Globethics Repository



Foreign Policy of China

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Mughal, Raees Ahmed
Publisher	Qurtuba University, Pakistan.
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-14 22:13:32
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/187805

FOREIGN POLICY OF CHINA:
A Study of Structures and Factors of Policy Process

Raees Ahmed Mughal*

Abstract:

This brief paper examines two questions concerning the foreign policy making process in Peoples' Republic of China. Firstly, who formulates policy and what is the relationship amongst various actors involved in the process? And secondly, to whose interest foreign policy is made? Paper ends with description of most likely trends that may prevail in future besides the identification of present challenges for the state of China with theoretical recommendations for improvement of policy process.

Policy Process:

While attempting to understand policy making in any country, it is essential to ask certain basic questions. At the top of political system, which individuals, groups, and institutions play a crucial role in decision-making process and what are their respective roles and relationship in this process? Where from their information and organization stem? At operational level, what mechanism exists to coordinate the major institutions involved in the conduct of foreign policy? How influential are experts and specialists, and through what channels their opinion is expressed. Above all, it is imperative to understand how decisions are made and for whose interest?[1]

Quality of Information on the subject:

During the Communist rule, information on the process of policy making was a state secret kept carefully behind the iron curtain. After Mao,

* Raees Ahmed Mughal, Lecturer, Govt. Degree College, Pabbi, NWFP, Pakistan, Email: raees_mughal@yahoo.com

however, the era of opening-up and reforms did start.[2] Despite all opening-up and reforms, even after three decades of *new* policies, the secretive nature of policy making and its implementation makes it quite difficult to provide any qualitative or quantitative data that is up to the mark of the scientific standards.[3]

Policy Makers, Individuals and Institutions:

According to Chinese Constitution, all public policy including foreign policy making is the prerogative of the Party. Government, is responsible to facilitate all expertise and manpower for this policy making process and its implementation. For this purpose Government is accountable to the Party and all guidelines, general principles, feedback and modification have to be processed through the Party.

The system of government is essentially centralized with significant openness to get input from all sections of society, through its own channels. The "inner cabinets" with membership of less than twenty individuals make all major decisions regarding foreign policy and other affairs of state governance. Most of the time, undisputed leadership of the nation, Mao and then Deng Xiaoping, acted as not only the 'court of final appeal' but also the initiator of new moves and policy makers with utmost power.

Institutions that are involved at top decision-making can be divided in two categories of party and governmental institutions. Politburo with its Standing Committee on Foreign Relations represents party while the State Council, is governmental body[4]. The relationship between party and government is typical of Communist system that is "On the whole, major issues are handled by The Party, and The State Council is in charge of routine work"[5] These major bodies are assisted by

all specialized bodies working in different areas of foreign policy. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Waishi Xianzu* (Foreign Affairs Small Group) having its own research staff and with membership of senior diplomats, experts from national universities, *Guoji Lianluo Bu* (International Liaison Department)[6] are minor bodies within party. While on the other hand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, five Coordination Committees (for the fields of Culture & Education, Finance and Economics, Political and Legal Affairs, People's Supervision, and Planning), a number of Staff Offices (to take care of issues like public security, justice) are bodies that work on day to day matters of foreign policy under the State Council.

Information Input Sources

Sources of information for policy making include research bodies, embassies, academic research, daily "reference material" of 40 to 80 pages, *neibu* (Classified) in nature, a selection of world press and research journals regarding China and world current affairs and personal interaction of leadership at national and international level.

Centralized-Decentralization

At operational level, after Mao, a *Centralized-decentralization* is introduced and practiced in foreign policy. All political and sensitive matters are deliberated by the central government, mainly through bureaucratic channels.[7] At the level of bureaucracy, there is problem of multiplication of jurisdiction and failure of understanding local view. System of administration and decision-making quality had improved drastically in last three decades with future prospects of further development in this regard.[8]

Intellectual Influence

Influence of intellectuals on decision-making and its degree depends on the policy matter that is under consideration. In highly technical matters, the professionalism to let the expert work has emerged in current foreign policy making.[9] But in political matters, the intellectuals and social scientists still do not have much say. However, the trend in this regard is constantly changing for the last decade or so. The Chinese researchers at world universities and their views are now considered important. In number of cases in technical matters the influence of Chinese scholars abroad is very much felt by recent policy modifications.[10]

To conclude, the decisions are made by a few, but as quality and quantity of the decision suggest, all the time such decisions are taken in the supreme interest of the nation. This is due to the role demanded of leadership, where no one can achieve or sustain prestige without his or her firm expression of Sinocentrism in his deed and expression.[11]

Future

At present we observe a serious lack of information with regard to China decision makers and most of the time they have to rely on second hand resources of information like international journals, books and conferences. The future role of China demands more professional bodies of research and analysis in the field of foreign policy making. The absence of any such institution is mainly due to prolonged islolation of China during Cultural Revolution and its equally sore relations with both super powers during Cold War.[12]

After Cold War years, China improved drastically its quantity and quality of interactions with world state and non-state actors but no substantial step could be seen in institutionalization. Future of the China

Foreign policy making process and its quality depends on its encouragement of think tanks, specialized research institutions and development of channels within existing political system that ensure and encourage free scholarly expression from inside of China. In short China needs at this point of time a method by which it could be able to get quality information and data input for its decision making that fit into its existing political system, which ultimately means institutions and individuals capable of quality analysis having strong element of Sinocentrism.

Endnotes:

[1] Arthur D. Barnett, *The Making of Foreign Policy in China,* 1984. The author used all his personal links along with lavish finances by policy study institutes and was able to interview all important actors of foreign policy making. This tiny book is said to be the most authentic and upto date work of western scholarship on the subject. Inter-relation of different institutions presented in this paper is mere abstraction of relevant chapters and interviews from this same book.

[2] Haarish Kapur, *The End of an Isolation: China after Mao,* Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985

[3] Even the authorities on China Studies, in their most authoritative works are compiled to use excessive guessing and prediction faculty, along with the some pieces of information available to them, to lead to conclusion on the subject. It is very common to find sentences like "Since PM mentioned in his interview that we have another body for this purpose, so it means that there is another institution besides the Party bureau." Or "Having noted all such policies, one can deduct that this body must have at least one non party expert on economic aspect, which means that this body also include members outside of party congress". This "soft" data may not be taken as weakness of scholarship, rather it is a proof of the specific methodology evolved that match with the complex subject in a special research atmosphere lacking access to real data on the issue.

[4] Constitutionally, State Council is "executive branch" and the "highest organ of state administration."

[5] Mentioned by the Chinese PM, Zhao Ziyang in an interview on July 1984 included in: Arthur D. Barnett, *The Making of Foreign Policy in China.* Boulder, Colo.,Wetview Press, 1984.

[6] In Mao era this institution was charged with the responsibility of coordinating relations with all Communist states in and now mostly working as coordinating body for technical fields in foreign policy and according to some sources, with monitoring role at foreign policy.

[7] Central Intelligence Agency. China: Economic Policy and Performance in 2002, *A report by the Central Intelligence Agency, USA presented to the Subcommittee on National Security Economics of the Joint Economic Committee*, April 2003.

[8] Samuel S. Kim, *Whither Post-Mao Chinese Global Policy?, International Organization* 35, Summer, 1981, pp.433-465.

[9] In this regard special mention is must regarding the adjustment of views of international and national experts in matters related to economics. Almost all international economic review journals are scanned and abstracted with suggestions of modification of policy and implementation in the ministry, most probably at Coordination Committees.

[10] For example impact of such scholars works on WTO and its impact on China policy is a good proof of the factor.

[11] Mark Mancall, *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy,* New York, Free Press, 1984.

[12] Joseph Camilleri, *Chinese Foreign Policy: The Maoist Era and its Aftermath,* Seattle, Wash, University of Washington Press, 1980.