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PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON THE 'PEACEFUL-RISE' CONCEPT IN MAINLAND CHINA

Dominik Mierzejewski

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International House
University of Nottingham
Wollaton Road
Nottingham NG8 1BB
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)115 846 7769
Fax: +44 (0)115 846 7900
Email: CPI@nottingham.ac.uk
Website: www.chinapolicyinstitute.org

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Dominik Mierzejewski*

ABSTRACT

The author would focus on the differences between Chinese intellectuals in their approaches to the new foreign policy concept, *heping jueqi*, proposed by Zheng Bijian in October 2003. The highly controversial concept provoked stormy discussions among Chinese scholars. In 2004, Chinese political scientists brought the matter up for discussion. In fact after a few months of discussion we might say that there were three groups of scholars: followers (optimists), dubious optimists and opponents.

Many scholars mainly from Shanghai based think-tanks, like Xia Liping and Jiang Xiyuan, enthused about the new concept and started to substantiate the thesis. To them the "peaceful-rise" concept was a continuation of the "three represents theory." On the one hand it was based on China's macroeconomic achievements and on the other on Chinese traditional "peace-loving culture".

The second group accused the government of presenting the "empty concept" without any ideological background (*yishi xingtai secai*). They argued that China was capable of playing an important role in the international relations but it must reject all "western ways of rising" and be based on a real rise of cultural and spiritual values. In contrast China would lose a "strategic chance" and would be a power only for a short period. Chinese (*Zhonghua*) culture faced a revival opportunity and should be included in Chinese foreign policy.

The last group raised voices of doubt. Wang Yizhou and Wang Jisi from the Chinese Academy of Social Science urged further discussions on the inconsistencies and theoretical problems inherent in the concept. Moreover Shi Yinhong from the People's University raised the issue of Taiwan as a potential complicating factor for China's rise.

* This paper was presented at the [International Forum of Contemporary Chinese Studies Inaugural Conference](#), 19-21 November 2009, organised by the School of Contemporary Chinese Studies at The University of Nottingham. The author is Assistant Professor in International and Political Studies at the University of Lodz. For more information about this paper, please contact him at mei@mierzejewski.org.pl

Eventually, the "peaceful-rise" concept was withdrawn from Party documents and Chinese authorities decided to promote the less controversial concept of "harmonious world."

Public Discourse on the 'Peaceful Rise' Concept in Mainland China

Dominik Mierzejewski

In contemporary China the dynamics of discussions about Chinese foreign policy as a whole is linked to its reforms and opening-up, growing GDP, changing social stratum, industrialization and urbanization processes. During the last 30 years the pace of discussion has increased. Particularly since 1992 (the second opening up) a lot of foreign affairs' materials such as diplomatic memoirs, source materials or diplomacy anthologies, yearbooks and dictionaries have been published¹. On the other hand the growing GDP has increased public opinion's aspirations especially among the middle and business classes. These processes have created a necessity for the central government to answer to these ambitions. The dynamics have been created by the growing interrelationship between the Chinese Communist Party and public opinion in China. The last point of the dynamics, not discussed in the paper, involves elite changes in the PRC, which in the author's opinion, are in a state of flux. Periods of transitions within the Chinese Communist Party have been the most important times for the future of the country.

In this study, which has been based mainly on Chinese primary sources like books, articles and commentaries published both in print and online, the author presents a variety of ideas, concepts, views and observations discussed among the Chinese intellectuals since the official concept of 'peaceful-rise' was proposed. Major questions to be answered are: How have intellectuals responded to the official foreign policy concept? What kind of arguments have they used to judge the 'peaceful-rise' idea?² Was it only a

¹ The best examples are the International Politics and Security Yearbook published by the Chinese Academy of Social Science (Yellow Book) e.g. *2005 nian: Quanqiu zhengzhi yu anquan baogao, Guoji xingshi huan pishu*, Shehui Kexue Wenxuan Chubanshe, Beijing 2004 and *Zhongguo Waijiao Cidian* (The Dictionary of the Chinese Diplomacy) published by Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe in Beijing in 2000.

² The author used three terms to describe 'peaceful-rise': theory, idea, concept or outlook due to the semantic problems. In fact Chinese scholars have used a variety of notions in Chinese. For instance the Chinese dictionary 'Cihai' advanced four aspects of the Western idea of concept: 1. a picture in the mind (*zhuyi, niantou, sixiang, jihua, dasuan, yijian*); 2. a guess, filing of probability (*xiang xiang, mohu xiangfa*); 3. means a perfect and eternal archetype of which reality is an imperfect copy (*linian, lixing gainian, guannian*); 4. understanding (*lijie*). There are also other notions of the idea like: *sixu* defined as a main lane of ideas and *siyi* understood as a guess and understanding, *sixiang tixi* – understood as a system of thoughts or ideological and *lilun tixi* understood as a theoretical system for example Mao Zedong's Thoughts: *Mao Zedong sixiang*. The most popular term in the Chinese specialist literature is *sixiang* that is explained as *lilun tixi* and understood as a theoretical system. Chinese political scientists often use a Western terminology e.g. equated an American public diplomacy *gonggong waijiao* and a Chinese public diplomacy *gongzhong waijiao* or people to people diplomacy *renmin waijiao*. This paradigm limits possibilities to interpret a Chinese foreign policy. The second example is a translation of Deng Xiaoping's 28 characters strategy e.g. 'yao didiao, bu dangtou' (keep a low profile) was translated as "yincang zhenshi yitu" (hide your real intentions under your wings). See: Xiao Jialing, *Dangdai Zhongguo waijiao yanjiu 'zhongguo hua': wenti yu sikao* (The Sinization of the research on the contemporary

result of a central 'battle of concept' and struggle for power within the Communist Party of China during that period of power transition? At the end, why did the authorities allow a relatively free public debate on foreign affairs?

At first, in 1995, Chinese academics had used the 'peaceful-rise' concept to describe China's foreign policy in coming years. In 1998, Yan Xuetong and three other researchers from the Beijing-based Institute of Contemporary International Relations published a book entitled *International Environment for China's Rise*, which probably was the first analytical work that discussed the concept of China's rise.

The official *heping jueqi* concept was proposed by Zheng Bijian in October 2003. The highly-controversial concept provoked stormy debates among Chinese scholars and abroad. The CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao used the new concept to refer to China's global role and responsibilities in speeches in December 2003, suggesting that the new concept has become an official foreign policy line. The subject became an issue of intense and open debate among Chinese decision-makers and intellectuals. In fact after a few months of discussions we might say that there were three groups of scholars--followers (optimists), 'dubious optimists' and opponents³.

Followers

Along with Zheng Bijian's speech some influential magazines e.g. 'Outlook' (*Liaowang*) and 'Study Times' (*Xuexi Shibao*) published by the Central Party School recommended this theory as 'correct and appropriate'. Chinese political scientists brought the matter up for discussion. Many scholars, mainly in Shanghai based think-tanks, were enthused about the new concept and they started to substantiate the thesis. The 'peaceful-rise' concept to them was a continuation of the 'three represents theory' introduced by Jiang Zemin in 2001. On the one hand it was based on China's macroeconomic achievements and on the other derived from Chinese traditional 'peace love culture'.

In the book 'Peaceful Rise of China' published in 2004, Xia Liping and Jiang Xiyuan stressed the importance of Chinese traditional values. They also emphasized that China should have its own new international relations theory based on Chinese culture to justify

China's diplomacy: problem and thought), 'Guoji GuanCha' 2008, no 2, Zhao Quansheng, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York 1996, s. 53-54 and *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian*, Beijing 2004, p. 1184.

³ These three groups were differentiated on the analysis of their papers. The First group of scholars highly praised the official party line e.g. presented by Jiang Zemin during the 16th Congress. The second group advocated rejection of the Western patterns of rising and proposed Chinese model or theory of rising as well as Chinese model of development. The last group – opponents turned down the 'peaceful-rise' concept as a ridiculous idea.

the concept⁴. This new theory should contain such values as unity in diversity, peace and humanity. The first point that they referred to was the ancient concept of unity in diversity. The *he er bu tong* concept arose from the earlier concept of the *tian ren he yi* (unity between universe and mankind). In Confucian philosophy, it was described as *jun he er butong* (unity between nobleman and the universe). They also recognized the importance of the other great Chinese philosophical system – Daoism. Laozi advocated *wuwei erzhi* (do nothing and let nature take its course), in other words, power comes from nature. The positive promotion of China was related also to the 'dragon culture' (*long wenhua*) and slow quitting of the 'victim mentality' (*shouhaizhe xintai*)⁵. In Chinese mentality power comes from morality and morality comes from nature. In the view of Wang Yiwei, the traditional tribute system integrates power and morality. Therefore, in Chinese traditional thinking, there was no concept of nation, nation-state, sovereignty, or international system but rather the ideas of 'all under heaven' (*tianxia*)⁶. As he strongly advocated, the West does not understand China due to their semantic differences. Significantly, conceptual differences can exist as a result of different languages and its norms. Power, as an example, usually is translated into Chinese as '*quanli*'. Actually, in traditional Chinese, '*quanli*' has two basic meanings: 'steelyard' (noun) or 'against scripture while for principle' (verb). In practice, '*quanli*' (power) is connected with '*quanshu*' (tactics or strategy). The Chinese understanding of power is always related to morality, for instance, Confucius thought that a good emperor is someone who 'rules others and cultivates himself' (*nei sheng wai wang*). In fact, in the Chinese way of thinking, morality from the inside brings about the power outside⁷. Historically, Chinese culture is primarily rooted in a model of Confucianism whose concept of power stands in marked contrast to that of the West⁸. In this regard whether China proposes this concept or another would not be understood by the West.

In fact, they have simplified reality and has followed the official interpretation on the Chinese foreign policy concept. In several speeches, Jiang Zemin, the then-president of the People's Republic of China, made good use of Chinese heritage to explain intentions

⁴ Lu Gang, Yong Xuedang, *Zhongguo weixie shei? Jiedu "Zhongguo weixie lun"*, (To whom China is a threat? Interpretation of China threat theory), Xueshu Chubanshe, Shanghai 2004, p. 418-419.

⁵ Qian Hao, *Long wenhua, daguo xintai, Zhong-Mei guanxi – dui Zhongguo 'shouhaizhe xintai' de lishi yu lilun kaofen* (Dragon Culture, Self-Consciousness as Big Power and Sino-U.S. Relationship: A Historical and Theoretical Probe of China's Victim Mentality), 'Guoji guanCha' 2004, no 68, p. 25-27.

⁶ Wang Yiwei, *Chinese Tradition of Thinking Power*, A paper prepared for the 46th Annual ISA Convention Honolulu, H.I. March 1-5, 2005, online: www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/7/0/7/6/p70765_index.html (accessed on 4 September 2008)

⁷ Wang Yiwei, op.cit.

⁸ Chih Yishih, *China Just the World: the Morality in Chinese Foreign Policy*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, London 1993, p. 27-34.

and finally the concept became – ‘the great guide’ (*zhongda zhidao*)⁹. China’s rise concept was based on *hexie lun* – theory of harmony. In spite of world’s contradictions, stereotypes (*qian pian yulu*) and mutual fights (*huxiang chongtu*), the idea of harmony ensures that all can live in symbiosis. As Chinese leaders they followed the official party line of ‘peace and development’ concept. The authors often quoted Jiang Zemin who, in the 16th Party Congress Report, remarked that two tendencies of peace and development were dominant and the world faced a great opportunity for development¹⁰.

In the view of Xia Liping, the cultural background was a precondition (*qianti*) of China’s rise concept¹¹. Both scholars identified peace, cooperation, development, progress, and fair cultural values as China’s peaceful-rise essences (*jingsui*). The foundation (*jichu*) for a new policy should have been a combination of national and world interests and China’s inclination to be a power that protects mankind’s common interests (*gongtong liyi*). To them the concept of rising was firmly grounded in Chinese values. In the new century the Chinese politicians also have proposed a ‘new security idea’ (*xin anquan guan*) based on traditional Chinese values. Along with promoting intra-cultural dialogue, the ‘peaceful-rise’ concept should abandon ‘cold-war thinking’ and ‘power politics’. This was a believable explanation, the only huge problem being that certain Chinese behavior in the international relations arena remained unexplained by it. Such an interpretation was misleading because Confucianism was an optimistic and utopian system of values.

They continued that for a country like China, the long-term goal (*yuanqi mubiao*) is to establish a fair and reasonable (*gongzheng heli*) international new order and this might be achieved by China’s ‘peaceful-rise’¹². China has advocated that to build the new international political and economic structure, there is no need to challenge or overthrow the present international order with revolutionary methods. Particularly, the international community should strengthen its ability to support the interests of developing countries as well as developed countries. The Chinese values system has underpinned China’s attempts to organize international politics according to its own notion of justice. This enables China to safeguard its strategic chance (*zhanlue jiyu*) and bolster China’s confidence in international relations, particularly in the international market¹³.

More importantly this group of scholars has admitted that a ‘peaceful-rise’ is possible because the nature of global confrontation has changed. Globalization has brought about

⁹ Jiang Xiyuan, Xia Liping, *Zhongguo heping jueqi* (Peaceful Rise of China), Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, Beijing 2004, p. 139-140.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 26-27.

¹¹ Xia Liping, *Daguo queqi lilun he Zhongguo heping jueqi* (Theory of rising power and China’s peaceful-rise), ‘Guoji wenti luntan’ 2004, no 36, online: <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=12913> (accessed on 16 August 2008)

¹² Jiang Xiyuan, Xia Liping, *op. cit.*, p. 140-142.

¹³ Zou Xiaoming, *Heping jueqi jinfang ‘guojia jihui zhuyi’* (The ‘peaceful-rise’ to guard ‘national pragmatism’) online <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=10439> (accessed 4 September 2008)

a mutual dependency (*xianghu yicun*). Moreover the world faces a lot of non-traditional security threats (*fei chuantong anquan wenti*) and in order to overcome diseases like SARS or AIDS the global community should put much effort into common actions. In the 21st century, competition would be about economy, not military strength. As Wang Jian from the China Macroeconomic Institute argued, the nature of capitalism has altered its face. In the 'virtual capitalism era' (*xuni ziben zhuyi*) as capital flows mainly through stock markets and bonds (*gupiao, zhaiquan*), China has become a center of global production and could lay conditions for other powers. The situation of 'real production' (*wuzhi chanpin shengchan*) helped China to afford a 'peaceful-rise'¹⁴. In this situation the process of 'going global' (*zou chu qu*) and rising becomes logical. Thirty years ago Chinese authorities welcomed foreign capital to invest in China (*qing jinlai*). Now there is a reverse process and China has adopted a peaceful 'go-global' strategy (*heping de zou chu qu*)¹⁵. On the other hand, the historical process has brought China to the right place. This group put a strong emphasis on 'historical determinism'. Guo Shuyong, from Shanghai Jiaotong University, explained in detail three major stages of global history:

1. 1648 Treaty of Westphalia till the end of the Second World War characterized by the rise and fall of powers and wars as a mechanism to achieve a global domination;

2. 1950 till the end of 21st Century that was characterized by the peaceful coexistence and peaceful competition between global powers and has been a transition period towards the 'ideal global order'; a signal for the transformation was the 'peaceful collapse' (*heping shuailuo*) of the Soviet Union;

3. 'Ideal type' regime (*lixiang leixing*) would be based on accomplishments of the UE integration model and human rights regime (*renquan zhidu*) that will be transformed from the sovereignty regime (*zhuqian zhidu*).

More to the point, three basic levels (*yanjiu cengmian*) of the 'peaceful-rise' were singled out: the international system must fit the 'peaceful' measures for them to achieve global power status. If the basic premise of international relations is a conflict or war, that kind of rise is unachievable. The second level, which Guo Shuyong called *danwei cengmian* (unit level), is that the rising power itself must apply the major strategy of peaceful competition (*heping jinzhang de da zhanlue*). Lastly, the 'interactive level' (*hudong cengmian*) is where the rising power creates a positive image and interacts with other nations in a positive sense¹⁶.

¹⁴ Wang Jian, *Lun Zhongguo 'heping jueqi' zhi keneng* (To discuss China's 'peaceful-rise' possibilities) online <http://business.sohu.com/2004/05/23/90/article220239064.shtml> (accessed on 5 September 2008)

¹⁵ Zheng Yongnian, *Zhongguo jueqi de jiaoding sheng cong he er bu lai* (The Rise of China was born from peace), [in:] *Daguo xinlu, liushiliu Zhongwai xuezhe tan Zhongguo yu Shijie, Huangqiu Shibao, Guoji luntan qingxuan*, (The Mentality of Power. 66 Chinese and Foreign Scholars Discussed China and World), ed. Wang Wen, Beijing 2007, p. 99-100.

¹⁶ Guo Shuyong, *Daguo jueqi yanjiu de luoji qidian* (The logic of researching big power rise) <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=6233> (accessed on 3 September 2008)

In addition, the supporters admitted that China's rise dates from 1949, stating that China aspired to be a 'world top great power' (*shijie yiliu qiangguo*). The mission should be accomplished by 2040 when the 'four modernizations' would become a reality. They also admitted that the 'peaceful-rise' concept would ensure national security. According to Guo Shuyong, China would take three major steps to achieve 'state's rise' (*guojia jueqi*):

1. 'Built stage' or 'preparation stage' (*ying zao jieduan*) when the state builds a peaceful neighborhood and prevents splits in the country;
2. 'Mould stage' (*suzao jieduan*) when China takes initiative to recover lost territory;
3. 'Strategic economy stage' that enables the international community to accept the new order of the political economy and ensure equality and justice¹⁷.

What is more, Wang Jun took an optimistic perspective and pointed out that after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, America had invited China to be a 'responsible stakeholder' (*fuzeren de liyu xiangguanzhe*). China would like to take responsibility and become a 'great shareholder' (*da gudong*). In this context he considered the international system as a corporate governance system in which China took its chance¹⁸. China entered a 'strategic chance period' (*zhanlue jiyi qi*) when international problems could not be resolved only by one superpower. In fact, they considered the international system as a 'not zero-sum game'. The Chinese Communist Party adopted a special 'go global strategy' to become a global peaceful power. The final reason why Chinese rise would be 'peaceful' is that it would be subordinate to the 'five overall plans' (*wu ge tongchou*) that were passed during the Third Plenum of the 16th Party Congress, and ensure China's future and harmonious development. They promoted internal evenly-distributed development in China's rise for peace (*wei heping er jueqi*)¹⁹. In the same way, Men Honghua, a professor from the Central Party School, has described the process of the 'peaceful rise' as such: in the coming two, three or four decades China will be facing a historical and strategic opportunity (*zhanlue jiyu*) for reforming, opening up, rising and playing an active role in international development²⁰.

Furthermore, they justified the concept as a positive answer to the American China threat concept (*Zhongguo weixie lun*). This concept, according to Yang Guangbin of the

¹⁷ Guo Shuyong, *Guanyu Zhongguo jueqi de ruogan lilun zhengming jiqi xueshu yiyi* (On the certain contentions of theories and academic meaning of the China's rise) online: <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=8940> (accessed on 4 September 2008)

¹⁸ Wang Jun, *Zhongguo daxiang haishi qingwa?* (China: the elephant or the frog?) online: <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=10493> (accessed on 8 September 2008)

¹⁹ Wang Yiwei, *Zhongguo heping jueqi de san zhong juedu* (The three explanations of the China's 'peaceful-rise') online: <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=6544> (accessed on 8 September 2008)

²⁰ Men Honghua followed an official Party line on 'strategic chance' remarked by Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao as well as Zheng Bijian. See: *Lun Zhongguo jueqi de zhanlue jiyu qi*, (On China's rise and strategic Chance period - discussion) online: <http://myy.cass.cn/file/2006011020360.html> (accessed on 24 October 2008)

Chinese People's University, could be traced back to Western international relations theories. Yang pointed out that advocates of the Chinese threat derived their arguments from the theories of stable hegemony, balance of power, and geopolitics in the realist tradition of the discipline. They also predicted that China would challenge the existing regional and international order²¹. In contrast, as Meng Yangqing remarked, China's rise will affect the international order in a positive way. China had actively participated in the international system e.g. at the regional level -- the Six Party Talks in Beijing, ASEAN+3 initiative -- where Beijing was be a 'no-revisionist' member of the international community. Although China would become a power, it would not pretend to be a leader because China did not have a tradition of 'cultural rise' (*wenhua shang de jueqi*) while 'hiding intentions and taking some advantages' (*taoguan yanghui you suo zuowei*) was still the most important position in Chinese foreign policy²².

To some extent the Olympics games in Beijing were a sign and symbol of China's 'power-rise'. As Zhao Lingmin observed in 'Nanfang Chuang' in August 2008, in the case of China, sport and politics are inseparable. The Chinese politicians used sport to overcome the 'sick man of Asia' (*Yazhou bingfu*) stereotype and build 'national spirit' (*minzu qinsheng*). Sports were used in Mao's time to establish partnerships with other states and after 1978 to 'rejuvenate China' (*zhenxing Zhonghua*). In the 1990s, sports competitions were a mechanism to show, mainly in the internal propaganda machine, that the Chinese nation had revived (*Zhonghua minzu fuxing*). The linkage between the Olympics, politics and nationalism provoked the Western media to create an atmosphere of fear. In fact, Chinese nationalism had been borrowed from Western culture which was of a different cultural background that did not correspond with the Chinese culture²³. Chinese nationalist thinkers had been influenced by both the traditions of Chinese political thought and Western ideas²⁴.

Dubious optimists

The second group of scholars was made up by mainly intellectuals who found the concept different and more complicated. Zhang Jianjing, in an article, published in the weekly magazine 'Nanfang Chuang' in March 2004, stated that the 'peaceful-rise' concept

²¹ H. Yee, Zhu Feng, *Chinese Perspectives of the China Threat: Myth or Reality?*, The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality, Edited by Herbert Yee and Ian Storey, Routledge, London, New York 2002, p. 29-30.

²² The same argument was raised by Wang Mao. See: *Zhongguo bu zuo Yazhou lingdao zhe*, (China will not be an Asian leader) [in:] *Daguo xinlu...*, p. 103-104 and Meng Yangqing, *Zhongguo fazhan rang shijie fangxin* (China's development lets the world to rest) [in:] *Daguo xinlu...*, p.111-112.

²³ Zhao Lingmin, *Aoyun nian de Zhongguo minzu zhuyi* (The Chinese nationalism in the Year of the Olympics) online: <http://www.nfcmag.com/view-927.html> (accessed on 9 September 2008)

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

did not possess any value judgment and referred particularly to an active policy. The Beijing-based scholar had accused the government of presenting an 'empty concept' without any ideological background (*yishi xingtai secai*). By academic definition, *jueqi* means to rise or ascend (*shangsheng*) to prominence (*tuxian*) and to raise one's head (*tai tou*). This new concept revealed Chinese intentions and in fact was contradictory to Deng Xiaoping's principle 'to hide intentions' presented in September 1989²⁵. To some extent the 'peaceful-rise' concept was not a long-term one but only an answer to the prevailing international situation such as the 9/11 attacks, the 'Iraq Freedom' operation led by the United States and the Korean crisis. Moreover, mistrust (*bu xinren*) among Chinese partners might create major obstacles to the PRC's future development which was a contradiction to Chinese goals. But rather than rejecting the concept, the Chinese authorities should reject the 'western way of rising' and base its actual rise on cultural and spiritual values. If not, China would lag behind and be a power only for a short period. In fact the 'rise' concept did not comprehensively answer the Chinese culture revival. To some extent the concept was at variance with Chinese values²⁶.

Hu Angang – a leading Chinese economist – has justified China's peaceful-rise by saying that it had regained its position in the global economy. China has had four big periods of economic development:

1. 1400-1800 -- China was a centre of the global economy;
2. 1820-1950 -- Fall of an economic power (*jingji daguo*);
3. 1950-2020 -- Economic growth accelerates;
4. 2020 – 2050 -- Rise of a strong economic power (*jingji qianguo*)²⁷.

But like Zhang Jianjing, Hu doubted whether China would succeed via the 'way of black development' (*heise fazhan zhilu*). After 30 years of reforms, China faces a number of pressing problems that concern future development such as internal disparities or corruption. To become a real power, China must get rid of high pollution, low efficiency and Soviet-type industrialization as well as avoid the consumption and consumerism model applied in Western developed countries. China has to create its own model that will fit its national situation (*guoqing*) and make good use of human resources e.g. to develop intellectual resources (*fazhan zhishi ziyuan*). The new and non-traditional (*fei*

²⁵ The proverb *taoguang yanghui* has three possible meanings: 1. wo xin changdan – suffer a lot and wait for a revenge; 2. to hide sb. capabilities and avoid leadership; 3. keep a low profile and. See: Jingbian Chengyu Cidian, Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, Shanghai oraz Taoguang yanghui de tejiu shenmingli (The everlasting relevance of the proverb *taoguang yanghui*), Xinhua News Agency online: http://news.xinhuanet.com/comments/2005-11/07/content_3744965.htm (accessed 17 August 2008) and Wang Fuchun, op.cit., p. 54-55.

²⁶ He referred not only to *Zhongguo* – China but to *Zhonghua* which much more broaden notion. See: Zhang Jianjing, *Zhongguo de jueqi shi yi chang geming* (China's rise is a revolution), „Nafang Chuan” May 2004, online: <http://www.southcn.com/nflr/llzhuanti/hpjq/mtsy/200405130508.htm> (accessed 16 August 2008).

²⁷ Hu Angang, *Ruhe kandai Zhongguo jueqi* (How to persive China's rise) in: *Zhonnguo: Daguo jueqi* (China: The Rise of Power) ed. Men Honghua, Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, Hangzhou 2004, p. 2-3.

chuantong) phase of development should provide: a common level of education, well-off standard of living, common prosperity, elimination of income poverty (*shouru pinkun*) and intellectual poverty (*zhishi pinkun*). He also emphasized the 'green development' (*luse de fazhan*) concept that means 'to rationally consume natural resources, green style of life, full employment and human development'²⁸.

Above all, Gao Quanxi, from Beijing Normal University, argued that the fundamental question concerns not with 'peaceful-rise' itself but the more important problem of closing the gap between Chinese development and the rest of the world. It is interesting to note, in this context, that China has not been seen as a modern state (*xiandai guojia*). Although the modernization process has begun, an appropriate political system, civil rights and duties, the rule of law, democracy, a constitutional government and even public morality have not been established yet. Furthermore, instead of broadening the discussion about China's 'raison d'état' and national interest, Chinese people have had limited access to debates about its foreign policy. The next problem that China would face as a rising power is the changing nature of international relations. It should be noted that major international players have already completed the 'nation-state period' and entered 'the post-state period' (*yi ge houguojia de shidai*). As he indicated:

*'The international political, economic, military, cultural, environmental and other aspects of the problem have gradually changed their nature and the modern nation-state is no longer a priority issue in the international politics and is replaced by the transnational economic links that have gradually become the central issue (zhongxin de wenti).'*²⁹

In this regard, Gao Quanxi advocated that in China's case, its most appropriate role in international relations would be based on 'realistic liberalism' (*xianshi de ziyou zhuyi*) that means to protect its own interests. The philosophy of *xianshi de ziyou zhuyi* is based on pacifism (*heping zhuyi*) and liberalism (*ziyou zhuyi*), but is also an opposition to hegemonism (*baquan zhuyi*) and the use of realistic methods to protect national interests³⁰.

The most interesting voice of doubt arose from the former chair of the library in the Central Party School Du Guang. In an article 'Peaceful-rise and two spannings' (*kuaye*) he noticed that in order to be a peaceful power, China should reject two barriers that badly affected the country: despotism and Stalinism. He clearly advocated that feudalism and despotism had ruined Chinese institutions and that Stalinism had stifled creativity through brainwashing:

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 13-15.

²⁹ Gao Quanxi, *Chaoyue zhanzheng yu heping: yizhong zhengzhi zhaxue de sikao* (Surpass the peace and war: one political philosophy thought/reflect) <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=6545> consulted on 17 August 2008

³⁰ Ibidem.

'We want to have 'peaceful-rise' but we must go far beyond these two obstacles. There are some martial arts novels that describe the qingong exercises. At first you have to tie sandbags to your legs and after a long time of exercises you can take them off and then you can run as if flying (*jianbu rufei*). Stalinism and despotism stuck to China's legs. China has to discard these sandbags and next develop a healthy rise, a peaceful-rise³¹.

Li Qiang, professor at the School of Government at the Beijing University, also mentioned a similar problem. However China advocated the 'peaceful-rise' but the concept has still contained: a realistic view of the state's benefit (*guojia liyi de xianshi zhuyi*), nationalist (*minzu zhuyi*), egoistic (*ziwo*) and megalomaniacal (*dawo*) elements. To surpass the problems China must acknowledge economic superiority over politics (*jingji jue ding zhengzhi*)³².

Opponents

///In contrast to all of the above, some academic circles have raised voices of doubt. This group mainly has insisted a crucial difference between solemn promises and decoration and real policy. They have raised objections and have been really displeased with official party line. Wang Yizhou and Wang Jisi from the Chinese Academy of Social Science urged further discussion on the inconsistencies and theoretical problems inherent in the concept. Next, Shi Yinhong from the People's University, raised the question of the Taiwan issue as a potential complicating factor for China's rising.

Furthermore, sceptics' voices, some as followers' brought up the issue of 'rising' itself. To them an adjective 'rising' would create problems with Chinese relations with neighbours, fear and opposition in Asia. The semantic problems were mentioned e.g. by Pan Wei – the chair of the China-World Forum at the Beijing University in the text 'Also discuss 'peaceful-rise' (*ye tan heping jueqi*). In his opinion China's rise should not cause astonishment because it arose from 1949 and all the issues in Chinese foreign policy like Nixon's visit and becoming a permanent member of the Security Council in 1971 were the significant signs of rising. During the last decade, China has become the second largest economy and by this means China's rise is an incontrovertible fact. Some scholars admitted that the peaceful-rise concept was a continuation of the *tao guan yanghui you suo zuo wei* but this time the Party leadership put the accent rather on 'potential achievements' than on 'hiding intentions'. According to Pan Wei there is a need to throw 'fantasy illusion' and prepare to fight (*dudiao huang xian zhunbei zhanzheng*) and return

³¹ Du Guang, *Heping jueqi he liang ge kuaye* (The 'peaceful-rise' and two step over) online: <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=7451> (accessed on 29 August 2008).

³² Li Qiang, *Heping jueqi yu Zhongguo fazhan zhanlue de xuanze* ('Peaceful-rise' and China's development strategic choice) online: <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=6547> (accessed on 5 September 2008)

to Chairman Mao's papers³³. Rise indicates being strong (*qiang da*) and this means to be in opposition. This realistic paradigm indicates that there are four major situations when 'rising' might be implemented:

1. Rising does not mean becoming a superpower rather a regional power (*qiquxing qianguo*);

2. In the world there are certain super powers (*chaoji qianguo*) or several regional powers that try to counterbalance (*ping qi ping zuo*) a certain number of superpowers;

3. In the world there are two superpowers or several regional powers to counterbalance two superpowers;

4. In the world there is one superpower and several rising powers to countermeasure the superpower hegemony.

In the opponents view China's rising is to counterbalance the U.S. hegemonic power but in fact China still is an 'empty fortress' (*luohou guojia*) and still a developing country (*fazhang zhong guojia*). In this context elaborating China's 'peaceful-rise' was only prattle (*kongtan*). In fact the new concept has created an unfavorable atmosphere about China's intentions. Furthermore, all rising powers do not intend to use 'gun' and use peace as a method of rising. But after all the international situation turns out to be more difficult than the elites had dreamt about – peace is only a desire and a beautiful dream (*yiwang he meili de mengxiang*). Pan Wei sharply criticized the new concept and called his country *kewang Zhongguo* – 'wishful China' or *lianxia mengxiang zheng* – 'a disease of cheap dreams'³⁴.

For another scholar, also educated in the United States, Huang Anping, the 'peaceful-rise' concept was only an empty rhetoric which did not correspond with the reality. He argued that the process of rising itself must lead to the revision of the contemporary international relations and at best would contribute to the balance of power. After Hu Jintao's speech in December 2003, the concept was not anonymous (*zhongkou yici*) and any petitions should be put forward to the central leadership. The issue is not whether to choose between the rise of peaceful development, but how to define the real meaning of the word 'rise'. The major task for the 'rise' problem was how to maintain the peaceful status in the international relations? The history of the world's major powers' rise and fall did not yet have a 'peaceful-rise precedent' (*heping jueqi de xianli*). Powers like Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United States and other countries has not been based on the same case. In this regard it would be a difficult task to convince the international community of the 'Chinese characteristic rise' (*Zhongguo*

³³ In the article he quoted one of Mao Zedong's paper on war preparation. See: Mao Zedong, *Cast away illusion, prepare for struggle*, 14.08.1949, "Selected works of Mao Zedong", online: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4_66.htm (accessed on 17 August 2008).

³⁴ Pan Wei, *Also discuss the "peaceful-rise"*, online: <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=12361> (accessed on 18 August 2008).

tese de jueqi). For Huang Aiping, both the concepts of 'peaceful-rise' as well as 'peaceful development' had the same meaning. He posed a rhetoric question: Why did Chinese propaganda strongly promote the concept that raised objections and with which other states disagreed? Such propaganda should consider not only rhetoric but also the reality inside the country (*guoqing*) as well as the international situation (*qiuqing*)³⁵.

Unquestionably, what was more important was the negative impact of the 'peaceful-rise' concept on Sino-US relations in the context of neo-conservatism in America. Scholars from the Central Party School, in an article *Zhongguo heping jueqi shi fou keneng?* published in 'Study Times' (August 2004), asked whether a peaceful-rise was achievable. They concluded by identifying the Taiwan issue and the United States as the major obstacles preventing China's rise. They implied that the Chinese have a 'holy right' to reunification with Taiwan and in a dead-end situation China could use a 'no-peaceful' measures. The second problem related to US domination and interference in China's domestic problems e.g. *zu guo tongyi*. What was interesting was that the authors in a Maoist style differentiated between good, peace loving 'American people' (*Meiguo renmin shi aihao heping de*) and the bad government that has desired a war. In fact, America is governed by many interest groups (*liyi jituan*) or lobbies that are pushing for future conflicts. In this case, China would be obligated to have a realistic view and 'peaceful-rise' might not fit the contemporary international situation. In the 21st century, not only China would rise but some other nations (*daguo jueqi jun* – the group of rising powers) would also become powers, basically sharing the same values as China. In that situation Chinese diplomacy should carefully observe international relations and learn lessons from the current situation³⁶. 'The Global Times' also published an anti-US commentary by Zhou Jianming entitled '[We] must consider our country's national security strategy from the worst possible [scenario]: observe closely the American strategic trends'. Zhou criticized pro-American officials and scholars who have misjudged and underestimated the administration of President George W. Bush's determination to move the centre of American strategic policy, increase the level of US military assistance to Taiwan, and adjust its strategic arrangements with China as the major competitor³⁷. Zhang Wenmu, a researcher at the Institute of Contemporary International Relations, took an even harsher stance towards America. He recognized the importance of the end of the Cold War, and especially 1999's war in Kosovo, when Washington and its allies escalated the strategy of 'containing' China in East Asia. At the beginning of the twenty-first century,

³⁵ Huang Aiping, *Guanyi heping jueqi yu heping fazhan de sikao* (To consider the peaceful-rise and peaceful development) online: <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=12956> (consultated on 25 August 2008)

³⁶ Chen Xiankui, Xin Xiangyang, *Zhongguo heping jueqi shi fou keneng?*, (Is China's peaceful rise possible, or not?), 'Xuexi Shibao', 30.08.2004, no 250, online: http://www.china.com.cn/xsbs/txt/2004-08/30/content_5648323.htm (accessed on 19 August 2008).

³⁷ H. Yee, Zhu Feng, op. cit., p. 31.

Sino-American relations had reached a new low level. If the situation continues to deteriorate, Zhang concluded that direct confrontation between the PRC and the United States or its proxies might occur³⁸.

Conclusion

The public discourse on Chinese foreign policy concepts has provided a rich resource but more open discussions are something new. In spite of this, the existence of a discourse on the future of China's position in international relations shows that Chinese intellectuals have tried to create China's own visions, concepts, motivations and trajectory. The ongoing debate has resulted in the authorities changing their definition of the 'rise' concept. With the new concept of 'harmony', the 'peaceful-rise' idea has been officially banned and academic circles have started to promote a different but official theory of a 'harmonious world'.³⁹ This interesting discussion was one of the fundamental determinants that led to the withdrawal of the 'peaceful-rise' concept from the official propaganda machine. Undoubtedly, the debate had been held in conjunction with a period of power transition within the CCP. Intra-party struggles over the consensus on future leadership have had an impact on the public discourse. On the one hand scholars expressed their political sympathies while on the other essential arguments demonstrated differences among the high-ranking politicians. In fact the public polemic has revealed the internal relations among divided groups within the CCP. Still in China the topic of rising power is a hot one because China aspires to a power status. After one year of promoting the concept by high-ranking party members, the official discussion stepped down to the lower, academic level. The first group of scholars mainly used culture and moral rhetoric to explain the concept of rise. To them the Chinese strategy, which is based on values like benevolence, cooperation and harmony, has an impact on Chinese decision-makers. The concept was substantiated with Chinese values the aim being to make it less controversial in the international public opinion. The group of 'dubious optimists' remarked that China's internal problems posed major obstacles to the rise. The CCP needs to adopt a new model of a modern state with proper systems of education healthcare, and environmental protection, to rise in the international arena. If China meets these conditions its peaceful rise will become a reality. Totally convinced that major Chinese values determine the concept, the two groups have described China as a country with a moral mission to uphold justice in the world. The last group of academics, mainly from Beijing, have highly criticized the concept, pointing out that

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Sui Jiwan, *Hexie shijie: Zhongguo waijiao xin lixian* (The harmonious world: New concept of Chinese foreign policy) in: *Hexie shijie yu Zhongguo duiwai zhanlue* (The harmonious world and Chinese foreign strategy), ed. Cai Tuo, Zhongguo Zhengfa Daxue Chuban She, Beijing 2006, s. 49.

China will create an environment un conducive to its own development. Moreover, as realists, they saw the inter-relationship between military modernization and building a strong position in international system. The views of these three groups differ in terms of their approach to the international relations theory: while the followers are idealistic, the opponents are completely realist.

Table 1.

Strong and weak points of the 'peaceful-rise' concept in the Chinese public discourse

	Strong points	Weak points
Optimists (yes group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - semantic incompatibility - Chinese traditional values -historical process; strategic chance -building a peaceful environment - nature of the contemporary capitalism 	
Dubious optimists (yes but group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chinese traditional values -internal reforms (green GDP) -broaden discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -concept without theory -contradiction to the Deng Xiaoping <i>tao guan yang hui</i> - building a modern state
Sceptics (no group)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - semantic incompatibility -no democracy and limited public discourse -fantasy illusion, empty rhetoric -real problems like Taiwan -anti-US feeling within the Chinese society -negative impact on Sino-US relations

Source: Author's own study based on analysis.

At the current development stage, the important factor for the Communist Party of China is public opinion and public sentiments. As Yue Xuetong mentioned, whether nationalists or communists, common Chinese people have considered a 'peaceful-rise' as a mechanism for the great revival of the Chinese nation after years of humiliation⁴⁰. That was a major reason driving the authorities to allow further public discussion.

A final general observation is that controversial moments in the history of China's foreign relations have been excluded from the debate. Participants in the discourse have not taken a critical approach to their own 'Sino-centric' and 'messianic' vision of China's

⁴⁰ Yan Xuetong, *Zhongguo ren kan Zhongguo jueqi* (The Rise of China through Chinese Eyes), online: <http://www.irchina.org/xueren/china/view.asp?id=466> (accessed on 13 October 2008)

role in the world that might create serious doubts about China's real intentions. This in fact has been the weakest point of the debate.