

# HOW TO DEAL WITH CHINA

George Kennan's Philosophy and Cultural Internationalism

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## INTRODUCTION

The well-known 8,000-word Long Telegram and the X Article that George Kennan issued in the early part of the Cold War is considered to be a quite valuable and persuasive proposal in regards to the U.S. government's formulating of strategies for dealing with Soviet Russia. Contemporaries of Kennan were struck with awe by the detail and thoughtfulness of his proposal in spite of a considerable number of questions and opposition raised against his messages. In addition, his writings are quite sophisticated and attractive in their rhetoric and in rendering ideas. Many are charmed by the eloquence, and are filled with a sense of deep affection and admiration, not only among the pundits of U.S. foreign policy, but also among English learners and instructors as well.

Taking into consideration of Kennan's basic philosophy as thus elaborated, this paper examines how to deal with present-day China's assertive geopolitical strategies. Some excellent passages from the messages of the Long Telegram, the X-Article and the memoir (1950-1963) were extracted for this purpose. Though this situation differs significantly from the global conditions at the time of George Kennan's writing, there appears to exist significant instructive notions that can be considered when charting the course of strategy vis-a-vis China as a newly rising power.

In order to present feasible ideas on extending the policies towards China, Kennan's philosophy for dealing with Russia in the Cold War will be first introduced as a reference to policy formation for a hierarchical power. Then, the writer will emphatically exhibit Chinese governmental requirements before specific ways of dealing with China are enumerated, namely through consideration regarding the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), China's currency in the global market, and cooperative deterring actions. Considering the actual implementation of the policies towards China, the cultural definition of international relations shall be shown to be equally as important as invoking George Kennan's doctrine for dealing with the hegemonic power.

## I KENNAN'S PHILOSOPHY

In the last part of the Long Telegram dispatched on February 22, 1946 from the American Embassy in Moscow to the State Department, Kennan advised how to deal with Russia, which had been extending aggressive policies both in official and unofficial covert planes. Kennan said in the telegram that “the first step to be taken is to apprehend, and recognize for what it is, the nature of the movement with which we are dealing -- Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow ---”. He concluded that the greatest danger that the U.S. had in coping with the problem of Soviet communism at that time was that the U.S. itself allowed them to become like those they were coping with, (which was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)) (Kennan 1946: 17). Thus, he stressed moral solidarity and the vibrant society of the American people as well as that of the West as a whole.

## II CHINA NEEDED AN OUTSIDE ENEMY

As being illustrated, Kennan's first advice was to apprehend and recognize the nature of the movement which was being dealt with. Along with this guidance, in this writer's opinion, it is significant to understand what now makes the Chinese government be assertive and advocate an anti-Japan policy in the current Xi Jinping government. To prove my point, it is important to note that in the Chinese political system of Communist control, there has always existed the weakness of not having any means to ask about and reflect public opinion through actual policies. Therefore, in their political system, it is necessary for the top leader to govern all the hierarchical organizations, which are party, politics and military. The recent announcement of the reorganization of the military force, in which all branches of the armed forces would come under a joint military command, is a clear indication to the grip of the Communist Party over the 2.3 million member military.

Kennan stated in the X Article, “In the USSR, the existence of civil war and the long foreign intervention in the past together with the obvious fact that the communist represented only a tiny minority of Russian people made the establishment of dictatorial power a necessity” (Kennan 1947: 568). There appears to be an analogy between these two communist powers if we focus on the needs of the maintenance of the internal political structure since China was also beset by invading hordes of tribes and foreign powers in their vast tracts of land in her history. In both cases, the government tends to pursue a dictatorial type of path, and to justify its control upkeep there has always a need

for an outside enemy. That is why any Chinese communist government, such as the chairmanship of Mao Zedong, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, or Xi Jinping, sought an outside enemy.

The writer highlights the following three cases in past Chinese communist administrations. From 1951 to 1952, Mao Zedong started the Three-anti and Five-anti Campaigns in the name of eradicating enemies of the state and corruption in the cities. The number of purged capitalists, landowners and political opponents during this period is estimated at several million. On June 25th, 1950, less than one year after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Mao sent the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) to Korea, crossing the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Hither, the US was designated as an outside foe, and Mao tried to arouse antagonistic feeling among Chinese people concentrated on American imperialism.

Another example is the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958. This time, Mao shelled the islands of Kinmen and Matsu to drive away the Republic of China (ROC) army. However, the bombardment in essence helped to promote the Three Red Banners Movement, which included the Great Leap Forward and the People's Commune policies that he was undertaking forcefully despite the lackluster outcome and disarray. By generating tension in the Taiwan Strait, the power of the PLA was reinforced and so was Mao's, allowing him to enact policies that would have otherwise been unpopular.

The third example is the border clashes with Soviet Russia that occurred on Damansky Island at the Amur River in March, 1969. The seven months of military crashes were efficacious to distract from the alleged domestic chaos at peril in the wake of the infamous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). This time, Soviet Russia was chosen to be a new enemy of China codifying them as Soviet Russia Revisionist Socialistic Imperialism.

### III ANTI-JAPAN CAMPAIGN

As being exhibited, establishing a recognized outside enemy performed an important role for stability of the Chinese Communist Party administration by keeping the deference of ordinary people to the authority. It was particularly effective during the fiercely implemented policy period as it diverted the people's dissatisfaction. Mao Zedong actually disclosed this necessity for China in his talk with Dr. Kissinger on February 17, 1973 in Beijing, when the U.S. and China started to warm up each other. The memorandum of conversation recorded Mao saying "Actually, it would be that sometimes we want to criticize you for a while and you want to criticize us for a while. That, your President said, is the ideological influence. You say, away with you Communist. We say, away with you imperialists. Sometimes we say things like that" (Foreign Relations of the United States 1969-

1976).

Initially, there was no need to resort to anti-Japan sentiment because the principal enemies of China were the U.S. and later the Soviet Union. After abortive attempts by Mao, namely the Great Leap Forward Movement and the Cultural Revolution, which were stifling the national economy, Deng Xiaoping and other leaders decided in 1979 to lead the country on a path of economic development based on a market economy. Doing a complete about face, eroding their communist principle which they had been forcing on the people for decades, the government decided to resort to nationalism, including an anti-Japan campaign, to continue their unchallengeable validity of control. The nationalism campaign was designed to defuse any inevitable tension that was to be generated in the aftermath of the radical change of the economic system since it was accentuated by the fact that class distinction was to be perpetuated by the ensured unequal distribution of wealth.

As has been the case in the past, for Jiang Zemin, the then General Secretary of the Communist party (1993-2003), it was important that an outside enemy existed to enable leadership. However, it was not wise any more to make the super powers, such as the U.S. and Russia, outside enemies. Seeing events and possibilities in context, Japan was now set as a sole target of their propaganda campaign. If they threaten Japan with such issues as history problems or Yasukuni Shrine, Japan tends to express “apology and reflection”. In a word, the anti-Japan campaign was a “no risk and high-return” policy, and they compiled the story of the Chinese people as victims (Lucas 2015). Thus, for the Chinese government, the anti-Japanese movement is so congenial to their impulse, and affords pseudoscientific justification for vesting internal control by sidetracking the people’s dissatisfaction. They emphasized the historical aspect, and have denounced the Japanese and their past conduct to restore the new image to that of an enemy, which gave rise to the imbued vogue and vociferous appeals of anti-Japanese movement across the country.

Highlighted in this was the decision by the Japanese government to purchase the Senkaku Islands from a private Japanese owner in 2012. Excessive Chinese nationalism returned, and it yielded decisive impact on latent anti-Japanese emotion animating and hoisting the activities of scathing attacks on Japanese shops and factories in China. Drawing on a period of similar intense social conflict and anxiety in the U.S., John Bodnar described in *Remaking America* (1992) about the American leader’s activities of influencing the symbolic inventory of American public memory. He noted “The need to sustain loyalty to the nation during World War II and during the earliest day of the Cold War obviously did not diminish the enthusiasm of authorities in the federal government and the states to use commemorations to foster patriotism. -- In this effort leaders could draw up on existing memories and traditions that had become thoroughly familiar to much of the population. Thus, they honored soldiers who fought for the belief of their leaders and pioneers who built a

nation” (Bodnar 1993: 250). The same thing is happening in China now as demonstrated by last year’s 70th anniversary military parade for victory over Japan.

To further complicate the matter, there is another weighty issue which appears to accelerate Chinese nationalism. It is a prediction by economists that China’s present economic growth trajectory will be followed by a period of much slower level. Prominent economists believe that it would be the right time now for China to grow at less than 7 percent per year, even though this is what Xi Jinping declared when he became a General Secretary of the Communist party. This economists’ direction is quite reasonable taking into consideration China’s current debt bubble at the local government levels, which is now exceeding the scale of the entire German economy. In fact, during the 2016 National People’s Congress ended on March 16, the GDP growth rate during the period of the next five years, which is from 2016 to 2020, was set as a “minimum 6.5%”. If the lackluster economic model starts faltering in the near term with ensuring recession, as the economists predict and as it is actually falling on the path now, the Chinese Communist Party will most likely inculcate nationalism to avoid less deference to authority. This will eventually lead to more anti-Japan campaign and more rather than less assertiveness in abroad since they would have less room to afford more conciliatory policies.

#### IV HOW TO DEAL WITH CHINA

In this atmosphere of intense acrimony of anti-Japan movement and the bullying behavior in the South China Sea, one may wonder what kind of policy should be dispensed for dealing with China. As an improvised solution, there tends to be a pursuance of the canonical containment policy. It was a popular dictum of the belligerent group in the U.S. government at Kennan’s time, utilizing his convenient phrases stipulated in the X-Article. Albeit with this well tempted policy adopted during the Cold War, the policy to be facilitated for China now should be more discreet, and, rather, in a diametrically opposing manner. A case in point is a cultural definition of international relations. In the book, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, published in 1997, Akira Irie clarified as “now military power, strategy, mobilization for war, and alliance diplomacy have lost their once dominant roles in defining international relations, other forces, social and cultural, are coming to the fore, and now a cultural defined community is real” (Irie 1997: 183). As being stressed, it is important to adopt a cultural perspective in defining future relations with China leaving aside the geopolitical preoccupation.

Currently, culturally right and workable means to dispense is to make an effort to accommodate China as an important and responsible leader in the international community. Francis Fukuyama

explicitly stated that in a sense there was an analogy between China now and pre-World War I Wilhelmine Germany. He pointed out that after 1871, there was no way that Germany would not exercise greater influence through Europe, and there was a historiographies view that the problem was the Triple Entente's failure to adequately accommodate Germany (Fukuyama 2014: 1). This statement provides quite instructive suggestion to pursue. It proposes that when a great power to be appearing, the international community is to fulfill the task of adjusting to such a dramatically rising power. It also suggests that the international community should devise a strategy to accommodate the rising power, invariably having her hold clear responsibility as a world political, economic and a culturally defined leader within the framework of universal law.

Accordingly, Japan should not itself consider China such an enemy because of China's overtures. The way Japan bases its policy vis-a-vis China should not be based on how it would treat an enemy, but how it would engage with a rising power more in general as being illustrated above. The following suggestions are directed toward Japan and the international community in conjunction with Japan, but can also be considered in other countries that may now or later be vilified by China's quest to create a distracting bogeyman.

## 1 AIIB

One of the most efficient and immediate steps that Japan could exercise is to join in the AIIB. In December 2015, the AIIB was founded by fifty seven nations, including China, England, France, Germany, and Russia. Japan and the U.S. decided not to join because of their concern about the governance and transparency of the new organization. However, rather than bickering in the process of formulating the organization from without, by joining the organization, Japan could exercise her skill to build the bank's basic rules from within, utilizing her expertise developed through her long activities in the Asia Development Bank and the World Bank. This means that Japan could herald the beginning of cultural internationalism, since by staunchly supporting the healthier operation of the bank, Japan would engender trust in China. It could even redound to the security of the region by mitigating the tension and discord through the influence of economic internationalism.

## 2 Renminbi in the Global Market

On November 30, 2015 the IMF recognized the renminbi, the official currency of China, as the basket of currencies of their reserve asset, the Special Drawing Right (SDR). Figure 1 below shows the current share of the currencies in the SDR. Starting in October 2016, the renminbi will hold an 11% share of the SDR basket as, shown in Figure 2.

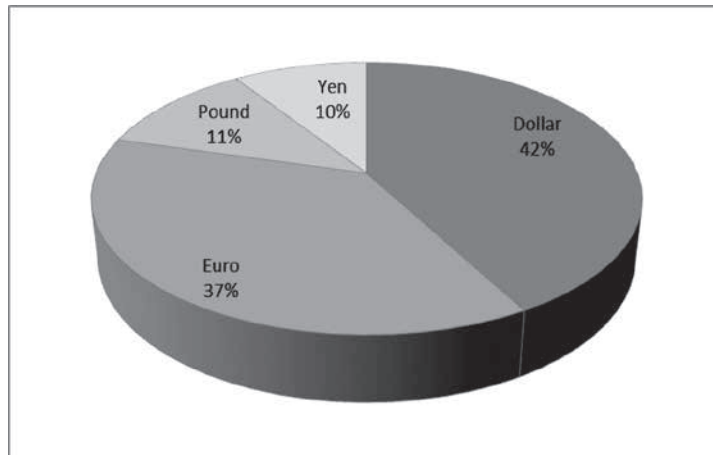


Figure 1. Current official currencies in SDR  
Source: The Japan Times, December 2, 2015

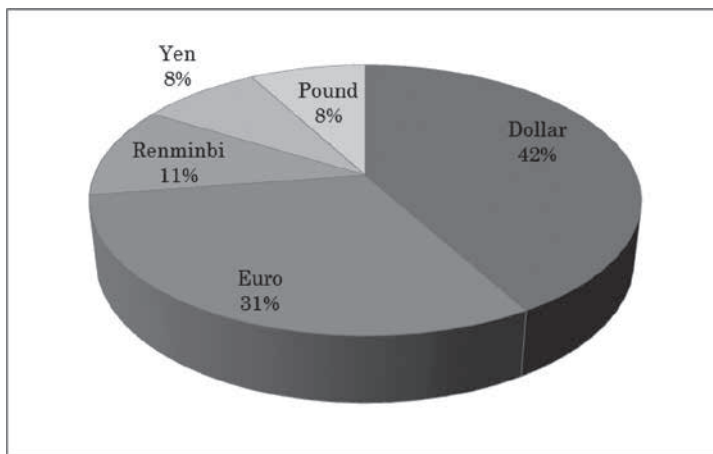


Figure 2. Official currencies of SDR from October, 2016  
Source: The Japan Times, December 2, 2015

The majority will still be the dollar at 42% and the Euro at 31%, but it is an important milestone to accommodate the Chinese economy into the global financial system. This is leading to induce an incentive to China's cultural internationalism activity. It is because China is expected to make much more progress in reforming its financial sector, including opening its tightly controlled onshore financial market, allowing more capital outflows and widening the trading band for their currency. Notably, the exchange rate of the renminbi is now set as only moving up to down two per cent against the U.S. dollar from a mid-rate set daily by the central bank. This should be passed on to

actual daily market parity as with other SDR currencies.

During the meeting of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in October, 2015, they categorically declared to establish China-Europe International Exchange (CEINEX) in Frankfurt with joint investment of renminbi 200 million (3.8 billion yen). Here, Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) corresponding to the stock index of the Chinese market and the Renminbi bond issued by Chinese and overseas companies are to be welded. Equally important, during Xi Jinping's visit to England in October, 2015, it was agreed that the Renminbi bond was going to be issued in the London market. Accommodation of renminbi for all these global financial schemes is expected to be the stimuli for China to be a responsible power befitting its economic might along the norm of the international community.

### 3 Deter Bullying Behavior

It is widely believed that China's current underlying policy thrusts the notorious "nine dash line", a huge tongue shaped maritime area shown in the map published by the Chinese government in 1949. The Pentagon revealed that China reclaimed about 11.7 sq. km. of land in the Spratly Islands from December 2013 to June 2015, which is 95 percent of the reclaimed land in the area by China, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan combined (The Japan Times November 2, 2015). This audacious practice by no means conforms to international law. China's intention is hard to fathom, and they have not stated, yet, asserting claims specifically to territorial seas and air spaces around the artificial islands as they have declared an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) demarcation in East China Sea. Nevertheless, it is envisaged that they would speak up when the military bases are completed, which no doubt would rankle the other concerned countries.

The only way to make China to curtail the bullying activities in the South China Sea and to exhort her to be a responsible regional member is for a cooperative international community to demonstrate adroit and vigilant opposing actions. In the last part of the X-Article issued in the July 1947 edition of Foreign Affairs, Kennan suggested some important point that the West could take into the consideration. He said, "the U.S. had its power to increase enormously the strains under which Soviet policy must operate, to force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection that it had to observe, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power" (Kennan, 1947: 582). There seems to be considerable evidence to support that this message should be considered in relation to Chinese divisive policies.

As an eloquent testament of demonstration, the USS Curtis Wilburt, a guided-missile destroyer based in Yokosuka, conducted a freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) within 12 nautical miles



(22 km) of Triton Island in the disputed South China Sea on January 30, 2016. A similar operation was conducted by the USS Lassen, an Aegis guided missile destroyer, within 12 nautical miles of Subi Reef last October. These momentous manifestations yielded profound implications for China in not allowing her intention of disquieting feature of status quo in the South China Sea.

Relating to this kind of daunting actions, there now are components of the alliance system, which are the respective bilateral treaties of the U.S. with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and the Philippines. These treaties should be reinforced, and create wedges with other countries afflicted by China for instance, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. The alliance could forestall fraught crashes between China and other clamoring countries in a somewhat unpalatable situation. As a part of the aligned coalescing work, Japan could readily focus its efforts on maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia by providing patrol boats, surveillance equipment, more joint military training and frequent ship visits. On December 12, 2015, Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Modi of India reached a slew of agreements in New Delhi including a \$15 billion deal for helping to build India's first high-speed rail link and for defense aimed at deterring China's expansion. By building such a multilateral apparatus and dovetailing the actions in purpose, it is expected that China realizes that its defiant actions are inextricably fraught with danger with the surrounding countries, and the corollary is that they are literally eroding their own international position.

#### 4 The Permanent Court of Arbitration

In November last year, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague ruled that it had jurisdiction to hear a case filed by the Philippines against China over the disputed South China Sea. The decision is a good sign to other potential claimants since it made China preemptive and freaked as they sought to resolve the issue unilaterally. China would eventually come under intensified diplomatic and legal pressure if the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague decides in favor of Manila, which is expected to happen in the summer this year. Along this development, in Sydney on November 22, 2015, the foreign and defense ministers of Japan and Australia made a statement to support the right of South China Sea claimants to seek arbitration. Subsequently, Vietnam made a submission to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in support of Manila's case. Furthermore, Indonesia's security chief said in December, 2015 that Jakarta could take Beijing to court over the so-called nine dash line. Through all these actions converged from various sources, as Kennan advised, it is hoped that China would eventually find their outlet of gradually "mellowing" to become a responsible international member.

## V POLITICAL POWER

As an important factor in international relations, we should scrutinize how Kennan considered the military power in the process of foreign policy decision. In his *Memoirs* (1950-1963) he stated, “-- the Soviet leaders, interested in extending their real power by measures short of general war have not been oblivious to the possibilities of such things as threats and intimidation-the possibilities of the use of the shadow of armed strength rather than its substance-as a means of influencing the political behavior of peoples elsewhere” (Kennan 1972: 335). Accordingly, Kennan admitted that military power was a “shadow” of a political power. Additionally, he told students at the National War College in 1946 the following: “You have no idea how much it contributes to the general politeness and pleasantness of diplomacy when you have a little quiet armed force in the background.” “The existence of such forces is probably the most important single instrumentality in the conduct of the U.S. foreign policy” (Gaddis: 38).

On the other hand, Kennan stated at the National War College in October 1947. “Remember, that ...as things stand today, it is not Russian military power which is threatening us, it is Russian political power. ... If it is not entirely a military threat, I doubt that it can be effectively met entirely by military means” (Gaddis: 39). Kennan reckoned that it is not exclusively military power which determines the total position of a nation on the international stage. In fact, in a lecture at the National War College on August 20, 1948, Kennan articulated with equal brevity, such factors as armed forces, economic power, propaganda weapons, and diplomacy as means of pursuing basic objects of American foreign policies (Suzuki: 100). These are what he called political power.

Invoking Kennan’s philosophy, it is political power that Japan should be based around and thrust in implementing policies towards China. Military power, of course, constructs an important part of political power, but it should not be the pretext as an instrument to be manipulated tactically on an extensive scale. Rather, it should be formulated as a fixed factor in the conduct of foreign policy, and should function as a deterrence and “shadow” underpinning the other constituents of the political power. Economic power, probably, has a more profound influence than the other elements of political power. To face an assertive and highly hierarchic power such as China, a healthy and vigorous domestic society appears to be a force to be reckoned with. As a matter of fact, for building such a society, no amount of domestic economic reform would suffice. Indeed, maneuverability of propaganda and diplomacy, to a great extent, relies on economic strength as well as internal soundness and the permanence of one’s own society.

## CONCLUSION

From their inherent one party political system, China needed and may demand even now an outside enemy as the Stalin's Soviet Russia had definitely needed during the interwar period, during World War II, and during the Cold War, which was clearly specified in the Long Telegram and the X Article. However, as Kennan suggested, there seems to be considerable evidence to support the idea that military power is not the factor to be bolstered in the forefront when dealing with a rapidly rising power such as China. Rather, the cultural definition of international relations represented by economic internationalism and diplomatic power appears to be the one to be extended to lead China as an important and responsible actor in the international setting. For this goal, it is imperative that the international community accommodates China through various scenes such as the operations of AIIB, Renminbi, and even in the activities of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Conference of the Parties 21 (COP21). Adopting these activities, China could perform an important role as a global leader, which is quite natural with her large national and economic scale. Through these activities, the cultural internationalism of China in the international society is starting to be influential by overcoming excessive parochialism.

Nonetheless, the support for China by the international community necessitates deterrence to be intertwined to make her perform as a responsible global leader. Particularly, the activity of reclaiming lands in the Spratly Islands is considered to be a challenge to the status quo in the region. It is generating tension with other relevant countries. This kind of unilateral action should be inhibited by coalescing activities of the concerned countries as well as the international community as a whole. The U.S. conduct of FONOP and the announcement of the Permanent Court of Arbitration regarding its jurisdiction over the issue are necessary manifestations and an antidote to the prevailing bullying behavior of China in the South Pacific. These actions are conducive to make China understand the universal norm to be observed as a leading international community member through the process of "mellowing of their power" as Kennan emphasized.

In a word, it is widely expected that China would follow the rules and precepts of the international community and pursue the cultural definition of international relations rather than falling in the path of traditional geopolitical strategy. Additionally, to face with the assertive and highly hierarchical power such as China, the vital economic strength appears to be important for the powers concerned. In conclusion, besides adopting China in the international community as a leading responsible power by the aligned coalescing work, the healthy and vigorous economic society in each relevant country tends to be equally important.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is a great honor for the author to contribute this paper for Professor Yoshihiko Nitta's retirement edition of Nihon University College of Economics Research Bulletin. Professor Nitta was the author's senior colleague in Hitachi Ltd., Tokyo during the 1970s and 1980s, and this writer is grateful for the opportunity given for celebrating and commemorating his lengthy professional service in the university.

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