

The relationship between China and security-generating organizations

1st Lt. Ionela Cătălina MANOLACHE*

*Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast Bucharest
e-mail: catalinagrigure31@yahoo.com

Abstract

Currently, the international environment is characterized by complexity. Global security is threatened by numerous factors, and specific organizations like NATO, OSCE, or the UN strive to eliminate or minimize these challenges. In this regard, an important element is the economic evolution of states. Economic supremacy is accompanied by advantages in other areas of development such as the political, social, or military. China is the state that has surprised the whole world with its ability to evolve economically, becoming an important actor in the field in a relatively short time. This status brings both benefits and numerous obligations, including the need to cooperate with security organizations to develop a climate of peace at the international level. That is precisely why the Chinese state must maintain good relationships with these organizations and make efforts to generate its own collective security, ensuring a climate of peace and setting an example for other structures.

Keywords:

China; NATO; OSCE; UN; cooperation; challenges; security.

In recent decades, China has abandoned the image of an isolated state, separated from the rest of the international community, and has emerged as one of the most developed states in the world. Especially in recent years, the state has evolved significantly from an economic point of view, quickly moving towards the top of the most important states from an economic point of view. This is also the reason why international organizations and the world's most influential countries started to pay attention to China's foreign policy, its objectives and behaviors. Yet, in the case of this atypical state for the Occident, it is necessary to understand the decision-making process and the factors that influence its politics and motivations.

Compared with other states, most of China's foreign policy decisions are made by an expert council, which acts under supervision but does not include members of the government as parts. All official decisions are made by this council and everything discussed between Chinese diplomats and their counterparts in other states, if not recorded in the discussions of this council, is considered free, unofficial discussions. In order to avoid sending the wrong message regarding its foreign policy, China has established a strategic group for the analysis and guidance of international relations (Xue 2014).

China's economic position gives it the advantage of influencing other states, especially those it borders, but also states with which it collaborates economically. China's foreign policy expresses the state's willingness to establish and maintain peace at the international level, with the purpose of securing its independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. China also wants to support the creation of a healthy international framework in order to impose its reforms and seek solutions for its opening to construction and reform and to achieve economic supremacy, but also in other domains, if that were possible.

China stood out for its willingness to learn from past experiences. Through its foreign policy, China states that it wants to maintain the lead at the same time as other states, being interested in obtaining some benefits that could only be obtained by working together. On the other side, China still maintains cold relations with some states of the world. For example, the Chinese state has diplomatic relations with only 178 of the 193 member states of the United Nations (UN). Also, relations with Western states are not very good either, because the Chinese state considers, in some aspects, that it is not equally and fairly treated in relation to the position it occupies. The biggest conflict that still keeps China in a position of insecurity and for which it does not receive a vote of confidence from the Western states is the one related to the sovereignty of Taiwan, but also smaller ones, related to border disputes with Japan or India (Dotson 2014).

The beginning of this century was a successful one, as China emerged as the state with the highest economic growth in the entire world. Its influence spilled over, especially in some states on the Asian and African continents and less in Europe or America.

China began to be interested in establishing relations with the rest of the international community in the 1990s and intensified this connection a decade later, when it expanded its relations with numerous states around the globe, collaborating in multiple fields, such as economic, socio-cultural, or even in the military field. The beginning of the third millennium also brought significant changes in Sino-American relations. The two states returned to better relations, and the world's major powers strengthened their relations with the Asian state.

2008 was the year full of significance for China, as it was the year in which the state gained its role as a main power on regional and global plan, as it achieved the highest economic growth for several years in the queue. Although there have been difficult years for Westerners since 2008, when the crisis started, triggering shortages and citizens' dissatisfaction, China was gaining a considerable advance, a fact that facilitated the increase in confidence and the adoption of an increasingly aggressive position on the international level. But, surprisingly for the state, the effect was the opposite, and China began to lose its credibility. After the moment of crisis was overcome by the entire global community, since 2011 China has sought to regain the trust of other states and convince them that it is not a threat, but rather a state that seeks to grow economically in a peaceful and responsible manner.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping came up with a new vision of the image that China should display and imposed an active foreign policy that expressed the desire to modernize the state, to create a peaceful external environment in which China could develop, especially from an economic point of view.

Regarding the military field, China has a modern and large army, which can, at any moment, become a valuable tool for Chinese leaders in case of regional or even global disagreements. However, the Chinese army has been tested very little in the last four decades, and only after the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine did military leaders begin to raise the issue of training the military forces by performing demonstration exercises, participating in joint exercises with allied forces or with neighbors with whom the state has harmonious relations (Beslin 2013).

The relationship between China and the United Nations

Internationally, the UN continues to be one of the most important actors in global governance policy. When it comes to issues related to world peace and security, the UN Security Council is the competent body for resolving these differences. Whatever problem the nations faced, the main task of the UN was to intervene quickly and effectively so that the situation returned to normal. The UN aims to maintain a climate of peace worldwide and has condemned every time the violent exits of some state actors.

The UN Security Council consists of five permanent members: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America (USA). These members exercise their right to veto, which allows any of these five members to prevent the adoption of any type of resolution. By 2019, China had only used its right to veto 14 times. By comparison, the US has vetoed on 80 resolutions since 1971. What is striking is that China's latest vetoes have aligned with Russia's, particularly on the issue of the conflict in Ukraine. It was not until March 2023 that China vetoed for a different resolution regarding Russia, this one in which China recognized Russia's aggression towards Ukraine and Russia's aggressor status. Also, the two actors have positioned themselves on the same side regarding the conflict in Syria. In 2018, China did not vote for the resolution that would have established the mechanism to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria. But, 4 days after the voting of this resolution, China vetoed another resolution that aimed to condemn the actions of the US on the territory of Syria. Later, the two partner states, China and Russia, vetoed on a resolution for a ceasefire in Syria, but this allowed Russia to continue its military operations in the country (Ropot 2018, 115-119).

As mentioned before, China is a privileged member of the UN, but also one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, and has been part of this organization since its establishment in 1945. In general, China has stood out as a pragmatic member, since, during the deliberation process within the Security Council, it judged, repeatedly, according to an apparently practical utility of the debated issue and positioned itself neutrally or even contrary to the other member states, making the decision-making process very difficult. On the other hand, there have also been situations in which China has taken a stand on its own initiative in issues related to global peace and security.

Lately, China has offered special attention to peacekeeping operations, as a member of the UN. The state became actively involved, especially through the lens of re-evaluating its own national interests and its position as an economically developed state. China has adjusted its own policy according to that of the UN, giving special interest to the role of this organization. The past few years have been remarkable for the China-UN relationship, with the state even adapting its diplomacy to the principles of cooperation, dialogue, and non-confrontation, and showing greater flexibility towards issues affecting the international community. However, although in some issues China approaches the situation according to the other member states of the Council and condemns, through resolutions, the attitude and activity of this state, in other cases, such as Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, it has avoided taking a position against Russia. This has raised new questions about China's intentions, with major powers once again becoming wary and condemning the Chinese state for the stance it has taken. China has carefully avoided condemning Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine, and this attitude has reduced the chances of a negotiated end to this war. China's attitude has brought it to the position of a double player, which maintains the partnership with the Russian state, but also pursues collaboration with the Western states.

The UN is an organization that seeks for the peaceful resolution of conflicts through diplomatic measures and its authority must be maintained and recognized. After 2000, China worked intensively to integrate into the international community by promoting the same measures as the UN. China's support towards the UN regarding international conflicts has grown progressively, the only turning point, moreover, a very important one, being the one related to Russia's aggression towards Ukraine. Even as it supports the organization in other conflicts around the globe, China still raises questions about the trust the organization and other states can have in it because it has positioned itself against them (Spakowshi 2009).

On the other hand, if in the past China was reluctant to assume an active role within the organization, at the present moment the state is one of the largest contributors to the organization's budget. The state also strongly supports the peacekeeping operations carried out under the auspices of the UN, being the second largest contributor to the organization's budget and one of the states that contributes significantly with human resources to these peacekeeping operations. Through these actions, China has gained the ability to exert diplomatic and political influence worldwide. Even though China has been opposed to peacekeeping operations for decades, in 1990 having only 5 soldiers sent to peacekeeping operations, their number has increased greatly, exceeding 3000 soldiers in 2015 and over 2000 soldiers today (EPP 2020).

As for China, this state seems to have other material and economic interests in mind and continues a double game. This emerges from its intentions to maintain the relationship with states threatened with sanctions from the UN. Another example is the one regarding the voting of a draft in 2019 that China voted for and which referred to the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, a state in which China has political and economic interests. Also, China's position as a permanent member of the UN is an important asset to prevent it from supporting states that have officially recognized Taiwan as a country.

Further, the relationship between China and the UN seems to have some gaps and there are misunderstandings on topics very important to global security. Although it tries to maintain a reassuring tone, China's periodic outings raise questions for world leaders and leave doubt about its intentions and its role as a major regional and global actor.

The relationship between China and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Until the beginning of this millennium, the relationship between China and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was almost non-existent. However, after the Chinese state began to develop and change its foreign policy strategy, the

political dialogue with NATO began to evolve, and in 2010, the two entities were also collaborating on the military level.

In principle, NATO's commitment to China is predominantly political. After 2010, they began to collaborate in the military field, to get involved in the issue of North Korea, the South China Sea, counter-piracy, or in terms of China's military defense reforms. Over time, it was also discussed about participating in specific NATO courses or planning joint exercises (Ropot 2018, 115-119).

Even though these discussions have taken place, there is no actual cooperation between the two entities, which is somewhat neglected. Rather, China prefers to collaborate individually with NATO allied states, as it avoids direct discussion and active involvement in the issue of international security, terrorism, and other similar issues. NATO member states avoid direct collaboration with China because of the economic power that this state possesses, but especially because of the authoritarian leadership style, territorial expansion ambitions, and unpredictability in the decision-making process.

Although it has positioned itself differently from Western countries in the issue of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, China does not represent, for the moment, a threat to the Euro-Atlantic area. China pursues military expansion towards the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Arctic areas and seeks to establish defense ties with Russia, with which it collaborates on the development of long-range missile technology, aircraft, aircraft carriers, or submarines with nuclear attack capability. Several NATO allies and members feel China's influence and involvement in several areas and blame it for several problems that have emerged and developed in recent years. Some of them consider China guilty of cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, or the development of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, China has its own ambitions and aims to occupy the position of world leader in the field of economics or artificial intelligence.

The current relations between China and NATO are rather strained, especially due to the increasing cooperation between China and Russia. Some NATO states see China as a rival for influence, while others view it as a trading partner.

NATO, as an organization, does not consider China an adversary and does not seek to start a cold war with the Asian power. In contrast, the Alliance is a democratic community that seeks to maintain regional and international peace and strives to ensure collective security.

In the future, it would be most appropriate for NATO to be willing to offer a position of power and security to international actors, thus increasing the collaboration of allies and members with China and being able to protect them, in the event of possible pressures from Beijing. Another precaution for NATO in the face of possible bellicose intentions of China consists of understanding the capabilities, activities, and intentions of the Asian state so that they do not affect Euro-Atlantic security and

do not give rise to risks, threats, or opportunities (Beslin 2013).

Regardless of the differences that exist between NATO and China, it is necessary to have collaboration between the two, as they can achieve very good results in areas such as cyber, hybrid, arms control, or non-proliferation of weapons.

The relationship between China and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The first cooperation between China and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) began in 2003, with the request sent by the Chinese ambassador to Vienna to initiate a meeting with the secretary general of the organization. Later, Chinese representatives participated in OSCE conferences held in Thailand, Mongolia, or Korea.

This connection could not be avoided, especially in light of China's common border with four OSCE member states: Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Given China's position, it has established strong economic relations with its neighbors, especially due to its interest in the energy resources of Russia and Central Asia. In addition to economic interest, China has also shown its regional influence on security, providing its neighbors with the necessary resources so that they feel protected.

Diplomatically, the OSCE does not understand China's intentions, as it is not familiar with the way of leadership and the existing command and control system. For the organization, China represents both an opportunity and a great challenge. At the moment, the OSCE maintains collaborative relations with China, but they are not very developed. It was only 10 years later from the first interaction with the OSCE that China began to assert itself within the organization through investments in port infrastructure in Western Europe, investments in various regions of Central Asia, Eastern Europe or the Western Balkans or in other areas such as IT infrastructure development or education.

The relationship between the two entities has been affected by debates over China's double game, especially in the Xinjiang region. China does not want to accept the idea of opening a dialogue on human and minority rights, and the OSCE insists on this issue. Also, another aspect that prevents a very good relationship between China and the OSCE is the existing competition for power between China, the US, and Russia. Through the prism of this continuous struggle, there has been a decline in the appreciation of multilateralism and cooperative solutions. The OSCE is based on principles such as consensus and compromise, and this competition affects its role, as relations between the main world actors suffer a lot.

An organization was created in Shanghai that cooperates in the political, military, economic, energy, or cultural fields. It is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

(SCO), made up of states from Europe, the Near East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. The OSCE pursues a collaboration with the OCS, especially with China, due to its geographical position, and common activities, but above all due to its role as an active player in international security (Eremia 2020).

A first solution that could help strengthen the relationship between China and the OSCE could be a constructive engagement between them in areas of common interest such as the fight against corruption, management of environmental issues, improvement of economic cooperation after the Covid-19 pandemic, and the conflict in Ukraine. China is acting in the direction of good collaboration by investing billions of dollars to create economic corridors between Europe and Central Asia through which they connect with the Near East, Africa, Southeast Asia, or India (Xue 2014).

Conclusions

China is the surprise state of the 21st century, which has evolved a lot, especially on the economic side. This position increased its importance in other areas as well and attracted the attention of all the major actors, whether it was admiration or caution. China's foreign policy promotes a state that strives for a harmonious world where there are mutual advantages and common benefits, and adopts a tolerant and open attitude in supporting multilateral trade, also promoting the integration of different civilizations and assuming the role of an important international actor.

At present, China has the ability to wield international power and can chart a clear direction for its future course of action in the economic, military, information, and social fields. This superpower role cannot be disputed for China, as the state has consistently engaged in international issues and is an active member in most organizations. Regardless of the nature of the conflict, China has been a significant player with a voice that carries weight, and its position has consistently been taken into account and has influenced other states in decision-making.

References

- Beslin, Shaun.** 2013. *China and the global order: signalling threat or friendship?* Vol. 89. Oxford: International Affair Press.
- Dotson, John.** 2014. *Political factions and spicy gincer: elder networks in PCR politics.* Washington: Global Research and Analytics.
- EPP.** 2020. „Relațiile UE – China”. <https://www.eppgroup.eu/ro/zona-presei/publicatii/relatiile-ue-china>.

Eremia, Cristian. 2020. „Organizația de Cooperare de la Shanghai și BRICS – perturbate de conflicte între India, China și Pakistan”. <https://monitorulapararii.ro/organizatia-de-cooperare-de-la-shanghai-si-brics-perturbate-de-conflicte-dintre-india-china-si-pakistan-1-33443>.

Farhad, Manjoo. 2017. *Snap Makes a Bet on the Cultural Supremacy of the Camera*. New York Times.

LaSalle, Peter. 2017. ”Conundrum: A Story about Reading”. *New England Review* 38 (1): 95-109.

Ropot, Traian. 2018. „China și SUA: interese și rivalități geopolitice în zona Pacificului”. *Administrarea Publică* 2 (98): 115-119.

Spakowshi, Nicola. 2009. *National aspirations on a global stage: concepts of world/ Global history in contemporary China*. Cambridge: University Press.

Wikipedia. 2023. https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Categorie:Rela%C8%9Biile_externe_ale_Chinei.

Xue, Lei. 2014. *China as a permanent member of the UNSC*. Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Press.