

# China's Present and Contemporary External Relations

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## Abstract

Since the authority transition in China in November 2012, there have been noteworthy changes in Chinese external relations. It has been widely observed that under the new leadership headed by President Xi Jinping, Beijing has become more assertive in international relations. This paper examines the china's present and contemporary external relations. It argues the relations between china and African countries. The study shows the current relations between china and America. In this investigation, while Beijing still clings to its pronounced 'peaceful development' arrangement meaning to keep up a steady outer condition helpful for its ascendance, the way in which it tries to do as such are significantly unique in relation to past decades. The paper also argues among the relationship of China, Asia, North Korea, and Southeast Asia having a special focus on territorial disputes and china's strategic balance in South Asia. The paper finally argues the relations between china and central and Eastern Europe giving a special focus on intergovernmental, political and economic relations.

**Keywords:** Chinese external relations; Xi Jinping; Peaceful development; Territorial disputes; Political and economic relations.

## 1. Introduction

During the last four decades, China has moved from being an isolated country separated from the international community, having become one of the world's major powers and being on its way to becoming the biggest economy in the world (Matura, 2019). Being at the epicenter of a worldwide power move from "the West" to "the East", and from "the North" to "the South" (Sarker *et al.*, 2018a), there has been a considerable measure of consideration given to its outer undertakings, including its external affairs objectives and conduct (Sarker *et al.*, 2018b). To accurately understand China's external affairs, there is a need to grasp the bigger picture, to be competent to comprehend what is guiding the Chinese foreign policy, and how the Chinese foreign policy decision making works (Sarker *et al.*, 2018b).

The external relations of the People's Republic of China (PRC), generally known to the most nations as China, guides the way in which China interacts with foreign countries and conveys its economic, cultural, and political weaknesses, strengths and values (Shafi *et al.*, 2020). As a great power and rising superpower, China's external strategy and tactical thinking are exceptionally influential (Cao *et al.*, 2019). China publicly states it "unswervingly pursues a free foreign policy of peace. The essential objectives of this strategy are to save China's independence, power and regional integrity, make a positive global environment for China's reform and opening up and modernization of development, and to keep up world peace and push regular development." An instance of an external strategy decision guided by "power and regional integrity" is that it's not taking part in political relations with any nation (Sarker *et al.*, 2020) that perceives the Republic of China (Taiwan), which the PRC does not perceive as a different nation (Sarker *et al.*, 2018a). China holds the membership of numerous international organizations, holding the main positions such as a perpetual membership on the United Nations Security Council. The PRC's conciliatory objectives were expansionist for accomplishing worldwide communist revolution before the Cultural Revolution finished. The ROC was replaced by the PRC in the early 1970s as the known government of "China" in the UN following Resolution 2758. As a nuclear power, China marked the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the United Nations. China's external approach today is outlined as key relations with neighboring nations (Sarker, 2019a) and the world's superpowers to endeavor for China's national interest, and to make an ideal domain for China's domestic improvement for ceaseless rivalry on the planet in the long-run (Sarker *et al.*, 2018b).

Without accurately grasping the larger foreign policy dynamics behind China's policy, it is simply not possible to accurately understand and, in the continuation, predict either its overall policy or its behavior in specific cases (Sarker, 2019b), be it towards Russia, Europe, South East Asia, or how it handles the events in Ukraine or Syria (Beeson, 2010). Nor is it possible to understand what kind of power China is today and will be in the future. This study will try to grasp the china's present and contemporary external relations around the world. The main objectives of this studies are to find out china's present relations with other nations, and china's contemporary external relations.

## 2. Methodology of the Study

This paper has been prepared on the basis of secondary data. The pertinent secondary information was accumulated from relevant articles, books, newspapers, different position papers and action plans of the government. A significant portion of the information has been gathered from literature review. Important publications of the government of Bangladesh & China and government websites of the both countries including other countries have been gone through.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Institutions for Carrying Out External Relations

China's external relations are carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Conversely, the Foreign Affairs Ministry is subordinate to the Foreign Affairs Leading Group, which settles on strategy making. Most of the Chinese foreign policy is formulated in think tanks supported and regulated by, but officially outside of the administration (Sarker, 2019c). One particular part of Sino-American relations is that a significant part of the foreign policy discussion happens between interlocutors who shape the think tanks (Sarker *et al.*, 2018a). Since these discussions are informal, they usually feel more freedom and fewer restrictions than discussions between government officials (Sarker *et al.*, 2018c). China is also distinctive for having a different body of Chinese strategic thought and theory of international relations which is different from Western theory.

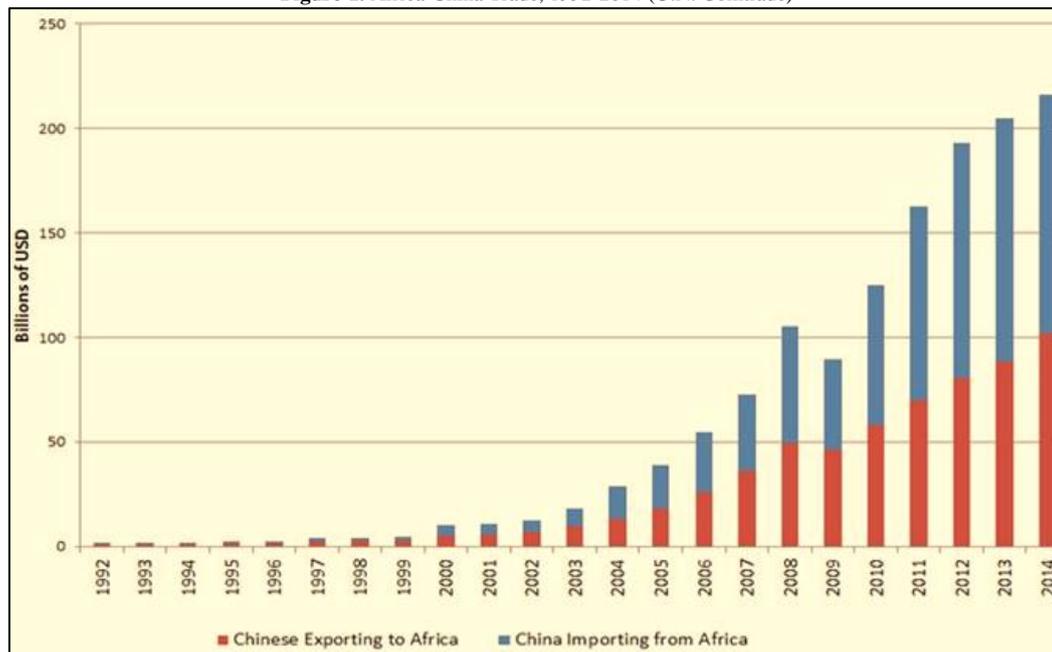
### 3.2. China's Present and Contemporary External Relations

As China's economy continues to grow, it wants to expand its markets and secure reliable supplies of resources in support of its economic development (Sarker and Jie, 2017). Resource diplomacy therefore becomes a prominent feature of its modernization diplomacy. China's present and contemporary external relations are discussed below as relations by region and country (Sarker *et al.*, 2019a).

### 3.3. Africa and China Relations

If the rise of China is the greatest story of the past twenty years, then the increasing presence of China in Africa is not too far behind. This is best indicated by the graph below, which shows the growth in trade between Africa and China between 1992 and 2014 (Figure 1).

Figure-1. Africa-China Trade, 1992-2014 (U.N. Comtrade)



What underlines this story is rapidity; as two emerging entities in the global market, the impressive levels of trade between Africa and China seem to grow exponentially with each successive year. Beijing is playing an ever more active role in the continent of Africa. Kenya's largest mega-infrastructure project since its independence from Britain in 1963, a \$3.8 billion Chinese-built high-speed railway, became active in 2017, built by China Road and Bridge Corporation and 90% financed by China Exim bank. With trade relations already at well over \$10 billion (representing 7.6% of the total trade volume between China and Africa and 36.4% of total trade volume between China and ECOWAS), in 2017 China's foreign minister Wang Yi pledged \$40 billion in investments and projects in Nigeria. On September 29 in 2017, the Tanzanian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, Dr Susan Kolimba noted that more than 1,700 job opportunities are expected to be generated by \$945 million in Chinese investment in projects registered in Tanzania this year alone. On the December 6 of last year, Zimbabwe's new government signed a \$153 million loan agreement with China. On June 25, China pledged \$15 billion to fund

Ghana's massive economic turnaround agenda, with the likelihood that a further \$4 billion would be committed for various development projects across the 10-region country.

### **3.4. America and China Relations**

U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping issue a joint announcement on climate change, swearing to reduce carbon emissions on the sidelines of the 2014 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. Obama sets a more aspiring focus for U.S. emissions reductions, and Xi makes China's first guarantee to check carbon discharges' development by 2030. The Trump administration announces sweeping tariffs on Chinese imports, worth at least \$50 billion, in response to what the White House alleges is Chinese theft of U.S. technology and intellectual property. China imposes disciplinary actions in early April, 2018 on a range of U.S. products, stoking concerns of a trade war between the largest economies of the world. The Trump administration imposes fresh tariffs totaling \$34 billion worth of Chinese goods. In excess of eight hundred Chinese items in the industrial and transport divisions, and in addition products, for example, TVs and restorative gadgets, will confront a 25 percent import assess. China strikes back with its own particular levies on in excess of five hundred U.S. items. The reprisal, also valued around \$34 billion, targets commodities such as beef, dairy, seafood, and soybeans.

### **3.5. Asia and China Relations**

China's developing assertiveness is most likely best exemplified by its approaches in its nearby neighboring territories. Its Asia policy remains a priority in order to secure trade interests, transportation of energy resources as well as territorial security (Sultana *et al.*, 2017). In a search for securing its position in Asia, China has become increasingly vocal to defend its territorial interests in the East and South China Seas, to confront its historical rival Japan, to contain the unreliable policy of North Korea, to balance the Indian influence in South Asia and to secure its soft power by increasing its interdependence with ASEAN countries (Sarker and Wu, 2019).

### **3.6. Territorial Disputes**

Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute: The Senkaku/ Diaoyu Islands dispute refers to territorial controversy over a group of five uninhabited islands and three barren rocks located in the East China Sea and ranging in size from 800 m<sup>2</sup> to 4.32 km<sup>2</sup>. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are vital for China for three main reasons, which explain its intransigence on this issue. First, the claim on the islands is connected to one of the most important axes of its foreign policy, namely China's territorial integrity (Sarker *et al.*, 2019c). The second factor is linked with the access to fishing grounds and hydrocarbon resources that sovereignty over these islands would entail (Sarker, 2019b). Finally, the issue of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands overlaps with other themes, particularly historical controversies, which nurture a nationalistic and fundamentally anti-Japanese discourse.

South China Sea: The South China Sea (SCS) has become another hot spot of China's sovereignty claims and maritime power expansion. From a rather passive stance, China is now claiming or re-claiming sovereignty over islands and exclusive control over maritime zones that are also vindicated by other states in the region (Sarker *et al.*, 2018a). In a context where China has increasingly focused on the quality of its naval forces, its activism in the SCS testifies of the progressive development of a military capacity to protect its direct security interests in the neighboring seas as well as to project its naval power far beyond its own borders (Sarker *et al.*, 2018f).

### **3.7. China and North Korea**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, China has become both the main political supporter and the first provider of economic aid to North Korea. A key priority of the PRC's foreign policy is the stability of its regional environment, as a prerequisite for its own stability. For doing that China aims at keeping the status quo in North Korea, as long as it does not comprise a threat to regional stability, while attempting to encourage reforms likely to change the regime in a way (Sarker *et al.*, 2019b) that would be favorable to China. A collapse of the North Korean regime would entail substantial damage for at least two reasons. First, Beijing doubts an immense rush of North Koreans to its borders, which will stand for a threat to public order. For this reason, China reserves the right to expel North Korean defectors – who are not recognized by Beijing as refugees – in accordance with bilateral agreements concluded with North Korea. Second, the fall of the regime would mean the loss of a buffer state and could lead to the reunification of the Korean peninsula under adverse conditions for Beijing (Xu and Bajoria, 2014).

Interestingly, China has proven to become increasingly impatient and vocal against the policy of the new North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, more particularly in the aftermath of the 2013 nuclear test (*supra*). In this respect, the fact that no meeting between Xi Jinping and the new North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has taken place since their respective assumption of office, the China visit by South Korean President Park Geun-hye (June 2013) and the return visit by the Chinese President to Seoul (July 2014) may indicate both a Chinese-South Korean rapprochement and a deterioration in the relations between Beijing and Pyongyang. However, the change of leaderships in North Korea and China will probably have no fundamental impact on China's North Korea policy. This is due to the power structure in China.

### **3.8. China and Southeast Asia**

The relationship between China and Southeast Asia should be approached from both the perspectives of China's relationship with ASEAN—which functions as the main regional institution in the area – as well as China's relationship with the states in the region. Generally speaking, China has been very supportive of the integration process within ASEAN. As a testimonial of China's faith in the relevance of ASEAN, the ACFTA (ASEAN-China

Free Trade Area) was established in 2010. The ACFTA has acted as a major driver for trade and has increasingly integrated the two trade blocs. In the words of Zhang Yunling, 'For the PRC, ACFTA is more than just a trade agreement. It helps to provide a comprehensive framework for cooperation between the PRC and the ASEAN countries. The PRC is now the largest market for ASEAN exports, but relations go well beyond trade to include infrastructure, connectivity and capacity building for human development'. China is nevertheless not the only influential external actor in the region, as Japan and the U.S. remain the main sources of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and entertain more stable and established relations with Southeast Asian countries. (Beeson, 2010) Despite the still relatively low capital inflows, investments from China have become critical for some less developed ASEAN Members such as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. A more recent trend also pictures Chinese companies that have started to delocalize their activities to Southeast Asia, more particularly Vietnam and Cambodia. This development indicates that Chinese labor-intensive companies might have growing incentives to move their activities to Southeast Asia with the progressive increase of labour costs in China. Myanmar has always played an important role being an important geopolitical partner for China. Some recent initiatives have been taken to strengthen the cooperation with Southeast Asian countries in the fight against human trafficking. This cooperation includes the establishment of liaison offices at the border between China and Myanmar (Gates, 2015).

### **3.9. China and the Strategic Balance in South Asia**

The nuclear balance in South Asia remains one of the most dangerous in the world. Three neighboring countries are in possession of nuclear weapons and second-strike capabilities (Sarker *et al.*, 2020); India and Pakistan have been to war four times with each other, and India and China once (in 1962). Since the 1970s China has helped Pakistan's nuclear program. Most recently, Pakistan has received funding from China to add four new nuclear plants by 2023, with four more reactors in the pipeline. The enhancement of nuclear facilities in Pakistan, along with China's own extensive nuclear arsenal, provides the argument for India's efforts at upgrading its nuclear capacities and the need for establishing a nuclear triad consisting of nuclear forces on land, at sea and in the air (Shafi *et al.*, 2020). China is also a major supplier of conventional arms to Pakistan. Recently, a USD 6 billion purchase was approved by a parliamentary committee in Islamabad, allowing Pakistan to buy eight Chinese submarines to counter India's naval dominance in the Indian Ocean (Sarker *et al.*, 2019a). The strategic balance in South Asia is a precarious one, where the extra-regional power (China) is actively supporting the further development of nuclear capabilities in a state that is often regarded by the international community as unstable (Sarker, 2019d).

### **3.10. China and Central and Eastern Europe**

China's emergence as an actor in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is shaped by four factors: (i) the establishment of bilateral economic relations with Central and Eastern European States in view of growing Chinese investment opportunities, on the one hand, (ii) and in view of the severe financial crisis, on the other hand; (iii) the establishment of a network of bilateral and multilateral relations, as exemplified by the intergovernmental and transgovernmental forum "Cooperation between China and Central and East European Countries" (16+1); and (iv) the political cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries, including fostering political relations, which may impact ongoing EU-China disputes such as the arms embargo (Poznatov, 2014). For the EU, these four factors imply that the Union has to foster the exchange of information amongst EU institutions and Member States regarding their policies towards China.

### **3.11. Boosting Economic Relations**

Investments by China do not only matter for the EU as a whole, but have proven particularly important for states in CEE. It has been pointed out that the investments may not only be related to EU market access, but also to economic opportunities in markets beyond the EU borders, such as Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Macedonia. Overall it has been pointed out that China looks for 'securing market access, technology transfer and optimization of supply networks. In 2012 'Chinese investment in the new member states of the EU is still on a very small scale, but looks set to rise, with both Chinese and central-east European governments keen that it should do so' (Matura, 2019). In other words, against the background of an economic and financial crisis, both EU Member States, such as Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, but also countries along the EU border, such as Serbia, were dependent on attracting investments in their shaken economies (Jacoby, 2014). While some commentators have mentioned that 'Chinese investment in Central and Eastern Europe is booming' data show an increase of FDI especially in Hungary, Romania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria. Investments in CEE are small compared to the rest of the EU, but are developing 'fast'.

The projects show not only an interest in EU Member States, but also a new focus on the Western Balkans. As reported by EurActiv in December 2014: 'Since 2010, USD 1.75 billion of Chinese money has gone into projects in Serbia, including construction of a coal-fired power plant, a bridge over the Danube in Belgrade and a stretch of motorway. Neighboring Bosnia has concurred ventures worth an aggregate 1.4 billion Euros to be financed by China. Montenegro, another previous Yugoslav republic, picked a Chinese organization to assemble a 800-million-euro stretch of a motorway connecting it with its northern neighbor Serbia.' While on the one hand, Chinese investments and economic relations with the region can be seen as an opportunity for growth and development, the European Union's own market integration model supplemented (or even tested) by rising Chinese activities (Turcsányi, 2014).

### 3.12. Political Relations

States of the Western Balkans and new EU Member States serve as hubs and key focal points in the economic activities between East and West, enabling China's westward reach. At the same time, the interconnectivity in terms of infrastructure has implications for the trade of goods and services and for investment (Barnett *et al.*, 2017). The question is whether a spill-over is to be expected between the intensified political, economic, technological and cultural cooperation and some of the prominent disputes between the EU and China, such as the arms embargo.

Moreover, the good relations that China seems to cultivate in CEE may impact on the position that partners take on a potential lift of the arms embargo. While it remains far from clear that China will be able to impact upon EU Member States in a way that a consensus on lifting the arms embargo would arise, the Chinese position is obvious: winning support for the Chinese case by increased cooperation – from economic diplomacy through public and soft diplomacy – and gradually changing the political perception of China. In this context it may be remembered that in 2004, the new Member States Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Baltic States were opposed to any lifting of the arms embargo, thus siding not only with other EU Member States but also with the U.S. position as 'the best guarantee of their freedom and independence'. Previous instances, such as the 2010 Hungarian Presidency, when Victor Orban did not mention human rights and refused to meet the Dalai Lama, may show emerging shifts in the political landscape of Central and Eastern Europe (Jacoby, 2014).

### 3.13. The Silk Road Fund and Central Asia: New Corridor between China and Europe

In 2013, China put forward a number of trade infrastructure initiatives, of which the double project of 'New Silk Road' and 'New Maritime Silk Road' stand out (Sarker *et al.*, 2018e). The project was presented by President Xi Jinping in September 2013 at Nazarbayev University (Kazakhstan) and took shape throughout 2013-2015. At the launch of the Silk Road Fund on 8 November 2014, Xi Jinping stressed that 'the new Silk Road Fund will be used to provide investment and financing assistance to execute resources, infrastructure, financial cooperation, industrial cooperation, and supplementary projects associated with the connectivity for countries along the 'Belt and Road'(Sarker *et al.*, 2018d). A 'special leading group' was established and an action plan published on 28 March 2015. The New Silk Road will help to develop the Western province of Xinjiang populated by Muslim Uighurs which is a potential source of conflict in Central Asia. Finally, the project will strengthen ties with Central Asian countries and secure energy imports from the region. China is one of the partners along with the EU, Russia and the U.S

## 4. Conclusions

In less than two years, China has made considerable changes to its foreign policy and external relations. Chinese diplomacy has entered a new phase in the current and contemporary world. China has to maintain a peaceful external environment conducive to China's rise. China's unprecedented emphasis on the protection of its national interests has, however, demonstrated that China's commitment to peaceful development is no longer without conditions. Rather, ensuring China's key national interests, however defined, will turn into an increasingly key factor driving Chinese diplomacy. China's commitment to a peaceful rise will thus be conditioned by the external accommodation of China's core national interests and reciprocal strategic reassurance by other countries. Moreover, Beijing's new initiatives to develop a 'new type of great power relationship' with the US and to form a 'community of common destiny' with countries in the Asia Pacific all demonstrate a more proactive diplomatic posture under the new leadership of China.

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