The World of Insecurity and East Asia after September 11.

LEE Samsung

Is Myanmar a Strategic Pawn or an Economic Pivot of China?

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The main thesis of this seminar is to argue that Myanmar is neither a strategic pawn nor an economic pivot of China in the short and immediate term. Since 1988, Sino-Myanmar entente is uneven, asymmetrical, but nevertheless reciprocal and mutually beneficial. The strategic entente and economic ties are a marriage of
The theoretical significance of this topic is to throw light on our understanding as to how and why a small power behaves and interacts vis-à-vis a rising superpower. Can an economically weak, socially fragmented and politically divided weak power like Myanmar, maintain its independence and survive the ambitions of a rising superpower? The usefulness of this seminar is to help us to understand the interaction patterns and processes between a small power versus a bigger power.

Geographical proximity of states does not necessarily connote harmony or equilibrium in the relations between neighbouring states. In fact, China's past relations with its neighbours show that geographical proximity could lead to political conflicts and disputes rather than to maintaining peace and harmony. India and Vietnam are good examples to illustrate political disputes and conflicts between China and its immediate neighbours. Similarly, Myanmar and Thailand’s perennial cross-border dispute is another example of conflicts generated from geographical proximity.

Myanmar-China ties since 1949 is an exceptional case of China maintaining on balance good, cordial relations with its neighbours. In fact, Myanmar is the country in Southeast Asia where China has gained most political influence and strategic presence since 1989. China’s influence is particularly evident at the sub-national grassroots’ dimension, where large numbers of Chinese have migrated to Myanmar’s northern cities, such as Mandalay, Lashio, Bhamo, Myitkyina, etc.

China’s Objectives

Myanmar is an important ‘landridge’ as a trading outlet to the Indian Ocean for China’s landlocked provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan and Guangxi.

Myanmar is a link between South Asia and Southeast Asia. It is important for China’s western development strategy, i.e. southwest silkroad. Myanmar’s geographical position is important for China to extend its military reach into the region, in particular for the PLAN’s two ocean maritime strategy.

Rangoon is important for contending hegemonies between China and India. China wants to check India’s ‘strategic look east policy’ in Myanmar. China’s interests in helping Myanmar establishing intelligence posts along the Bay of Bengal and in the Andaman Sea aims at India.

Myanmar’s Perceptions

Myanmar does not see itself as China’s pawn though the military regime is uncertain about being sandwiched between China-Indian strategic rivalries in the region.

The question how to juggle external criticism and growing external influence with its long history of isolation and xenophobia remains an important challenge for Myanmar. To assume that Myanmar is destined to be a colony of China as a foregone conclusion is a proposition that can be seriously challenged. The military junta is ambivalent and insecure on how to deal with the west from which it needs badly economic assistance and foreign direct investment.

To argue that Myanmar will be a vassal state of a rising external power is to ignore the apparent sensitive Myanmese nationalism, the commitment of the military rulers to preserve territorial integrity and past achievements with dealing with the external powers during the Cold War era.
The Effect of HIV/AIDS and What Zienzele Foundation Is Attempting to Do to Help Children

Prisca NEM APARE

Zimbabwe is second to Botswana in the number of HIV infection rates in the world. Currently, it is estimated that 3000 people die each week due to AIDS in the country. The most affected age group is the 15-49 years of age. The highest rates of infection are found in the 15-19 year age group. The main cause of transmission is heterosexual. Life expectancy has dropped from 65 years to 45 years for men and 50 years from 70 for women.

Among children, AIDS is the number one killer. Seventy five percent of all deaths among children are due to AIDS. Mother to child is the mode of transmission. Thirty eight percent of all pregnant women are HIV positive. Prevalence rates among children under 5 years of age are 40-50% and still rising.

Many school age children are also infected and are developing the disease. Among this age group, mother to child transmission at birth is the main culprit. This is followed by sexual abuse of children (by adults already infected). In some cases, children are caring for sick parents, therefore are unaware of the correct way of protecting themselves during the care giving process.

It is estimated that approximately 600,000 million children have been orphaned in Zimbabwe annually. Many of these children have lost both parents and are being cared for by elderly grand parents. These individuals have little or no resources and the energy needed to raise and care for these children.

HIV/AIDS has caused untold suffering among families. Throughout the country, there is no household that has been left untouched by this pandemic. AIDS has had major effect in food production, numbers of orphans, the number of orphans heading households, economic viability, elderly caring for small children, risky behavior and increase in crime by youths.

Not addressing this problem now, we will be guilty of contributing to the horrific suffering of the most important human resource of the country – the children. We will have failed as leaders, citizens, and families.

Zienzele Foundation was formed with the main aim of assisting AIDS orphans with school, survival skill building, project development, counseling, community support and health, nutrition and environmental assessment.

Not addressing this problem now, everyone will be guilty of contributing to the horrific suffering of the most important human resource of the country – the children. We will have failed as leaders, citizens, and families.

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Presidential Premier : Explaining Mahathir’s Dominance

HWANG, In-won

The year 1998 appears to be another landmark in Malaysian political history. After several years of rumors of leadership conflict within UMNO, Anwar Ibrahim was dismissed from office, expelled from the party and eventually imprisoned under the ISA. These events happened with Machiavellian ruthlessness in September 1998. Anwar’s sacking shocked the nation because such treatment of a Deputy Prime Minister had never
happened before. Even resignation was not part of Malaysian political culture until Mahathir came to power in 1981. During Tunku Abdul Rahman’s era, Tun Abdul Razak was his deputy for the duration of his reign. It was only because of the death of his first deputy Ismail bin Abdul Rahman that two deputies served under Razak. Mahathir was Hussein Onn’s deputy during his administration. To a much greater extent than in most other countries, leadership succession had been institutionalized as an important factor contributing to political stability in Malaysia. But up to now, Mahathir has had four deputies and three of them resigned or were sacked. It is still uncertain whether the fourth deputy will succeed Mahathir as president. It was under Mahathir’s leadership that conflict within top levels of UMNO has become institutionalized to a certain extent.

This paper explores Mahathir’s strategies towards regime maintenance within UMNO during the 1981-98 period. Overall, it seems that there has been a growing concentration of political power in the hands of Mahathir since he came to power in 1981. However, it must also be noted that there have been meaningful changes in Mahathir’s style in consolidating his political grip over the ruling party from moderate checks-and-balances (1981-87), direct control (1987-90), to indirect, but unambiguous, intervention (1990-98). By focusing on changes within the overall continuity in Mahathir’s leadership style in UMNO politics, this paper aims to provide a meaningful background analysis of the recent UMNO leadership crisis, particularly the fall of Anwar.

Humiliation, Realpolitik, Globalization and China’s Taiwan Policy

YE Jiang

To understand China’s Taiwan policy, one has to understand the modern and contemporary Chinese history and Beijing’s current perspective of the global political and economic situation as well.

It is quite obvious to Chinese elite as well as to common Chinese people that the Taiwan issue exhibits all of the worst elements of international power politics and national humiliations for China. In April 1895, after defeating China, Japan forced the Qing government to sign the unequal Treaty of Shimonoseki and forcibly occupied Taiwan. At the end of the Second World War Japan surrendered and promised that it would faithfully fulfill the obligations laid down in the Potsdam Proclamation, then Chinese Government recovered Taiwan. But after the government of People’s Republic of China replacing the government of the Republic of China on October 1, 1949, the KMT ruling clique retreated to Taiwan. When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, the United States sent its forces to the Taiwan Strait to protect KMT regime, thus starting the Taiwan issue which actually is the result of the civil war.

According to Chinese official viewpoint, since the end of the Cold War, the world has moved towards multi-polarity. Obviously, the China’s multi-polarity view of the world reflects a Chinese perception of the international relationship in light of “realism” or “realpolitik”.

But if one only notes the realist characteristic of China’s view of multi-polarity world without
considering its other features, one cannot fully understand the Chinese foreign policy in the post Cold War international community, and its Taiwan policy in particular. In fact, there are some liberal elements in China’s multi-polarity view that soften the reapolitik elements. The liberal elements resulted mainly from an acceptance of the globalization argument regarding a global economy.

Guided by multi-polarity view with liberal elements China’s Taiwan policy contains four major policy components. The first is the One-China principle, which means the separation of Taiwan from China can never be tolerated. The second is the approach of peaceful negotiations as the first choice in reunification and the promotion of economic and cultural exchanges as the forerunner of political reunification. The third is “one country two systems” principle which accepts the legitimacy of the capitalist system in Taiwan. The fourth is to reserve the use of force as the last resort in China’s reunification. Obviously the first and the fourth policy components are generated from the realistic aspect in China’s view of multi-polarity, while the second and the third from the liberal aspect.

With the interaction of these four policy components, Beijing actually prefers to maintain the status quo across the Taiwan Strait in the near future and wishes to reunify China in a peaceful way in the end.