

“Understanding ‘developing states’ in Chinese foreign policy: Central Asian case”

The recently read “Government Work Report(*zhengfu gongzuo baogao*)” at the Third Plenary Session of the 10th National People’s Congress(NPC) meeting of China in March 2005 offers a new look in Chinese foreign policy. If the order of listing is still an effective way of gauging the degree of importance in the analysis of Chinese official documents, the Report showed a great deal of change in the order of nations important to the Chinese national interest, with the so-called “developing states(*fazhanzhong guojia*)” overtaking the U.S., Japan and other western states in its priority.

Emphasized as one of the “Three Great Strategies(*sanda zhanlue*)” for Chinese foreign policy in the 21st century, strengthening relationship with developing states strategy presents a new dimension in Chinese foreign policy strategic thinking. High profile visits and active diplomacy by Chinese leaders to developing states, for instance, have aroused media commentaries and policy analysis community in the United States that China and the U.S. may go down a geo-strategic collision course resulting from China’s effort to satisfy its appetite for securing an upper hand in potentially conflicting issues and affairs, such as Taiwan, natural resources, and global order.

In order to grasp a better understanding of the intention and its implications behind China’s recent emphasis on developing states in its foreign policy, it is, therefore, time to fill in an academic void in conceptualizing ‘developing states’ by systematically analyzing Chinese definition and perception. Developing states as a factor was treated in Chinese foreign policy and in its individual regional policy context in the past. However, the proposed research would be the first to examine the subject matter in concept, related issue-area, as well as strategic implications on a global scale.

Of all the regions and countries that China defines and views as ‘developing states,’ the proposed research will particularly focus on and utilize Central Asia as an exemplary case to answer the aforementioned questions. The significance of this research underlies in the fact that Central Asia is one region that entails much geopolitical and strategic implication to the contemporary Chinese foreign policy. The findings are expected to be published in one of the leading international journals.