

## **China in the New Millennium: Asian Great Power Between Integration and Hegemonic Ambitions, Herbert Quandt Stiftung, Foundation of BMW AG and Department of Political Science of the University of Freiburg**

Munich, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2000

What is China's proper place in international politics? What role does China want to play in the world and how do its power aspirations translate into actual policies? What can we learn from China's policies regarding Taiwan, non-proliferation and international trade, about its commitment to play a greater, but responsible role in international politics? These questions constituted the centre of a roundtable workshop jointly organised by the Herbert-Quandt-Foundation of the BMW AG of Munich and the Department of Political Science of the University of Freiburg. The roundtable workshop brought together German specialists on China from academia, government, business and media. Given the variety of professional backgrounds of the participants, the assessments of China's actual policies and future policy options were quite diverse, thus stimulating lively debates.

Karl-Gottfried Kindermann of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich focused his presentation on China's historical background and its experiences with Western powers to gain a better understanding of Beijing's current policies in the international realm. The Chinese leadership had learned an important lesson from its historical experience: That it needed to maintain its autonomy and sovereignty and that playing a greater international role was a key instrument to realise this goal. According to Kindermann, China's foreign policy is shaped by the Chinese leadership's perception that its current political weight in international politics does not equal its cultural significance. These perceptions found their expression in a propensity for "Realpolitik" and explicit activities to change the global power balance in its favour.

The subsequent presentation by Frank Umbach of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik in Berlin (German Society for Foreign Policy) seemed to confirm this assessment. Umbach dealt with China's security policy and its role in multilateral security regimes. He expressed his concern over the marked increase in China's military expenditures and its plans to modernise the armed forces. China's foreign policy has to be seen as a result of the increased influence of the military leadership in the political realm. Given the military's larger influence in the decision making process Umbach saw a pattern of non-cooperation in China's foreign policy emerging and regarded perspectives for China's compliance with international security regimes such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty as rather bleak. Consequently, an important function of China's membership and integration in international and regional institutions such as the Asian Regional Forum and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) can be seen in creating the necessary domestic political space to pursue badly needed domestic reforms and constrain the militaries' political role.

Kay Möller of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Berlin focused on the question of political legitimacy to explain the Chinese leadership's difficulties in contributing to a solution of long-standing conflicts (especially with Taiwan). Möller argued that a solution of the Taiwan problem was not in sight: Key to any un-

understanding of the nature of the problem is political legitimacy. The Chinese government's political legitimacy is deeply challenged by the democratic Taiwanese political regime. Any integration of China and Taiwan – and be it in a loose political framework – would ultimately bring to the fore the many political contradictions in China, while the very survival of the Taiwanese government depends on its autonomy. Although China's policy toward Taiwan challenges the regional power balance, its immediate neighbours and Western states (the US and the EU) do not agree on a collective approach toward China and Taiwan, as their threat perceptions and economic interests vary widely.

Eberhard Sandschneider of the Centre for East Asian and China Studies of the Free University of Berlin presented his assessment of China's foreign policy in a paper entitled 'Chinese power play in the South China Sea: Beijing on an expansion course?'. He saw clear indications that China aspires for greater political influence in the region and wants to become a regional power. He chose three areas to illustrate this argument: military policies, especially armament, the Spratly island conflict and the Taiwan question. The rise of Chinese military expenditures, its White Book on defence policy, the greater autonomy of action of the Chinese military in domestic politics, and China's test of nuclear weapons in May 1998 are all indicative of a China, which wants to demonstrate its political power ambitions. China's military policy, security policy, and its greater assertiveness toward Taiwan creates a demand for confidence and security building measures. Such a demand raises the question of proper institutional mechanisms, such as the Asian Regional Forum, and their ability to provide a framework for cooperation.

Rolf J. Langhammer of the Institute for World Economy at the Christian-Albrechts-University Kiel opened the second panel on China's economic potential. Langhammer called China's World Trade Organization (WTO) accession a 'quantum leap' for the international community, given the economic benefits and its significance for strengthening the WTO as such. As a consequence of China's WTO entry, Langhammer predicted great increases in China's exports, an expansion of foreign direct investment and a rise in productivity as a result of the better allocation of labour and capital. Industrialised countries would profit foremostly from lower tariff structures. Developing countries' balance sheet would look less positive, as a greater share of Chinese products on the world market will ultimately compete with their products and exert some adaptational pressure on countries like India and Thailand to lower their prices (especially in the textile industry). The WTO's monitoring and control mechanisms can stimulate reforms in the Chinese legal structure and with regard to state owned enterprises. Summing up his presentation, Langhammer argued that China's WTO accession ultimately strengthens China's role as an economic great power in East Asia. He predicted a shift in economic growth from Southeast Asia to Northeast Asia.

In his presentation, Markus Taube of the Gerhard-Mercator University Duisburg focused on the impact of the Asian crisis on China's economy ('After the Asian crisis: China's economy between boom and crisis'). He argued that China has escaped the disastrous effects of the Asian financial crises because one central transmission mechanism was missing: currency convertibility. Yet, the crisis affected the Chinese

economy primarily via two ways: cross-border exchange of goods and direct investments. Although the latest economic data on China shows that the economy is in a rehabilitation phase, for various reasons Taube was sceptical, that China's economy will experience another 'boom'. Taube predicted that China's sensitivity concerning external shocks would rise due to the WTO accession, while at the same time the Asian financial crisis has forged a remedy of 'weak points' enhancing the Chinese economies' ability to deal with external shocks in the future.

Despite the variety of issues discussed, and individual differences in viewpoints, the participants overwhelmingly agreed, that China's policies hint at a process in which it has started to actively shape its international environment. The key variables, which ultimately seem to determine whether or not China will play a constructive and cooperative role in the future, appear to be domestic ones, especially the distribution of power among civilian and military policy-makers.

The conference facilities of the Herbert-Quandt-Foundation not only provided an ideal atmosphere to discuss these issues in a relatively small setting, the workshop also benefited immensely from the ability of the two conveyors, Dr. Horst Teltschik, Chairman of the Board of the Herbert Quandt Stiftung, and Prof. Dr. Jürgen Rüländ of the University of Freiburg to moderate the workshop, structure the debates and shift the focus on those issues which were of central concern for all participants.

Anja Jetschke

## **Workshop "Aktuelle Lage von Frauen in der VR China"**

Berlin, 3.-4. November 2000

Der von Professorin Mechthild Leutner (Berlin) und Dr. Nicola Spakowski (Berlin) an der FU Berlin organisierte Workshop zur aktuellen Lage der Frauen in der VR China knüpfte an eine am dortigen Ostasiatischen Seminar seit einigen Jahren in Forschung und Lehre fest verankerte Thematik an. Frühere Projekte, Tagungen und Seminare beschäftigten sich speziell mit Theorie und Praxis der Frauenbewegung in China. Im Mittelpunkt des diesmaligen Workshops standen nun der aktuelle Stand der chinesischen Frauenforschung sowie die Situation der Frauen in der VR China.

Der Workshop begann mit einem Film aus den 1960er-Jahren zur Alltagskultur der Mosuo. Gudula Linck (Kiel) zeigte hiermit ein seltenes Beispiel für eine ursprünglich rein matrilineare Gesellschaftsordnung im Vielvölkerstaat China. Die Matrilinearität wurde jedoch durch vermehrte Kontakte zur Han-chinesischen Bevölkerung, durch Touristen und den Wandel der Lebensverhältnisse insgesamt herausgefordert. Der Einzug der monogamen Heirat löste frühere Bräuche zwischen den Geschlechtern ab, so dass die matrilineare Familien- und Organisationsstruktur zwangsläufig unterlaufen wurde. Darin sah Linck einen natürlichen Vorgang, da Kultur kein statisches Gebilde sei, sondern durch die Lebensumstände ständig neu geprägt würde.

Den zweiten Tag eröffnete Mechthild Leutner mit einer Bestandsaufnahme zur gegenwärtigen feministischen Forschung, indem sie sowohl thematische als auch methodologische Probleme anriss. Der kurze Überblick zur Geschichte feministischer Ansätze in der chinaspezifischen Forschung demonstrierte, dass sich frauenspezifische