialist country. ⑩

On July 11, 1946 John Leighton-Stuart became the ambassador to China. He helped Marshall in his mediation efforts, but without success. On August 8, he and Marshall issued a joint declaration, saying that there was no way to gain an agreement between the CCP and KMT to cease fighting. This was in fact an admission that the mediation had failed. ⑪ In January of 1947 Marshall returned home and his mediation in China was finally over.

In mid-1947 the military strength of the CCP surpassed that of Chiang Kaishek. The CCP turned from strategic defense to strategic offense. From then on, even the weak mutual interest with the US in terms of stopping the civil war disappeared. Military victory caused the CCP to re-evaluate American power. On December 25, 1947, Mao Zedong said:

“The various domestic and foreign irreconcilable contradictions are like a volcano threatening American imperialism every day. American imperialism just sits on this volcano…… preparing for war, planning in the long-term to start World War III to defeat all democratic forces…… All democratic forces in the world must defeat this plan and are certainly capable of defeating this plan. Globally, the power of the anti-imperialism camp exceeds the power of the imperialist camp. It is we who have the advantage, not the enemy.”²²

America's military support to Chiang Kaishek and its ideological stance caused the CCP to see no mutual strategic interests with the US. The military advantage it gained made the CCP feel that there were even no common interests with the US on a tactical level. In other words, the CCP no longer cared about American military aid to Chiang. The CCP had confidence that no matter how much the Americans aided the KMT armies, the CCP would win the war. Mao Zedong constantly criticized those within the CCP who overestimated American strength. On January 8, 1949, he once again urged people to correct their notions of American strength.²³

The CCP military advantage caused the US government to worry more than ever that China would fall into the Soviet sphere of influence. In the policy guidelines he and others wrote for their work in China in 1947 Wedemeyer, said: “It is not good for American political objectives when there arises a situation, in China, Korea or any place else in the world, in which conditions are ripe for the establishment of a government with totalitarian or communist ideology.”²⁴ On September 19 of the same year, in a report to Truman, he suggested a plan of comprehensive support to Chiang Kaishek. He felt that a friendly China could provide with the US a base of manpower and resources against the Soviet Union. If China was ruled by a pro-Soviet government it would then offer these benefits to America's enemies, thus endangering American bases in Japan, the Ryukyus and the Philippines.²⁵ On February 18, 1948 Truman proposed a plan to Congress to supply Chiang Kaishek with US \$ 570 million in aid.²⁶ By increasing its military assistance to Chiang, the US increased its strategic opposition to the CCP, and the two sides became die-hard foes. By then, their conflicting strategic interests became paramount. The US strategic goal was to prevent China from falling into the Soviet sphere of influence by fully supporting Chiang's effort to win the civil war, while the CCP's

strategic goal was to overthrow the Chiang Kaishek government.

This period of history illustrates how easy it is for the US and the CCP to come to the same judgment of their mutual strategic interests when they use the same standard to judge those interests. Nevertheless, they believed that there were no common strategic interests when both sides used ideology as a standard. In other words, the same standard produced the same judgment about their mutual interests but the same judgment might be quite different from the reality. Two misjudgments will not make a correct one.

China-US Relations in the Early Days of the PRC

Objectively speaking, the CCP victory in the civil war created new conditions for the formation of common strategic interests between the CCP and the United States. There were two basic mutual strategic interests: 1) Both sides needed to prevent the outbreak of World War III. 2) Both sides needed to establish diplomatic relations. However, due to the influence of ideology on their strategic thinking, neither the US nor the People's Republic China (PRC) truly recognized the importance of these interests. In addition, the power gap between the US and the PRC caused the US to over-estimate the PRC strategic needs for the US and its arrogance prevented it from correctly evaluating the asymmetry of the mutual strategic needs between it and China.

The CCP came to power but that did not necessarily mean that the PRC had to take anti-US stance. Although the Soviet support played a significant part in the CCP victory in the civil war, the CCP mostly won the war by itself. This is different from the situation in Eastern Europe where communist parties came to power mainly because of the Soviet victory over Germany. Moreover, the Soviet Union was indecisive in supporting the CCP during the civil war and tried to persuade the CCP to drop its strategic plan of crossing the Yangtze River to liberate the rest of China. The Soviet Union wished for a divided China. During the final days of the civil war, when the KMT moved its government to Guangzhou, the Soviet Union responded rapidly to the KMT government's request by moving its embassy to that city. In early 1949, even as the KMT saw its defeat nearing, the Soviet Union was still negotiating about its privileges in China with the KMT. The Soviet Union did not trust the CCP and did not wish for the victorious CCP to create a strong China. These contradictions between the Soviet and the CCP actually created new

conditions for common interests between the PRC and the US.

After the founding of the PRC, its foremost strategic interest was to obtain international recognition. That was also the important strategic goal the CCP had struggled long and hard for. The second most important strategic interest of PRC was to achieve a peaceful international environment for its postwar economic reconstruction, in other words, to prevent the outbreak of World War III and involvement in any military conflicts. Neither of these two Chinese strategic goals impinged upon the interests of the US and they actually overlapped America's. Because of this, the leaders of the CCP felt there was more benefit than harm from establishing diplomatic relations with the US. As Mao Zedong instructed on April 28, 1949: "If the US and the UK break relations with the KMT, then we may consider the issue of establishing diplomatic relations with them."²⁰ However, the influence of ideology on the CCP was extremely strong at that time. In the Spring of 1949, the CCP established the diplomacy principle of "leaning to one side", namely standing with the Soviet Union.

Under the sway of ideology, the Truman administration equated the CCP's rise to power with the infiltration of Soviet influence into China. Because of this the United States pursued a policy of not recognizing China and trying to isolate it. In October of 1949, the State Department called a three-day meeting of experts on the Far East. Participants were mainly famous China watchers, who overwhelmingly called on the US to recognize communist China.²¹ But the policymakers held a different opinion because they analyzed the China-US strategic interests in terms of ideology. They only stressed that the CCP was a communist party and paid no attention to the idea that establishing diplomatic relations with the PRC would be useful for containing the Soviet Union. Ideological influence on the US China policy reached its peak during the McCarthyism of 1950, when China policy veered towards the extreme. McCarthy alleged that there were 205 communist party members in the State Department and later decreased the number to 57. He charged many people and scholars involved in policy making with being communists or Chinese spies. His accusations received support from the Senate, which established the Tydings subcommittee to investigate the accused. Although the investigations proved all of his accusations fake, the investigations per se showed the fact that ideology was the basic standard in formulating US China policy. In the early period of the Cultural Revolution launched by Mao Zedong in 1966, China adopted a similar

ideological extremist foreign policy. But ideology had not yet driven Chinese communist policy makers to be so irrational in the early 1950s.

Under the influence of extremist ideology, the US naturally adopted a policy isolating the PRC. On May 13, 1949 Secretary of State Dean Acheson instructed John Leighton-Stuart, Ambassador to China, to emphasize to the ambassadors of England, France and other countries that “we strongly object to any major country’s rush recognition of the CCP, whether that recognition is de facto or de jure”.^⑩ In June 1949, Leighton-Stuart planned to go to Beijing to meet with CCP leaders. When Mao Zedong learned of this, he agreed to Leighton-Stuart’s visit. But when Leighton-Stuart asked Washington for instructions, Truman vetoed the trip. Acheson instructed him: “Under no circumstances are you to visit Beijing.”^⑪

The end of the Second World War left the US as the strongest military power in the world. This introduced a new factor into US China policy——American arrogance. During the Chinese civil war, the US took an instructor attitude towards both of the CCP and the KMT. This prohibited the US from objectively evaluating its common strategic interests with either the CCP or the KMT. After the founding of the PRC, its arrogant attitude seriously affected the US understanding of the significance of the US-PRC mutual strategic interests.

The US victory in World War II confirmed American politicians’ belief that the US was the world leading nation with the capability of doing anything it wanted. In December of 1945, Truman presented to the Congress his “Special State of Union” in which he said: “We must all recognize that our victory has placed the heavy responsibility of continuing its world leadership upon the shoulders of the American people. To a great degree, the future of the world peace depends upon the American determination to continue its international leadership.”^⑫ It wasn’t just American leaders who felt that the US could bend the entire world to its will and ordinary Americans also felt that way. As one American scholar wrote, “Many Americans, including important people in the government, feel that they can use their power to order the world to follow the model of American democratic capitalism”.^⑬

It was this arrogance that caused the US to believe that the PRC needed more strategical support from the US than the US from the PRC. American policy-makers only saw the fact that China needed international recognition but failed to realize

that the US needed formal diplomatic relations with the PRC to keep it from leaning towards the Soviet Union. In addition, the US believed that the CCP needed American economic aid to consolidate its power. Therefore, instead of taking the initiative in recognizing the PRC, the US set preconditions for recognition. In May of 1949 Acheson instructed Leighton-Stuart to attach three conditions to recognition of the PRC: 1) actually controlling of Chinese territory and government institutions. 2) having ability and intention to carry out international duties. 3) being recognized by the majority of the Chinese people. ⑧

The first and third conditions did not present any problem to the PRC, because at that time the CCP already controlled most of the territory and population of China. Meanwhile, its guiding principle for establishing a democratic country had already received wide support from the population. However, the second condition conflicted with the PRC foreign policy of “cleaning house before inviting guests”. This policy aimed at re-examining the foreign treaties and agreements signed by previous Chinese governments and eradicating the imperialist countries’ privileges in China. ⑨ This of course included the re-examination of the treaties signed with the US. Because of this, the CCP was unable to accept the US requirement of PRC commitment to all old treaties.

In fact, the US could have had the chance to discuss these specific treaties with the PRC if it had seriously considered the issue of establishing diplomatic relations with the PRC. Although the US had supported the KMT during the civil war, the CCP did not have stringent preconditions for establishing diplomatic relations with the US. The CCP only hoped that the US would cease aiding Chiang Kaishek and would break off diplomatic relations with the KMT. On May 10, 1945 Mao Zedong instructed Huang Hua on the matter of Huang’s meeting with Leighton-Stuart, saying: “If the US government is willing to consider establishing diplomatic relations with us, then it should stop assisting the KMT and break off contact with the reactionary remnants of the KMT…… We are not asking the US to do ‘things benefiting the Chinese people’.” ⑩

Ideological confrontation drove China to the policy of leaning towards the Soviet Union and the US to the policy of isolating China. Policy confrontation dragged both sides away from their strategic thinking about the prevention of war and pushed them to prepare for next war. When the Korean War took place, both sides jumped into it with little consideration of their strategic interest of avoiding involve-

ment in a comprehensive war. American arrogance made the US underestimate the danger that crossing the 38th parallel would result in a comprehensive war with China. After the Korean War, American scholars agreed that the two countries had fought the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In summing up the China-US relations in this period, we can see that common understanding of mutual strategic interests was not sufficient to encourage these two nations into strategic cooperation. In 1949 both the US and the PRC recognized that establishing diplomatic relations was in their best interests but neither side emphasized the importance of this strategic interest in terms of preventing an all-round war. In other words, both sides were blinded by ideology about the significance of their mutual strategic interests. The history of this period shows us that it is very difficult for the US and the PRC to develop strategic cooperation when they do not view their common strategic interests as their paramount national interests.

China-US Relations in the Early 1970s

After the breakout of the Korean War, none of Chinese or American strategists gave any thought to mutual strategic interests between the two countries. Theoretically speaking, there are always conflicting and common interests between the US and China, but no one gives consideration to common interests when they are insignificant or overwhelmed by conflicting ones. From the Korean War to the break-off of the Sino-Soviet relations, the common strategic interests between China and the US were trifling. Both American and Chinese policymakers held fairly similar views on this point.

The break in Sino-Soviet relations at the end of the 1950's meant the return of common Sino-American strategic interests. At the beginning, these interests were not significant enough to draw the attention of policymakers in these two countries. As Sino-Soviet relations worsened and the US sank deeper and deeper into the mire of the Vietnam War, their common interests became more and more important. Many scholars believe that the Sino-American mutual interests were formed after the 1969 border clash between China and the Soviet Union. I am inclined to think that Sino-American common strategic interests came back in 1958 when the Soviets withdrew their experts from China and the 1969 border clash only served to make the Chinese and American leaders recognize the importance of

these common interests. Actually, in November 1968 China ordered its Charge d' affairs in Finland to contact the American Ambassador there and to suggest resumption of ambassadorial meetings in February of 1969. This indicates that Chinese leaders were aware of common interests with the US before the border clash with the Soviets. Unfortunately, the Chinese leadership did not fully understand the significance of these interests.

Before he was elected President, Nixon already had a new understanding of mutual interests with China. He wrote an article published by *Foreign Affairs* in October 1967 in which he strongly argued that establishing relations with China was in America's long-term strategic interest. He contended that the Chinese huge population made China a major power in terms of global strategic, political and economic issues. After his election, he repeatedly stressed China's size and population, and its strategic potential to his important foreign visitors, saying: "It would be much better to talk with the Chinese than to fight wars against them."³⁸ In October 1970 Nixon wrote an article for *Time*, saying he regarded China as a world power, if not now, then within twenty years and expressing his hope to visit China in his life and the hope that his children could do so if he could not.³⁹ In a speech in Kansas City on May 4, 1971 he said that the 800 million Chinese would undoubtedly become a great economic power and achieve all kinds of progress if they change their direction, and the US must initiate the first step to end China's isolation from the international community.⁴⁰ He supposed that China would become an economic superpower similar to the United States, Western Europe, the Soviet Union and Japan in 10-15 years.⁴¹

Nixon recognized that America shared strategic interests with China and started to improve China-US relations in the late 1960s. Soon after taking office in January 1969, Nixon asked his people to review the possibility and process of adjusting American China policy. He assigned this work to his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger.⁴² In July 1969, the Nixon administration announced its decision to loosen restrictions on travel and trade between China and the US. In November, Nixon stopped the American Navy's regular patrols in the Taiwan Strait and in December he ordered the American ambassador to Poland to contact the Chinese Charge d' Affaires there for a meeting.⁴³ In April 1970, the American military attache stationed in Paris approached the Chinese military attache there. In October of that year, Nixon had the a letter delivered to the Chinese leaders by Pakistani

President Yehay Khan, expressing his willingness to send a high-ranking diplomatic envoy on a secret trip to China.

The Nixon administration's understanding of China-US mutual strategic interests illustrates a change of the standard used by American policy-makers to determine strategic interests. That is to say, ideology became less influential on American foreign policy making. More and more, the US judged its strategic interests according to a country's relationship with the Soviet Union and considered developing alliance with all countries opposing the Soviet Union. At the same time, Chinese policy-makers also changed the criterion for judging their strategic interests and adopted the same principle as the US. Chinese leaders felt that the Soviet Union was more dangerous than the US, although China and the Soviet Union were both socialist countries.

Mao Zedong believed that revisionists hidden in the Party were a time-bomb which was even more dangerous than imperialists in public. With his anti-revisionist theories as guidelines, he regarded the Soviet Union as the top international threat. In July 1971, during Kissinger's secret visit to China, Mao Zedong still viewed the US as imperialist and not a true friend. But he thought that imperialism was less evil than revisionism and China should develop a temporary alliance with the US. Mao's thinking on this point was fully reflected in later Chinese government documents. In the Foreign Ministry's "Diplomatic Information" of February 25, 1973, Mao said that China's foreign policy "should still oppose the two hegemonic powers, but should distinguish the priorities", because "soviet revisionism composes the major threat to us, besides which the Soviet Union is craftier, trickier and more dangerous. Therefore, we should focus our efforts on exposing and attacking Soviet revisionism".^②

When Chinese leaders adopted anti-Soviet standards for judging strategic interests, they responded positively to American signals for improving relations. On October 1, 1970, Mao took Edgar Snow and his wife with him to watch the National Day parade from Tiananmen. In November, Mao asked Yehay Khan to transmit a letter to Nixon in which he expressed his willingness to discuss the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue with Nixon's envoy in Beijing. On December 18, Mao said to Edgar Snow, "If Nixon is willing to come, I am willing to talk with him. If we come to an agreement, fine. If not, that will be fine as well. If we argue, that will be great; if not, that will be great too. If he comes as a tourist

that will be fine; if he comes as a President, that will be fine too. Generally speaking, whatever he does will be fine”.^④ In April of 1971, China invited the American table tennis team, which publicly expressed to the world China's will to improve relations with the US.

After many contacts and discussions, Nixon finally visited China on February 21, 1972. It was the first summit between the PRC and the US since the founding of the former. The two sides signed the “Joint Communiqué” in Shanghai (also known as the Shanghai Communiqué). The stronger agreement of the Communiqué was: “The normalization of China-US relations is in the interests of all nations; both sides wish to reduce the danger of international military conflicts; neither side should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific; each side opposes the efforts of any other country or group to establish hegemony.”^⑤ According to Mao's theory of three worlds, the hegemonic countries in the world were the US and the Soviet Union. This part of the Communiqué actually indicated that the Soviet Union was seeking hegemony and that China and the US will oppose it jointly. The agreements in the Shanghai Communiqué clearly illustrated that both sides used the same standard to judge their strategic interests and attached the top strategic priority to containing Soviet expansion. At that time, the strategic need of containing the Soviet Union overwhelmed the ideological differences between the US and China. On May 3, 1972, in one of his reports to Congress, Nixon explained his China policy, saying: “While undertaking this agreement, both sides are fully aware of our differences. We decided to change our relationship because it is in favor of the fundamental goals of our countries.”^⑥

On the one hand, the Shanghai Communiqué reflected the Chinese and American leaders' common understanding of the significance of containing the Soviets, on the other hand it reflected the strong influence on China-US strategic cooperation by the US policy of supporting Chiang and opposing the CCP. In preparing for Nixon's visit to China, the greatest difficulty was the dispute between the two sides over the Taiwan issue. On April 21, 1971 China sent a verbal message to the American government: “If we really want to revive China-US relations, then all American military forces must be withdrawn from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait.”^⑦ During Kissinger's secret visit to China in July 1971, Zhou Enlai discussed the Taiwan issue with him at length. The Chinese had three requests in this regard: 1) The US should recognize that Taiwan is a province of China; that the

Taiwan issue is a domestic one and not subject to foreign interference. 2) The US should set a date for the withdrawal of its troops from Taiwan. 3) The US should abrogate its Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan. The US, however, only agreed to the following: 1) The US would acknowledge that Taiwan belongs to China and would not support Taiwanese independence and counter attacks against the Mainland. 2) The US would support China's resumption of its seat in the UN, but would not support the ousting of Taiwan. 3) The US would set a time table for withdrawing two thirds of its troops from Taiwan after the end of the war in Indochina and then reduce the number of troops in the future. 4) The US-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty should be settled by history. ④

Although there remained differences on the Taiwan issue, both sides came to an understanding in principle, i. e. that ending or reducing US military aid to Taiwan was a basic precondition for improving bilateral relations. Without this precondition there would have been no basis for discussing Nixon's visit to China. Kissinger made two more visits to China in October 1971 and January 1972, and had many discussions with the Chinese on the Taiwan issue. During his February 1972 visit, Nixon also discussed the Taiwan issue with Zhou Enlai, insisting that the US could not recognize the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China, nor could the US abandon Taiwan. As a precondition for the withdrawal of troops from Taiwan, the US insisted that China guarantee a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue. China insisted that how to achieve reunification was an internal issue. In the Joint Communiqué, each party expressed its own views on Taiwan issue. China reiterated:

Taiwan is the key issue obstructing the normalization of China-US relations. The PRC government is the sole legitimate government of China. Taiwan is a province of China and it has long been returned to the Motherland. The liberation of Taiwan is a Chinese internal affair and other countries have no right to interfere in it. The US must withdraw all armed forces and military equipment from Taiwan. The Chinese government firmly opposes any actions intended to create "One China, One Taiwan", "One China, Two Governments", "Two Chinas", "Taiwanese Independence", and the promotion of the idea that "the status of Taiwan is not yet settled".

The United States however announced:

The United States acknowledged that all Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait believe that there is only one China and Taiwan is a part of China. The US government has no dispute with this stance. The US government repeats its concern about the Chinese peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue. With this future scenario in mind, it confirms its ultimate goal of withdrawing all American armed forces and military equipment from Taiwan. During this period, it will gradually reduce its armed forces and military equipment from Taiwan along with the detente of the tensions in this region.^④

Although China and the US could set aside their differences over the Taiwan issue for the sake of their interests of containing Soviet expansion, these differences prevented a rapid development of their strategic cooperation. Despite the China-US summit, the Taiwan issue still impeded the normalization of their relations and blocked the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.

After signing the “Agreement on Ending the Vietnam War and Restoring Peace” on January 27, 1973, the US withdrew its troops from Vietnam, which created new conditions for the further development of strategic cooperation between China and the US. In February of that year, Kissinger visited China again. He and Mao Zedong exchanged their wishes for quick normalization. Kissinger told Mao, “We both face the same danger. Perhaps sometimes we have to use different methods but we have the same goal.” Mao Zedong said, “That’s good. As long as our aim is the same, we won’t hurt you and you won’t hurt us. We can deal with this son-of-a-bitch together.”^⑤ Kissinger and Zhou Enlai reached an agreement on setting up offices of Charge d’ Affairs in Beijing and Washington, D. C.

On November 10, 1973 Kissinger, who had been promoted to Secretary of State, made his sixth trip to China. After his meeting with Mao and Zhou Enlai, on November 14, China and the US issued another communique. In addition to repeating the basic content of the Shanghai Communique, it expanded the clause on not seeking hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region to “any other region of the world”.^⑥ This communique demonstrated that China and the US had examined their mutual strategic interests in light of global politics. At the end of 1973 the US withdrew 3,000 troops from Taiwan, which represented one third of its total force in Taiwan.^⑦ This move facilitated the later normalization of China-US relations.

China-US relations of this period illustrates that two conditions are necessary

for Sino-American strategic cooperation. First, both countries need to use the same criteria for judging strategic interests. Second, both sides need to regard their mutual strategic interests as their top national interests before they can develop strategic cooperation. Even if they continued to disagree over Taiwan, they could still develop strategic cooperation as long as they valued their mutual strategic interests highly. Vice versa, the Taiwan issue would necessarily impede their strategic cooperation if one of these two conditions was not met.

Lessons

From the “Five-Clause Agreement Draft” to the “Shanghai Communiqué”, Sino-American strategic relations went through friction and confrontation for 26 years and finally came back to strategic cooperation. Reviewing the experiences of that history, we may learn three important lessons.

First lesson: Relinquishing ideological disputes is the basic precondition for China-US strategic cooperation.

After the Second World War, ideological differences became the political foundation for the confrontation between the two military blocs headed respectively by the US and the Soviet Union. Truman’s policy of supporting Chiang and opposing the CCP, and the policy of isolating China carried out by successive US governments were all influenced by anti-communist ideology in different degrees. When civil war broke out, the CCP view of the world was also influenced by ideology. The CCP judged its strategic interests according to ideology, especially after it came to power. Because ideology was the standard of judging strategic interests, the CCP and the US were not able to realize the existence of their mutual strategic interests for a long time. At the end of the 1960s the Chinese and American leaders temporarily set aside their ideological differences, which enabled them to regard the containment of Soviet expansion as their top strategic interest. In other words, the standard of judging strategic interests against the Soviet Union impelled China and the US into strategic cooperation.

This historical experience provides a crucial lesson for post-Cold War China-US relations, i. e. , these two nations cannot engage in substantial strategic cooperation until they abandon their ideological differences. Neither China nor the United States can change its political system in the visible future and East-West cultural differences determine long term ideological differences between them. It would be

fruitless to try to mend their ideological differences. However, reducing the influence of ideological differences on the judgment of strategic interests will be helpful to developing China-US strategic cooperation.

Lesson Two: The psychology behind the US policy of supporting Taiwan and constraining mainland China will have a long-term negative impact on China-US strategic relations.

US reluctance to recognize the PRC's right to rule all of China has a negative long-term impact on Chinese and American understanding of the importance of their mutual strategic interests. From the time when Hurley and the CCP signed the "Five-Clause Agreement Draft" in 1944, the CCP has been queting American recognition of its legitimate rule in China. Nevertheless, supporting Chiang and opposing the CCP became the keynote of the US China policy after Roosevelt set that tone for his China policy. This policy signified US reluctance to recognize the legal status of the CCP as the ruler of China. That influence underwent a change after Nixon's 1971 visit to China but it did not disappear. It was still evident even after China-US relations were fully normalized in 1978. After Lee Tenghui came to power, the US resumed arms sale to Taiwan, which was implied the US denial of PRC sovereignty over Taiwan. China asked the US to implement its "One China" policy, which merely represents an extension of the CCP quest for American recognition of its legitimate status, i. e. , from recognition of the CCP's legal right to participate a coalition government to recognition of its status as the legitimate ruler of China and then to recognition of its full right of reunifying Taiwan. We may conclude that there will be no solid basis for durable strategic cooperation between China and the US in the foreseeable future unless the US stop its arms sales to Taiwan.

Lesson Three: Mutual respect between China and the US facilitates their common strategic understanding and strategic cooperation.

Since the end of World War II, the US has been the most powerful nation in the world while China has been slowly evolving into a great power. The power gap between the US and the CCP caused the US to constantly underestimate the determination of the CCP to protect its interests. During the Chinese civil war, the US felt the CCP lacked the ability to wrest power from the KMT and mistakenly sided with Chiang Kaishek. After the CCP won the civil war, the US believed that the CCP would not be able to remain in power for long without US economic support.

For this reason the US chose a policy of not recognizing the PRC. On the eve of the Korean War, the US did not think that the PRC was able to fight another war so soon after its founding. The US will not recognize the rightful status of the PRC as long as America does not realize Chinese special potential as a slow but steadily growing power. Without recognition of its rightful status, the US and China will have difficulty in reaching a common understanding of their mutual strategic interests.

The above considerations suggest that the US and China be able to develop and expand their mutual strategic interests as long as they respect each other's core national interests. In the first few decades of the next century, no country will be able to take the place of the US as the only superpower and China will develop into one of the world powers as well. For this reason, these two countries must learn to respect each other's interests and neither should underestimate the other's power and determination to protect its core interests. Specifically, the US should respect China's basic interest in protecting its national sovereignty and reunification, and China should respect the US major role in world affairs. If the two sides can reach tacit agreement on this point, they may engage in strategic cooperation for many years to come.

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CONTENTS OF CIR (*Chinese Edition*)

No. 7, 1999

1. Lu Zhongwei, *The Global Economic Situation and Economic Security (II)*.
2. Gan Ailan & Lin Limin *Changes in the World Geo-political Situation vs. China's Geo-strategic Environment*.
3. Lu Qichang, *The Cox Report: A Cock-and-Bull Story*
4. Li Xiaohua, *Japan's Strategy Readjustment toward Russia in the Post-Cold War Era*.
5. Jin Tao, *Analysis on the New US Global Strategy*.
7. Sun Xiaoqing, *Germany's Role in the Economic Globalization after the Launching of the Euro*.
8. An Hongquan, *The US Policy Readjustment toward North Korea*.
9. Wang Chunyong, *The Influence of Orthodoxy on Russian Society*.
10. Fang Jinying, *The Development Trend of Indonesia's Political Situation after Its Parliamentary Election*.
11. Zhao Jinfu, *South Africa's Policy trend after Its Presidential Election*.
12. Ding Sheng, *The Balkans: Still A Powder Barrel on Fire*.
13. Ma Jiali, *Analysis on the Conflicts between India and Pakistan*.
14. Liu Jianfei, *Technological Advancement vs. Transformation of the World Configuration*.
15. Deng Hao, *Islamic Wahhabiyah vs. Political Situation in Central Asia*.