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Hegemony or Leadership? Chinese Dilemma

Summary. The author analyzes the terms “hegemony” and “leadership”, in reference to international relations. His deliberations are based on the People’s Republic of China as a case study situated on a large global forum. He draws our attention to the phenomenon in modern diplomacy, through the vanishing of the term “hegemony” which is replaced with the more soft-sounding term “leadership”. This indicates a change of the old paradigm of the ruling position in favour of *primus inter pares*.

Keywords: hegemony, leadership, global power, security

1. Introduction

Looking back, even 40 years ago, an architecture of strategic global powers seemed to be very simple. Such a structure was more or less bipolar. The dynamic of changes that challenged the end of XXth century caused that the World became not only multipolar, but rivalry as a driving force within international relations. It is obvious, that States have their own interests and efforts to achieve them is the main source of contradictions. The States do not quit national interests even they propagate solemn obligations to participate within international collaboration for mutual benefits. The best example is the European Union with all newest turbulences. Within that great game of interests take part, first of all, countries with a dominant economic position as for instance the United States of America, People’s Republic China (further called as China), the United Kingdom, the Federal

Republic of Germany and others do not forget on Russia. This last one especially does not want to loose its ancient position as a superpower, at least within political and military sphaera. Such dynamic of changes is a feature of our contemporary times. A feature, that made the World less safe, more complicated, but at the same time more exciting. It is less foresighting, but even that very interesting providing new scientific progress that makes us closer to each other. Closer not only through global network but as well as growing up mobility of people and great migrations.

2. What difference between “hegemony” and “leadership”?

Within international policy, since centuries we have to deal with two words: “hegemony” and “leadership”. Both of them have own accepted meaning not only in scientific research, but political practice as well. In majority of dictionaries “hegemony” means leadership, domination or governing, especially one nation or political group over another. In Polish language dictionary „«hegemony» of a certain state, organisation or social group means their ascendancy over others [Słownik... 2007: 87]. In a similiar spirit word «hegemony» is defined in Great Oxford Encyclopedia [Wielka Encyklopedia... 2008: 138], as well as in French Dictionary Paul Robert [Robert 1980, Vol. I: 510], and even in German language, already at the beginning of XXth century [Herders... 1905: 255]. The word «leadership» means leading certain group of people [Słownik... 2007: 358] independently of its size always somebody stands over. David A. Lake in his study on leadership, hegemony and international economics rightly has observed, that in scientific research in substance we have two theoretical methods: theory of leadership and theory of hegemony [Lake 1993: 459]. It has to be admitted, that both methods dovetails same attchement to positivism, that shifts on functioning of the World economy. In accordance to Lake, theory of leadership is based on theory of goods and is looking for explaining international stability and security in a form of creating international economic structure. What about the theory of hegemony, it is focused on different, structurally linked preferences in foreign trade, and trial of explanation economic openness, defined as a sum of free trade and protection ist elements of foreign economic policy of the biggest state of a system [Lake 1993: 461] Steven W. Mosher points, that in fact Chinese were first that introduced idea of hegemony into modern diplomatic vocabulary. He stands on a position, that it happened during secret visit of Henry Kissinger in Beijing in 1971 [Mosher 2007: 21]. I think, that Mosher carried things too far, because as it was already indicated, a word «hegemony» was already in use. May be he wanted to emphasise, that in time the then Vietnam’s conflict, and potential threat from

the side of the Soviet Union in relations with China, it was formulated that part of talks in a manner of indicating will of China to be active for its independently survival do not regarding the possibility of mutual Chinese – U.S.A. collaboration to stop the conflict in Vietnam. There is no doubt, it was a great turning point within international relations. In September 1971 at the United Nations Ambassador from Beijing replaced the Ambassador nominated till that time by Taipei. The People's Republic of China replaced Taiwan and appeared a real successor of a great history, that has been not deprecated in spite of cultural revolution.

3. Bearing in mind the Past and looking ahead

Henry Kissinger preparing Nixon's visit in China (in 1971) remembers how during mutual talks with Zhou Enlai, Chinese Statesman emphasised:

“We are two nations on both sides of Pacific, you with 200 years history, and we scarcely with 20 years, dated to New China creation. So we are younger than you. What about our ancient culture, it is true that every country possesses it – Indians in the United States of America and in Mexico, Inca Empire in South America, that was more ancient than China. It is a pity, that their Scriptures are not preserved, but are lost. When we talk about Chinese history, particular note should be taken on script, carrying on the heritage of four thousands years based on historic relicts. It advantageously affects unity and development of our nation” [Kissinger 2014: 255].

Then it was underlined continuity, that consacred his attention Hu Jintao in his speech on XXVIII Congress of the CPC (8 November 2012): We should develop promotion system of traditional culture and promotion of exceptional Chinese culture. We should enlarge and standardize use of the official Chinese language [Hu Jintao 2013: 65]. Revocation to Chinese language as a keystone of an unity of the State and all nationalities living in China is extremaly important for building national identity. This is in fact new accent within state policy dimension.

Hegemony in its essence is a very complex problem. Very often it is considered on a military or economic platform and later referring to politics. In the meantime it should be recognized as geopolitical issue, just because geometry of power is changing dramitically. Those changes cause necessity of foreign policy adaptation by main actors referring to current situation, and do not looping own visions of strategic goals achievements. What more, goals recognized by consecutive governing parties as priorities of the national policy. Power of those elites is examined in a context to what extent position of the state is strengthened or weekend on international arena. Nowadays' shift of generations in ruling party in China has nothing to deal with personal matter, but in fact it is a shift to achieve constantly

the position of a superpower. Positive feature of those changes is sustainability indicating state unity. This unity is a watchword of the present Chinese governing elite. In already mentioned speech, Hu Jintao emphasised success of a doctrine "one country and two systems" (to be sure he has in mind Hong Kong and Macao), but he also underlined that „We have to continue to refer to principle of one China. Chinese territory always has been indistributable, and no one going to its partition shall be tolerated [Hu Jintao 2013: 91].

Looking at such statements and taking into account strategic vision of China's reunification we find, that it is nothing new in international relations. Such doctrine of the reunification had always the Federal Republic of Germany patiently waiting for a favoring moment to realise it. An it happened, Utopia was realised. In a long-run perspective it is expected that Taiwan will reunite with Continental China in a peacefull process, because it will be no other way to continue high level of development and looking for a higher growth.

In a research of international relations significant position takes place super power's position. Public opinion is highly interested who is assessed as a super-power, taking into account as very important military aspects. In Europe last tensions between Ukraine and Russia on the East of Ukraine remarkably influence this interest. One of the important indicators is Global Power Index showing the position of main military powers in the World.

Table 1. Global Firepower Index – 2016

No.	Country	Index
1.	United States of America	0.0837
2.	Russia	0.0964
3.	China	0.0988
4.	India	0.1661
5.	France	0.1993
6.	United Kingdom	0.2164
7.	Japan	0.2466
8.	Turkey	0.2623
9.	Germany	0.2646
10.	Italy	0.2724
18.	Poland	0.3909

Source: www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp [11.11.2016].

The value of this index is stronger being near zero (but in fact unattainable). There is no doubt, that nuclear potential and possible threat of its use, are the most important factors providing the military power of a state. The Arms Control Association monitors the problem and published the latest data as below in Table 2.

Table 2. Estimated global nuclear warhead inventories – 2016

No.	Country	Total	Retired	Stockpilled	Deployed
1.	Russia	7300	2800	4500	1796
2.	United States of America	7100	2500	4571	1367
3.	France	300	—	—	—
4.	China	260	—	—	—
5.	United Kingdom	216	—	—	—
6.	Pakistan	140	—	—	—
7.	India	110	—	—	—
8.	Israel	80	—	—	—
9.	DPRK	—	8	—	—

Source: www.armscontrol.org/print/2566 [10.11.2016].

Bearing in mind what is shown above China has not significant nuclear potential, but it is equal to India and Pakistan together. Making a lot of problems Democratic People's Republic Korea has only 8 warheads, but in spite of all circumstances it's rather under control. Comparing other military potential China has sufficient capacity to defend own territory. Chinese government is fully aware, that it is urgent need to provide modernization to the army. At the XVIII Congress of the CPC Hu Jintao underlined application of IT as a goal of military modernization [Hu Jintao 2013: 87]. Obviously, as every other country, China as well updates its war doctrine emphasizing its defensive character, but develops various kinds of security especially „maritime, outerspace or cybersecurity”, but as the most important military task is recognized „to gain local wars in informatic epoch” [Hu Jintao 2013: 86]. It's natural that modernization of military potential is associated with serious expenditures, as well as with R&D in very sophisticated areas of science including first of all IT sector. IT sector is strongly linked with possible cyber conflicts. Contemporary battlefield does not require use of the nuclear warheads as an instrument of a deterrence doctrine. It should be sufficient to paralyse command centres by a cyberattack. Such threats could also comprise satellite systems, electronic systems of Stock Exchange data transmissions or attack on banking or energy control systems. The World is in fact always on always in the global network and slowly is going to loose efficient control over it. May be it is one of the reasons to block in China fully free access to the Internet, understanding arising threats from this sector. It is linked as well with level of awareness of people and heavy daily problems of the Chinese society, as a special dimension of social security. China observes very carefully all on-going processes of the World and is not staying aside but play active role. The growth of security level and indication on potential threats for China, it favours birth of patriotic attitudes and higher level of Chinese army training. Certainly it is not that level of a Great March period, but recognized serious military power. China despite political rethoric rejecting

idea of hegemony in fact is going to be a hegemon. The President Xi Jinping (in his speech in Berlin) has calmed Asian public opinion, alarmed with development of Chinese army (three weeks earlier Chinese government announced increase of the military expenditures on 12.2%) [Bloomberg News 2014].

4. Economic dependence as a tool for regional or global leadership that's the question

Military power does not come from nowhere. Its fundamentals creates national economy. China manages better as the Soviet Union with economic problems. This state did not pretended, as the Soviet Union did, to the role of a hegemon. China well understood, that the arms race in not well developed country will cause real collapse. All undertaken reforms slowly made a country better prepared to the present global position. At that time China reserved for itself a position of leader of the Third World launching doctrine of the "World's Town and the World's countryside". That's why China has better relations with that part of the World than most of highly developed countries. Chinese leaders have been aware, that people do not live only with ideology and therefore such impressive programmes of Deng Xiaoping, allowed to give enormous upswing to the Chinese economy, and later to formulate idea of a Chinese Dream. This upswing based on the economy of scale, however not free market economy, brought effect of an increase of production and export. China is a trade phenomenon on the World's scale. The growth of export caused essential change in geography of the World's trade. The next effect is strong dependence of many countries of the Chinese economy not only being importers but as suppliers of the raw materials to the huge Chinese manufacturing industry. Previously Chinese goods were a symbol of cheap and weak products. Nowadays customers noticed, that it is a wrong way to see Chinese export as bad quality market. Many international companies despite of critics that the workers in China do not have not only decent salaries but as well conditions of work are very hard, locate own production to be more competitive. The World with a surprise observed, that Chinese government did not reject opinions on heavy job conditions including environmental problems, and what more launched own programmes to improve the situation to realize expectations of people and to show that Chinese Dream should be a goal of Government and society.

For certain countries dependence of Chinese economy is really serious problem. Interesting analysis has been made by Kenneth Rapoza. He listed 10 the most depended countries of Chinese economy, and to our surprise only one on the list (Brazil) does not belong to Asia and Pacific region.

Table 3. Top 10 China Dependent Countries

No.	Country	Size of dependence
10.	Indonesia (IDX -21.7%)	China accounts for roughly 10% of Indonesia's exports, equivalent to 2% of its GDP
9.	Thailand (THD -16.21%)	China accounts for 12% of Thailand's exports and 7% of its GDP
8.	Malaysia (EWM -20.4%)	Getting up there. China is 12% of Malaysia's exports and 10% of its GDP
7.	Brazil (EWZ -33.6%)	China is basically 18% of Brazil's exports and its single biggest foreign market for made in Brazil. But as far as GDP, China accounts for 2% of that
6.	Peru (EPU -31.4%)	China is 19% of Peruvian exports and roughly 4% of its GDP
5.	Japan (EWJ +11.83%)	China is also 19% of Japan's exports and 3% of its GDP
4.	Chile (ECH -17.3%)	China is 23% of Chile's export market and around 8% of its GDP thanks to copper trade
3.	Republic of Korea (EWY -2,6%)	China is 25% of Korean exports and roughly responsible for 11% of its GDP
2.	Taiwan (EWT -9.56%)	26% of its exports and a whopping 16% of its economic output are dependent on China
1.	Australia (EWA -13.4%)	Iron ore has made China account for 34% of Australia's exports worldwide. China accounts for 6% of Australian GDP

Source: Kenneth Rapoza [2015].

Manufacturing and selling abroad is not an only goal of Chinese strategy. China is enlarging Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and the most interesting market is the U.S.A. American administration created a lot of barriers for imports from China and that's why Chinese capital is investing to manufacture inside the U.S.A. to be free of customs and near final customer. However American business and politicians draw the attention to the problem as it has been reported to the Congress of the U.S.A. [Morrison 2013]. Aspiration to be the biggest has been realised by the dethronement U.S.A. in foreign trade (without services) achieving value of 3.87 trillion USD against American 3.82 trillion USD [China Eclipses U.S. 2013]. But in fact it is still insufficient to reach position of a hegemon on a global scale. The Chinese economy accounts still a half of American value and has no one real own Chinese Brand to be recognizable. Anyway it is already sufficient to be "regional hegemon" in Asia. May be such a difference induces China to disinclination of use a word "hegemon". A patience to achieve own

goals is a virtue of Chinese people. It is admirably to compare this with a lack of patience among European politicians.

Taking into account leadership there are different reasons to be recognized as a leader. For practical assessment there are accepted such factors as power, authority, vision of development, organizational efficiency, but as well as capacity to achievement common profits for all members of the group. China is already significant participant of multilateral international collaboration. Régine Perron is right, that “this openness on the World is based on Mao Dzedong policy Fundamentals” [Perron 2014: 58]. However China crossed over long years of evolution its approach to multilateralism to achieve today’s success. First of all, no important how it could be assessed, China is a leader of the BRICS group. The leader that wants to be in a shadow but everyone feels its leadership. Slowly, but remarkably, China avoids a word “hegemony” as for instance in Hu Jintao’s speech: “Come into sight signs of growing hegemonism, power policy and neointerventions as well as local conflicts” [Hu Jintao 2013: 94]. Nevertheless to have more influential position within international community China inspired creation, and realized this project, the New Development Bank to counterbalance influence of the IMF and the World Bank.

Bearing in mind already made remarks it will be a mistake do not draw our attention to very open statement where China is going to? “China is against hegemony and power policy in all its forms, it does not make any interventions in foreign countries and will never aspire to hegemony or expansion” [Hu Jintao 2013: 96-97]. Of course it means as well, that China will never resign of all actions to “maintain sovereignty of China, security and development of own interests and will never knock down under any external pressure” [Hu Jintao 2013: 96]. Very strong statement, that shows already feeling being strong enough to say what the country is. A hegemony always causes recognition it by others. It is a slowly process from leadership, dominant position and in a natural way reaches a role of hegemon. It is obvious, that Chinese leaders are fully aware of that and as well as take into account complicated geopolitical situation. Following Kotkin’s remark, that “The geopolitical environment, meanwhile, has become only more challenging over time, with continuing U.S. global supremacy and the dramatic rise of China” [Kotkin 2016: 3]. In any case Russia is the neighbour country of China and it determines bilateral relations. What more Russia lost its supremacy in Central Europe and is looking for a strong position on the Pacific. That’s why Russia and China have concluded “strategic partnership”. Paradoxically it strengthened more position of China than Russia. China launched great initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (shortly referred to as the Belt and Road) [Vision and actions 2015].

The Government of China emphasizes, that „The Belt and Road Initiative is in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. It upholds the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence” [Vision and action 2015: 9]. It is more than clear, that China does not want to be called as a hegemon, but rather “primus inter pares”. Emphasizing background of the Belt and Road Initiative “China is committed to shouldering more responsibilities and obligations within its capabilities, and making greater contribution to the peace and development of mankind” [Visions and action 2015: 8]. For that responded the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Jacob J. Lew: “Sustaining U.S. leadership and adapting it to the challenges of our times remain indispensable. U.S. influence in a changing world will increase as the United States shares with emerging economies such as China both benefits and the responsibilities of managing the global economic and financial system” [Lew 2016: 57].

5. Conclusions

Looking at this swordplay one can make some conclusions. First of all it is observed disinclination to the word “hegemony”. In a diplomatic sense it sounds rather negative and should be better to avoid it to maintain mutual confidence.

Secondly, at the beginning of XXIst Century, countries have become more interconnected by multilevel diplomacy. Wrong experiences from the Past have made countries and people more aware what “hegemony” is. So such careful change of phraseology is like a soft-power within international community.

Last but not least, the old paradigm designating to a super-power position through certain number of nuclear warheads does not exist anymore. It is rather replaced by “leadership” towards sustainability in a turbulent World’s economy. That’s why China expects the recognition its “leadership” not “hegemony”. The word “leadership” is more soft-sound and become a political brand within international relations. And as a “Brand” has its value and price indeed.

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Hegemonia czy przywództwo. Chiński dylemat

Streszczenie. Autor analizuje znaczenie słów „hegemonia” i „przywództwo”, odnosząc oba do relacji międzynarodowych. Rozważania są oparte na studium przypadku Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej. Zwraca się w nich uwagę na zjawiska zastępowania we współczesnej dyplomacji terminu „hegemonia” pojęciem bardziej miękko brzmiącym „przywództwo”.

Słowa kluczowe: hegemonia, przywództwo, mocarstwo, bezpieczeństwo.