Macmillan International College Edition

Other titles in the China in Focus series:

S. Aziz: *Rural Development — Learning from China*

H. D. R. Baker: *Chinese Family and Kinship*

J. Gardner: *Chinese Politics and the Succession to Mao*

T. Saich: *China: Politics and Government*

TOWARDS THE END OF ISOLATIONISM: CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY AFTER MAO

Michael Yahuda

M

© Michael Yahuda, 1983

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without permission.

First published 1983 by
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
London and Basingstoke
Companies and representatives throughout the world

Typeset in Baskerville by
STYLESET LIMITED
Salisbury · Wiltshire
and Printed in Hong Kong

ISBN 978-0-333-27529-0 ISBN 978-1-349-17149-1 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-17149-1

The paperback edition of this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

For my father
and in memory of my mother

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xv
1. Introduction	1
Two dimensions of China's foreign relations	3
Some historical and comparative perspectives	9
The PRC as a global power	14
Domestic politics and foreign policy	17
The three phases of China's foreign policy	25
The Sino-Soviet Alliance	25
From a Third World united front to revolutionary isolation	34
Alignment with the West	37
 PART ONE: MAO'S LEGACY	
2. Chinese Society and Foreign Relations	47
The development of the concept of self-reliance	52
Self-reliance and external assistance after the establishment of the new state	63
Socialist values and foreign influence	74
3. Mao's Legacy of Geopolitical Thought	81
Mao's geopolitical perspectives	84
Contradictions	86
The assessment of strengths and weaknesses	90
Imperialist strategy and the significance of the Third World	93
Mao's geopolitics and Chinese foreign policy	95
Mao's view of China's place in international politics	99
Statehood and independence	101

Mao and the two superpowers	104
The use of force despite strategic adversity	114
The border battles with the Soviet Union of 1969	117
Problems of Mao's geopolitical heritage	120

PART TWO: FOREIGN POLICY AFTER MAO

4. Chinese Society and Foreign Relations After Mao	125
Structural and political restraints	132
The problems of reform	137
The expansion of foreign trade	142
Co-operative economic relations	150
Student and other exchanges	159
Defence and the open door	161
5. Strategic and International Politics Since Mao	167
Developments in Chinese approaches to international politics	171
The non-inevitability of war	179
Recognition of Euro-Communism	185
Relations with the countries of Europe	188
China and the superpowers	196
Relations with Japan	212
Encirclement and counter-encirclement in Southeast Asia	219
China and the Third World	234
Conclusions: Problems and Prospects	237
Reform and the open door	237
Problems of succession	239
The end of isolationism?	241
<i>Notes and References</i>	248
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	268
<i>Index</i>	272

Preface

This book seeks to examine the continuities and changes in China's foreign policy since the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976. To this end it suggests that this can best be done by distinguishing between the geopolitical and societal dimensions of China's foreign relations. The former is concerned with questions of power relations and national security, while the latter focuses on the impact on Chinese society of China's economic and cultural interactions with the outside world. In practice the two dimensions may be closely related; but for the purposes of analysis it is useful for example, to separate discussion of China's relations with the two super-powers from discussion of China's capacity to absorb advanced Western technology or the challenges that might be presented to social values from increased contact with the world as envisaged by the policy of the 'open door'.

The book is divided into two parts. The first considers the character of Mao's legacy in foreign affairs and the second examines the developments since his death. Both parts analyse the geopolitical and societal dimensions separately.

Since the death of Mao, China has embarked on a series of domestic changes that constitute a disavowal of most of the ideological concerns and policies associated with Mao for the last twenty years of his life. In July 1981 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued a considered verdict on its history since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.¹ The document also included a separate section on Mao himself. This praised his contribution to the Chinese revolution but it also criticised severely many of his policies from the late 1950s. In particular it criticised him for having initiated the Cultural Revolution which was condemned as a calamity without a single redeeming feature.

Strangely, despite the significance of foreign relations to

China's development over this period of more than thirty years, hardly any space was found in this 30,000 word document for comment or analysis of foreign affairs. For example, neither the Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s nor the tilt to the United States in the 1970s (both of which might be thought to have been of considerable importance in China's history since 1949) was explicitly mentioned. Aspects of foreign affairs are referred to at various points *en passant*, but no one reading the resolution would realise that there had ever been any controversies or major changes in the conduct of China's foreign policy over this long period. It is true that Mao's approach to foreign affairs was put in a positive way, but nowhere was it summarised, let alone discussed in any depth. Interestingly, the nearest the document came to detailed comment concerned Mao's foreign policy performance during the Cultural Revolution. Having subjected him to withering criticism for his theories and policies during this period, the resolution simply endorsed Mao's foreign policy without note or explanation:

In his later years, he still remained alert to safeguarding the security of our country, stood up to the pressure of social imperialism, pursued a correct foreign policy, firmly supported the just struggles of all peoples, outlined the correct strategy of the three worlds and advanced the important principle that China would never seek hegemony.²

In effect this official history declared that whatever mistakes may have been committed by the Party leaders in general and by Mao in particular since the founding of the PRC, they did not lie in the field of foreign relations.

This minimal reference to foreign affairs reflects a general reluctance by China's authorities to discuss openly differences and disputes on foreign policy that have taken place at various times between the leaders. Frequently, very detailed and politically damaging accounts of leadership disputes on domestic questions have been disseminated within the country and even to the outside world. But even when foreign policy differences were known to have been involved, they have been deliberately excised from the later accounts. The clearest

example of this is the Lin Biao affair. The materials which the Chinese authorities released on this included a great deal of information on inter-leadership relations, and on the Chinese political process as well as on the substance of the case itself. Much of this was highly damaging to the integrity and authority of the regime and its surviving leaders. But even though Lin and his close associates were known to have opposed the opening to the United States, precious little was released on this dimension of Lin's conflict with Mao and Zhou. Similarly, many of the leaders who were disgraced in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution such as Luo Ruiqing, Liu Shaoqi and Peng Zhen, had disagreed with aspects of Mao's initiatives in foreign affairs in 1965–66. But their otherwise voluminous indictments during the Cultural Revolution left out virtually all mention of this.³

This peculiar reticence on foreign affairs extends even further. There has not been any general attempt by Chinese officials or scholars to survey their country's foreign policy over the more than thirty years since the establishment of the PRC. The reports on the work of the government given to meetings of the National People's Congress do contain sections on foreign affairs, but these are usually very brief and by their nature they are not analytical or sufficiently detailed to be of much interest. There have been a few sporadic attempts to assess the foreign policy contributions of certain leaders, the most notable of which was by the research division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the second anniversary of Zhou Enlai's death.⁴ But, to my knowledge, there has never been a similar assessment of Mao. This is distinctly odd in view of the constant claims by Chinese officials to disbelieving foreigners that their foreign policy has always been consistent and principled. In fact there can be few countries whose foreign policy has been more marked by volatility and change than China. As I shall argue in this book, if there is a consistency underlying China's foreign policy it is to be found in the geopolitical thought which has guided it, rather than in the didactic principles constantly invoked by its officials. The absence of Chinese accounts of their foreign policy is all the more striking in view of the veritable stream of Soviet publications which seek to demonstrate, in considerable detail, the

claim that Soviet foreign policy has always followed Leninist principles.

There are signs, however, that aspects of this may be about to change. In 1981 the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences began publication of the journal *International Studies* which has carried scholarly articles on aspects of Chinese foreign affairs. So far these have been little more than background papers to current policies. For example, issues one and two published articles on the Sino-Soviet border dispute and the initial involvement of the United States in the Taiwan issue in 1949–50. However, there has also been a lengthy article on Zhou Enlai's diplomatic style. It is to be hoped that the scope of the journal will soon be enlarged to facilitate a deeper understanding of Chinese perceptions of foreign policy issues. This book is an endeavour to contribute to that understanding.

The original title of the book was simply *The End of Isolationism*. On reflection, however, it seemed appropriate to qualify such a claim by adding the word 'towards' at the beginning. Even though important changes have occurred since the early 1970s and especially since the end of that decade which have significantly expanded and deepened the extent of China's interchanges with the outside world, it still cannot be said that China's relative isolation is at an end. As will be argued in Chapter 4, China is still far from sharing the patterns of interdependency with other countries that characterise the international relationships of most states in world affairs. The processes of policy making in the Chinese government still remain obscure in many respects. Changes in Chinese policy arise from internal developments that continue to be unknown and perhaps unknowable to the outside world. Even in foreign affairs, incidents can still occur whose causes remain unfathomable and certainly unprovable. For example, in the spring of 1978 many armed Chinese fishing boats suddenly appeared in the waters of the Senkaku Islands (or in Chinese Tiaoyudai) claimed by both China and Japan. The boats proclaimed China's sovereignty over the islands, and the incident was perceived in Tokyo as an anti-Japanese demonstration. Just as suddenly the boats withdrew and the embarrassing incident was smoothed over by both sides. Even more

than four years later, despite many speculations about the causes of the incident, nothing has been proved.

Similarly, although travel to and from China has expanded considerably, the Chinese authorities are still able to exercise controls over the extent of discourse between Chinese and foreigners. The growth of foreign economic relations has given rise to acute problems of absorption of foreign technology in China. The interchange with the foreign business community (especially with Overseas Chinese and those from Hong Kong and Macau) has been linked with the widespread incidence of corruption. Important political forces in China have perceived Western cultural influences as dangerous 'bourgeois liberalism' corrupting writers and young people. The policy of the 'open door' cannot be said to have found universal favour in China and it cannot be said to be irreversible.

Nevertheless, compared with a decade ago, China has made giant strides towards ending its isolation. The value of trade trebled between 1972 and 1975 and trebled again between 1977 and 1981, so that its value is now 16 per cent of the country's estimated GNP. The development of particular regions and sectors of industry have become linked with that trade. Thousands of Chinese students are studying in Western countries (7000 in the United States alone). Academic and cultural exchanges have expanded enormously. There is a growing interest in foreign countries and cultures in China. The Academy of Social Sciences which was founded in 1977 now has separate institutes for the study of certain countries and regions such as the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, Western Europe, South Asia and Southeast Asia. It also has one for the translation of foreign literature. As we shall see, China's diplomacy has acquired greater sophistication and subtlety.

In sum, the trend towards greater involvement and interchange with the outside world is unmistakable, but whether it will continue and in what forms remains yet to be seen.

Finally, it is a pleasure to record my gratitude to Robert Catley, Greg O'Leary and Andrew Watson for their helpful comments on sections of the book. Mrs Barbara Bray provided invaluable research assistance in the writing of Chapters 4 and

5. I am also grateful to Mrs Jenifer Jefferies for typing the manuscript. Of course, I alone am responsible for any failings or errors in the book.

Michael B. Yahuda.
Adelaide.

Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CC	Central Committee (of the Communist Party of China)
c.i.f.	cost, insurance and freight
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon)
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPI	Communist Party of Italy
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
EEC	European Economic Community
f.o.b.	free on board
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNP	Gross national product
ICBM	Intercontinental ballistic missile
<i>JPRS</i>	Joint Publications Research Services
KMT	Kuomintang
LDC	Less developed countries
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NPC	National People's Congress
PKI	Parti Kommunisti Indonesia
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
<i>SWB/FE</i>	Summary of World Broadcasts, (Part Four) The Far East (Published daily by the British Broadcasting Corporation)
<i>SW</i>	<i>Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung</i> , Vols 1–5, Beijing, Foreign Language Press 1960–65 and 1977.