

## CHINA'S EVOLVING WORLD VIEW AND THE PHILIPPINES\*

*Aileen San Pablo-Baviera*

**A**n old Chinese proverb asks: How could the swallow know the aspirations of the wild swan?

Studying China from a Philippine perspective is at times being like a little swallow trying to understand the aspirations of the wild swan. While the Philippines and China may seem to belong to the same species in more ways than one – sharing an oriental culture, a common regional environment, and the challenges of development, yet, we are so different. And the difference cannot be more fundamental than the disparity of the way the swallow perceives its own smallness against the vast horizons, with the way the wild swan eclipses all in its shadow.

The relevant factor is not so much our respective sizes as the manner by which China and the Philippines contemplate the world and their respective places in it.

Many Filipinos possess paradoxical attitudes towards China – seeming to fear her strength and at the same time despise her weakness. For a long time, the most common image of China

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that came to the Filipino mind was that of a fierce and menacing dragon poised to ingest its smaller neighbors. Such imagery was founded on our studies of ancient Chinese civilization, a vast empire whose influence spread far and wide in the Orient, tales of how the Sultan of Sulu paid tribute to the Emperor of the Middle Kingdom who was the Son of Heaven, as well as modern horror stories of the Cold War variety about how the tide of communism would swell insidiously, overthrowing bourgeois governments every step of the way.

However, China has also been alternatively perceived as a champion of Third World causes, a loyal ally against superpower stratagem, a guarantor of regional peace and security, and a true advocate of sovereignty and nonalignment. We need, therefore, to ask ourselves, which is the real China? How does she view the world and what designs, if any, does she have upon it?

Clearly, to develop a more rational attitude towards China and the Chinese, we need to understand her more and to understand China means to see the world through Chinese eyes. When we speak of a Chinese world view, this should comprehensively include how China understands the nature of man and of the cosmos, the logic and flow of history and social development, and a vision of an ideal existence. To accomplish this means delving deep into the domain of epistemology and the realm of antiquity, but we do not wish to be presumptuous. Our interest here is much more limited – to gain insights on how China presently looks at the world in order to better comprehend her conduct of foreign relations, particularly with regard to the Philippines.

## **The Ancient Chinese World View**

We begin with the ancient Chinese world view and its relevance to current thinking. Scholars engaged in studies of the world view believe that it is a mirror reflection of a self-image or of how one

looks upon one's self. This may be singularly true for ancient China, considering the fact that for the greater length of their history, the Chinese believed that they were entirely surrounded by seas and mountains, beyond which everything was barbarian. Therefore, as far as the Chinese were concerned – China was the world.

The most important influence on the ancient Chinese world view was the Confucian doctrine. Because it developed at a time of wars, corruption, and natural calamities, the greatest concern of Confucianism was the maintenance of order and harmony, first in human society, and secondly between man and his natural surroundings. Confucius was neither absorbed with the supernatural nor the afterlife, but, rather, he devoted all efforts to the solution of problems of the earth, which was referred to as *tianxia* or all below Heaven. The Confucian classics were more than anything else social and political treatise. As Sun Tzu professed: "Heaven has its seasons; Earth has its resources; Man has his government." The tranquility of nature and the occurrence of flood and drought were attributed to the success or failings of government, and to the virtue or folly of the sovereign. Good government was seen as the key to achieving harmony and order. A good ruler was one who consciously strived towards moral reform.

Confucianism also prescribed a sociopolitical structure that was hierarchical and anti-egalitarian in nature. Traditional Chinese philosophy placed no value on equality. On the contrary, emphasized at every turn were the superior-subordinate relationships that existed between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, between the superior class of scholar-officials on one hand and peasants and merchants on the other.

This hierarchical conception of order extended to China's early relations with other peoples and nations. In its Sinocentric perspective, within the great unity of "all under Heaven," boundaries existed which separated the civilized from the

barbarian. Cultural superiority and moral virtue were deemed the sources of her glory, not military strength nor material wealth.

Traditionally, the Chinese did not conceive of themselves so much as a nation or a state but as a civilization that would spread its influence by standing as an example to the barbarians. The principles of national independence, national sovereignty, and national equality were non-existent in ancient China, running contrary to their sense of a universal civilization.<sup>1</sup> Relations with other political entities were conducted within the framework of the tribute system. Western traders bearing greetings from European sovereigns for the Emperor were treated with the same hospitality and indulgence extended to tributary missions from neighboring kingdoms or fiefdoms in Japan, Korea, Annam, or Sulu.

What is perhaps remarkable is that in the long history during which China regarded itself as the Middle Kingdom, enjoying the allegiance and tribute of smaller states and exercising significant cultural influence over many outside peoples, there was no aggressive effort on her part to impose her will on non-Chinese states.

Early contacts with the West saw a clash of two civilizations both deeming themselves morally superior to the other. The Chinese, believing that their own knowledge and civilization were self-sufficient and that they had little to gain from exchanges with the West, condescended upon the foreign devils. Meanwhile, the Europeans saw the Chinese as barbarian because they were not Christian. The difference was that while the Chinese welcomed the foreign devils in the hope that they would be sinicized and brought into the fold of Chinese civilization (*lai hua*), the Europeans were only too eager to employ superior weapons to Christianize the Chinese, not to mention to extract their abundant resources.

China's confrontations with the West eventually led to the formal abolition of the tribute system and its replacement with the treaty system. Reform of political institutions subsequently

took place while the basic belief in Chinese superiority remained. The fear grew that exposure to Western ideas might corrupt and undermine the Confucian social order. The impact of Western aggression on the Chinese world view could perhaps be measured in terms of the following factors: first, it reinforced what some scholars call the anti-foreignism<sup>2</sup> of the Chinese, particularly following the imposition of unequal treaties; second, it gave birth to a true consciousness of nationhood and race among the Chinese in dichotomy to another civilization; and third, it questioned the old definitions of power insofar as virtue was no longer deemed sufficient without technology and weapons.

## **The Maoist World View**

While the influx of Western thinking may have failed in transforming the Confucian order, Maoism may have been more successful.

Because of the commanding position that Mao Zedong enjoyed from 1949 until his death in 1976, the Chinese world view that evolved during this period was very much an echo of his personal perceptions and analysis of the world. Maoism was, in fact, a conscious attempt to change the manner the Chinese viewed themselves in relation to the rest of the world. Mao believed that Confucianism and imperialism had both contributed to the development of an inferiority complex among the Chinese masses.

Ever an optimist and a revolutionary romanticist, he sought to transform China's weakness – its huge, backward population – into its principal strength. He maintained that man, not technology, was the primary moving force in history. To prove it, he led a poorly equipped but committed Red Army to revolutionary victory, after which he embarked on transforming feudal China into a stable socialist state by mobilizing millions of Chinese peasants.

The revolution that he led was a conscious attempt to recast the old China – steeped in tradition, superstition and a bureaucratic hierarchical social system – into a completely bold, new, dynamic nation animated by the spirit of socialism. Yet, inevitably, Mao himself, together with his comrades-in-arms, were products of the old thinking, their world view inextricably colored by the ancient traditions even as its content and course were determined by the revolutionary imperative. We find, upon studying the Maoist world view, both aspects of the old and the new, of continuity and change.

As a Marxist, Mao believed that the development of China was but a part of a larger historical process of world development, that history moves forward and not in circles, that change is inevitable because of the existence of contradictions in all things, and that continual struggle is necessary if man were to make his own history. In contrast to the Confucian primacy on tradition, order, and harmony, Mao called for change, for a new just social order to be achieved through hard struggle.

Egalitarianism was a primary value in Maoist China. Mao was committed to remove the differences between the rich and the poor, the cities and the countryside, mental and manual labor, and officialdom and the masses.

Importance was also attached to self-reliant, voluntarist, and mobilizational methods of social transformation, as well as protracted struggle. These were, after all, the factors that had proved crucial to revolutionary victory in 1949. This viewpoint is logical in a country such as China, which, while suffering from a dire lack of technology and being unevenly endowed with the factors of production, has massive manpower resources. It is one of the reasons why Maoism held great attraction for Third World liberation movements.

Anti-imperialism was another key aspect of the Maoist world view. Mao's early revolutionary doctrine cited two major

contradictions existing in China – that between imperialism and the Chinese nation, and secondly, that between the feudal landlord class on one hand and the Chinese workers and peasants on the other. The tasks of overthrowing imperialism and feudalism went hand in hand. Feudalism was referred to as the “social base” of imperialism, with the argument that imperialism invariably allies itself with the ruling strata, supporting and preserving the feudal structures while reducing an independent country to a colony or semi-colony.

In a situation where the principal contradiction was between imperialism and the Chinese nation, the struggle against the main enemy – imperialism – necessitated the establishment of a united front even with the Chinese bourgeoisie. The struggle against the feudal ruling elites became principal only after imperialism had been overturned.

How do these attitudes translate into China's perception of the world? Mao viewed everything around him from the kaleidoscope of class struggle. Whether attributable to the legacies of Lenin, to his own revolutionary experiences, or to antagonism towards the Confucian order – Mao saw the world as basically unequal – a hierarchy of modern, powerful imperialist states against a mass of oppressed and exploited nations. He defined the international system as a struggle between the defenders of a moribund status quo and revolutionary challengers seeking to establish a new and just world order. The antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie within national borders was seen as the principal basis of civil wars and other national conflicts. Underlying all these was Mao's unshakable faith in the certainty of final victory – the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, and victory of the oppressed nations of the Third World over their oppressors.

From the moment of their own victory in repudiating imperialism and the old decaying order in 1949, China began to be seen as a model of revolution in the Third World. Its theory of

protracted people's war gained adherents among national liberation movements, particularly in Asia, and its initial successes in socialist construction were an inspiration to other poor nations. This being so, and in line with her duties of proletarian internationalism, China extended support to those waging what it termed "just wars" of national liberation, championing their causes in international fora, loudly propagandizing and cheering them on in their efforts to overthrow so-called oppressive bourgeois regimes. China has consistently been at the forefront of the clamor for a new world order. In the 1970s, she played a crucial role in the United Nations in terms of raising the agenda of developing nations versus the agenda of the superpowers. This included active encouragement of the United Nations resolution for a New International Economic Order. China symbolically aligned herself with the Third World based on her semi-colonial experience, her proletarian standpoint, and her own enormous problems of development. She was one of the originators of and continues to foster what has come to be known as the "Bandung spirit" – Third World unity, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism.

On the other hand, a close look at China's record in international affairs will reveal, perhaps contrary to our expectations, that her support for national liberation movements (NLM) and armed struggle-oriented communist parties has been largely through proselytizing and the extension of moral and political support rather than actual material assistance. Very few NLMs received substantial backing from China that could decisively have turned the tide in their favor. Generally, Maoist China's sparse record of military involvement in conflicts outside her borders have been defensive in nature, oriented towards ensuring territorial security and in no way causing the advancement of revolution. In fact, her limited military actions against Vietnam, India, and the Soviet Union may have even pushed back the agenda of the revolution in the Asia-Pacific region. Even after



she had attained nuclear capability, she consistently displayed an unwillingness to be engaged in armed hostilities with any of the proclaimed enemies of China and socialism.

Moreover, China refused to take a leadership role in any of the Third World organizations such as the Non-Aligned Movement or the Group 77 while vocally supporting their objectives. A possible explanation for this is the broad, ideologically diffuse membership of these groups in contrast to China's own revolutionary standpoint. After all, while the member nations may take common positions against colonialism and imperialism, many of them were actually governed by feudal and, therefore, "reactionary" ruling elites. Another reason may be that China wished to avoid entanglement in the many conflicts, territorial, cultural and otherwise, that persist among countries of the Third World. It may also be that China wanted to avert direct confrontation with imperialism as well as what it calls Soviet social-imperialism. Finally, the Chinese leaders felt that they stood the most to gain by maintaining their flexibility and pragmatism in the conduct of relations with other countries.

China's behavior in world affairs has led to the observation that, like the ancient empire, she still sees herself as an ideological role model – this time for Third World nations and revolutionary movements. And like the old civilization, any expansion of its influences was to be achieved mainly through attraction and emulation, rather than through vigorous intervention, coercion, or aggression.

The great discrepancy between China's maximalist proselytizing and her cautious and minimalist activity in support of both revolutionary NLMs and Third World causes is actually consistent with the Maoist strategy of self-reliance. China believes, based on her own experiences, that revolution can neither be "exported" nor "imported," and that no revolutionary movement enjoys prospects for success unless it is indigenous, broad-based, and

relies primarily on its own efforts. To this day, China continues to support in principle revolution as an instrument for social change, but she is not about to risk her fortunes by supporting revolutions that may be doomed to failure anyway because they are not capable of consolidating their gains through self-reliance.

China's divergence with the Soviet Union was also undeniably a major factor contributing to the shaping of a modern Chinese world view. If proletarian internationalism and the anti-imperialist united front dictated the thrusts of the 1950s, then during the 1960s and the 1970s, Chinese foreign policy became largely a function of her antagonism towards the Soviet Union.

The reasons behind the Sino-Soviet split were complex, ranging from the personal to the political, from the economic to the ideological.<sup>3</sup> The effects of the split were earth-shaking, completely altering the alignment and balance of forces in the international arena. Its consequences on China's world view were as significant. The good vs. evil, oppressor vs. oppressed conception of the world did not alter, but evil was no longer represented solely by the immoral forces of imperialism and reaction but also, alongside with these, Soviet social-imperialism. The Maoist leadership used the term social-imperialism to describe expansionist designs and aggression by the Soviet Union committed under the guise of socialist internationalism. China had roundly opposed the Soviet Union's attempts to control Eastern Europe as well as the unequal and unfair terms of the Soviet Union's economic partnership with the Third World nations.

It was then that China presented her theory of the Three Worlds – reportedly originated by Mao but largely advanced by Deng Xiaoping. The Three Worlds theory alleged that the world is divided into three blocs – the “First World” consisting of the two superpowers, the imperialist United States and the revisionist and social-imperialist Soviet Union. These two superpowers were engaged in both contention as well as collusion for control of the

rest of the world; they were the enemies of the world's people. The "Second World" was composed of the lesser imperialist countries of Western Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan who also exploit the Third World nations but might share in their struggle against the superpowers. The majority of states, including China, belonged to the Third World. They were the oppressed and exploited peoples – "the wretched of the earth" – struggling against imperialism, hegemonism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, apartheid, Zionism, and all forms of reaction.

The Three Worlds theory also maintained that the contention between the two superpowers was the main source of war. Between the two superpowers, it said the Soviet Union was the more dangerous because it was a newcomer to the imperialist camp and, therefore, more aggressive compared to a greatly weakened post-energy crisis United States. Moreover, the Soviet Union, being a centrally planned social system, could more easily mobilize its resources to pursue war. It was also the more deceptive because it continued to use the mantle of Leninism to justify its hostile actions. Finally, the Three Worlds theory called on the peoples of the Second and Third World to establish the broadest united front against imperialism and social-imperialism.

On the level of international politics, China's anti-hegemony and anti-superpower position greatly, if inadvertently, contributed to the creation of a multi-state and multi-polar world system. It did so by breaching the so-called communist monolith, challenging the earlier bipolar structures dominated by the respective alliances of the superpowers, and by projecting the Third World and China herself as a rival power center. Moreover, anti-Sovietism helped rationalize China's rapprochement with the US and the West.

At the same time, however, it greatly undermined China's claims to be an ideological role model for Third World revolutionaries, first of all because of the intimate association China chose to foster with "US imperialism," and secondly because the Soviet

Union still commanded the respect, if not the outright allegiance, of many Third World countries and liberation movements.

It was mainly because of China's perceptions of a Soviet threat to her own security that she placed her strategic interests under the wing of US deterrence – this despite her continued antagonism to American liberal democratic ideology and US interventionism. As a result of detente with Washington, Beijing further toned down her proselytizing and practically all forms of support for national liberation movements and struggling communist parties, particularly in her immediate region. To frustrate any expansion of Soviet influence in the region following American defeat in Indochina, she chose to support the Khmer Rouge regime and later the anti-Vietnamese resistance in Kampuchea. She persistently sued for improved relations with the staunchly anti-communist regimes in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), and worked to diffuse any tensions in the Korean peninsula that might spark confrontation with the US. Up until the momentous summit meeting held between Deng Xiaoping and Mikhail Gorbachev last June, China's anti-Soviet position was the fulcrum on which hung the balance of power in Southeast Asia.

## **Implications of the Maoist World View for the Philippines**

China's interest in the Philippines as a hotbed of revolution against imperialism and colonialism preceded its interest in the establishment of bilateral relations with the Marcos government. The Philippine Republic was hostile to the communist regime in China from 1949 until the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1975. This hostility was particularly active during the Korean War and the Indochina conflict when the two countries fought on opposite sides. The large presence of American troops in Clark

and Subic were part of the American strategy of communist containment and, therefore, deemed hostile by China.

Meanwhile, the 1968 establishment of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines signaled the escalation of the Philippine revolution against US imperialism and the feudal ruling class. The subsequent growth and expansion of the communist-led national democratic movement in the Philippines could have been seized by China as an excellent opportunity to promote its ideological objectives if it had been so inclined. But China's growing anti-Sovietism took precedence, cautioning China against doing anything to decisively accelerate the pace of a protracted people's war in the Philippines. A communist victory in the Philippines in the 1970s or 1980s could have boosted the stakes for the superpowers in Southeast Asia and possibly brought on any of the following: increased US intervention in the region, increased Soviet influence in Southeast Asia outside of Indochina, the possibility of confrontation between China and the US over the issue of recognition and support for Philippine communists, the dismantling of US bases in Clark and Subic, thus, inviting Soviet actions. Any of these scenarios would have been unpalatable for the Chinese, concerned as they were with maintaining the regional status quo to guarantee their security as well as space for their modernization efforts under the premise of a Soviet threat. Another consideration was China's own uncertainty about the New People's Army's capacity for self-reliant victory. Chinese support for Philippines communists was, therefore, minimal relative to their support for other, more distant liberation movements and most certainly relative to the expectations of the Filipino guerrillas. Since 1975, this support has been progressively declining.

The government of Ferdinand Marcos, taking its cue from US moves to normalize relations with China, decided to explore normalization of ties with socialist countries in the early 1970s.

The normalization of relations with China was done on the basis of the drastically changed balance of forces in Asia in the early 1970s, following US withdrawal from Vietnam, Sino-US rapprochement on the one hand coupled with the worsening turn of Sino-Soviet relations, China's admission to the United Nations, plus the growing popularity of neutrality and non-alignment among Third World countries as exemplified by the 1971 ASEAN declaration of neutrality. The first oil crisis and the resulting recession of the US economy also forced our country to look elsewhere for sources of crude oil, while consolidation of power by the Philippines military after the proclamation of Martial Law gave the Marcos government greater confidence in combating internal insurgency. All these factors helped pave the way for the friendly and mutually beneficial relations we now enjoy with China.

Marcos, the astute politician that he was, played to the hilt the advantages of having friendly ties with all three protagonists – the US, the Soviet Union and China. On occasion, he would speak in nationalist, anti-US intervention rhetoric even while his policies clearly catered to US economic and strategic interests. The early Martial Law policies of agrarian reform and nationalization of strategic industries misled the Filipino people into thinking that the feudal structures would be dismantled along with the expropriation of the oligarchy. There is reason to suppose that, consistent with her own interests, China began to view Marcos as a potential ally against imperialism and social-imperialism, in much the same manner that feudal autocratic governments of other Third World countries were considered progressive for as long as they expressed a modicum of resistance to imperialist intervention.

In other words, if the Chinese argued that the principal contradiction in the world was that between imperialism and social-imperialism on the one hand and the oppressed nations on the other, then the Philippine government along with the rest

of ASEAN, should be included in the broadest anti-imperialist and anti-Soviet social-imperialist united front. China may have been maintaining low-key ties with the Philippine communists. But as far as China is concerned, the anti-feudal, anti-bureaucrat capitalist struggle in the Philippines being waged by the local communist movement takes only secondary importance, if at all.

## **The Philippine World View**

A discussion of the Philippine world view would be a most worthwhile undertaking at this point, to enable us to consciously evaluate our basic philosophy and outlook and see how they coincide or disagree with those of the Chinese. This should rightfully be the focus of a separate paper, and there are certainly more qualified persons to expound on the subject matter. For our purposes, let us simply raise few relevant points.

Historically, the geographic location of the Philippines has cast it into a melting pot of races as well as crossroads of commerce and culture. In contrast to the Chinese, we were exposed to foreign contacts long before we had consciousness as a nation. With the exception of a few cultural communities who have now been marginalized in social and political life, Filipinos have tended to imbibe rather than resist foreign influences.

Our colonial experience has been one attempt after another to change our traditional attitudes and values – first by Christianization, then by Thomasite education, perhaps now by American pop culture, so that today being Filipino means following not one, but several, at many points even conflicting, traditions. The basic world outlook of the Filipino did not indigenously evolve but was imposed from without. Among certain groups in our formidably hierarchical and class-plagued society, specifically the ruling class and intelligentsia, such attitudes have taken root.

For the majority, it continues to be imposed through media and the educational system. To speak of a single Filipino world view, I suspect, is more an expression of an aspiration than a description of reality.

Moreover, despite the relative openness of Philippine society and the massive doses of information we receive from Western sources about international events, Filipinos do not seem to harbor any significant interest in world affairs, nor do we tend to relate events happening outside our borders with our own vital concerns. This has resulted in a propensity to abdicate independent and original analysis of our global environment from the standpoint of our national aspirations, and a strong tendency to adopt the Western and even the imperialist framework as our own.

Nevertheless, the dominant theory of the world shared among Filipinos – dominant particularly because it is advocated by the ruling elite – seems to posit that while being unique in culture and history, the Philippines cannot develop apart from the rest of the world. The key to the forward thrust of society, it is presumed, lies in favorable international conditions and close partnership with the more advanced countries. Since independence, policies of government have hewn closely to the prescriptions of modernization theory popularized by the Western sociologists and adopted by Western and mainstream Filipino economists and political scientists. The development of Third World countries is regarded as a process of drastic social transformation from a traditional agrarian society towards a modern industrial society, a process whereby Western industrial civilization, including their economic systems and institutions of government, diffuse into the non-Western world and become the bases of social progress.

What China sees as imperialist exploitation and oppression are – in the dominant Filipino thinking – positive contributions to development. Not only are they perceived positive, they are assumed requisite to national development.



It is also interesting to note that these attitudes favoring patron-client relations among states, although foreign in origin, do find congruity with certain traditional values we uphold. In interpersonal relations, national politics, as well as foreign relations, Filipinos seem to place greater value on cooperation rather than on self-reliance, on obligations rather than equal rights, on stability rather than justice, on passivity rather than direct action.

Over and above the basic antagonism between Marxist-Leninist doctrine of China and our half-baked liberal democratic ideology, the Philippines has been prone to view China's earlier isolationism and anti-foreignism as irrational and her proselytizing for revolution as some sort of rabble-rousing. On the other hand, from Maoist China's point of view, the Philippines was yet another Third World country still to be enlightened in the ways of liberation, the cradle of an unfinished revolution whose time had not yet come.

## **Current Chinese Thinking under the Period of Reform**

Since the conclusion of the Maoist era and the emergence of Deng Xiaoping as leader, sweeping reforms have been instituted affecting many areas of economic, social and political life in China. Some of these changes directly challenge basic presumptions of the Maoist world view as well as of traditional Chinese thinking. However, just as it is difficult to judge how successfully Maoism supplanted the feudal outlook, it is impossible to gauge at this point the impact of Deng's reforms on the Chinese world view. This is true not only because reforms have been in place only in the last 10 years, but because they face serious economic, political, and ideological challenges. The Tiananmen crisis was the materialization of these new contradictions.

Moreover, the implementation of reforms in China preceded attempts by Party theoreticians to justify them in ideological terms. Only after a decade did Communist Party theoreticians come up with their concept of the “primary stage of socialism.”<sup>4</sup> More recently, Chinese scholars have been elaborating on such subjects as the history of socialist reforms in the world and the development of a Marxist theory of modernization, indicating the desire to come up with a rationale for the reforms from the Marxist perspective. Until the philosophical and historical bases of reform are conceptually developed, the ideological vacuum in China that arose following de-Maoization will persist, and so will the breakdown of socialist morality.

While it is too early to speak of Deng-ist policies as representing a new world view, nevertheless, we note that a new wave of thinking has indeed risen in the last decade. The aspects of reform that can potentially transform the Chinese world view are the following: the reversal of egalitarianism, the surge of materialist culture set in motion by increasing consumerism, and above all, the open-door policy.

China’s open-door policy began in the early 1970s but became full-blown only under Deng Xiaoping. The Chinese leaders insist that the open-door policy is not a temporary or expedient measure designed merely to take advantage of Western technology and capital to boost modernization. Rather, they say, it is a “long-term principle of vital importance which has become a fundamental national policy guiding the effort to make the people prosperous and the country strong.” Moreover, the open-door policy is deemed consistent with what they call the “basic trend of world economic development.” The new thinking asserts that “it is necessary for all countries to develop their economies through commodity trade and exchanges of technology and experience in management in order to supply each other’s needs and learn from each other’s strong points to offset the weaknesses.”<sup>5</sup> Such

attitudes may even herald the beginning of the end of China's long-held anti-foreignism.

In the unofficial view of many Chinese experts, the trend towards economic and technological cooperation, coinciding with the new interest of the superpowers in resolving regional disputes, will diminish the importance of military power in favor of economic and technological superiority. Gorbachev's remarkable efforts towards peace and cooperation may already have turned the tide. China herself has contributed to detente by opting for a policy of "independence" and equidistance from both the US and the Soviet Union since 1982, following a reversal of its "revisionist and social-imperialist" accusations against the Soviet Union. Many Chinese scholars believe that the easing of US-Soviet tensions will help encourage the resolution of Third World conflicts. The creation of a new world order will more than ever be waged as a political battle rather than military one, with even liberation movements opting for political settlement, rather than armed struggle.<sup>6</sup>

These new attitudes are apparently gaining popularity among scholars and researchers in China. The struggle against imperialism, hegemonism, and international power politics remains, alongside the struggle for a new international political and economic order. But the rules of the game are fast changing. And China, gropingly, is anxious to adjust.

This new kind of thinking in China, should it ultimately prevail over the stiff resistance of more conservative elements in Chinese society, will be more in keeping with the Western world view and the dominant Filipino outlook. However, it is also dangerous that so many of us mislead ourselves into thinking that China is completely discarding its old framework. It is not.

Where does the Philippines stand confronted with these developments in China and a rapidly changing regional and global environment? By many indications, we are sadly impervious

to the flux of world history. Historical circumstances may have deprived us of national unity and the chance to define our aspirations as a people. But here and now, the formulation of a Filipino world outlook still seems to be crippled by a leadership with no vision outside the boundaries of personal ambition and no foresight beyond the next scheduled elections. We have yet to come to terms with the neo-colonial realities of our national life, while states younger than ours have long emancipated themselves psychologically from their colonial past.

Great changes are happening around us that may spell survival or ruin, depending on how we employ the advantages in our environment. It would be most unfortunate if we end up clinging to an obsolescent world view when the world has, in fact, already been transfigured. In this sense, there is much to be learned from China.

## Notes

1. Samuel S. Kim. *China, the United Nations and World Order*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 23.
2. Kuang Sheng Liao. *Anti-Foreignism and Modernization in China, 1860-1980*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1984, 1986. This study discusses the role of anti-foreignism as a mass sentiment closely interlinked with the nationalism and the aspirations for modernization of the Chinese.
3. Mao and Khrushchev reportedly had greatly different world outlooks and ideas, leading to a clash of personalities. A major political issue was Mao's polemic over Soviet domination of the international communist movement and hegemony over East Europe. From the economic perspective, Mao's strategies for socialist construction, particularly during the Great Leap Forward, were criticized by the Soviet leadership. But probably the most serious cause of the split were ideological differences. The Chinese and Soviet leaders had opposing views on the question of principal contradiction in the world and the problems of war and peace.
4. Former Premier Zhao Ziyang first expounded on the theory in 1987, when it was officially adopted by the Communist Party but discussion and debate

on its basic proposition have been going on since 1982, chiefly among economists and ideologues. Many such discussions have appeared in *Social Sciences in China*, the journal of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

5. Gao Dichen & Pan Enqi. "China Opens to the World," in Wong Pui-Yee, ed., *China Reforms for Excellence*. Hong Kong: VIP Management Consultants Company, 1986, p 23.
6. Banning N. Garrett & Bonnie S. Glaser. "Chinese Assessments of Global Trends and the Emerging Era of International Relations," *Asian Survey*, vol. 29, no. 4, April 1989.

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