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International experience in conflict resolution: US-China conflict of interests

La experiencia internacional en la resolución de conflictos:
el conflicto de intereses entre Estados Unidos y China

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ABSTRACT. This article aims to characterize international political conflicts that have lasted for millennia on a civilizational, social, or geopolitical basis, which are insufficiently studied and analyzed despite their duration. This study aims to find an effective way to resolve a conflict of interests using the example of the US-China conflict. The authors determine that researchers of this issue must engage both the methodological and their political position, presenting a personal view. This study states the importance of understanding how best to avoid and, at some stage, try to prevent the spread of conflict.

KEYWORDS: China; conflict management; international conflict; international organizations; national interest; United States

RESUMEN. Este artículo pretende caracterizar los conflictos políticos internacionales que se han prolongado durante milenios sobre una base civilizacional, social o geopolítica, que son insuficientemente estudiados y analizados a pesar de su duración. Este estudio pretende encontrar una forma eficaz de resolver un conflicto de intereses utilizando el ejemplo del conflicto entre Estados Unidos y China. Los autores determinan que los investigadores de esta cuestión deben emplear tanto lo metodológico como su posición política, presentando una visión personal. Este estudio afirma la importancia de comprender la mejor manera de evitar y, en algún momento, tratar de prevenir la propagación del conflicto.

PALABRAS CLAVE: China; conflicto internacional; Estados Unidos; gestión de conflictos; interés nacional; organizaciones internacionales

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Introduction

All state actors of the modern international community make maximum efforts to prevent and predict all the possible causes of international conflicts. New alliances are formed to combat existing threats, and specific reforms are made. International and regional organizations, together with states, are joining forces to combat the spread of these deadly disputes (United Nations, 2021). However, more developed countries cope better and more efficiently.

Nevertheless, differences in mandates, relevant areas of activity, bureaucracy, national interests, and conflicting views on conflict prevention limit effective multilateral action and prevent the parties from joining forces to achieve a common positive outcome. The main reason for failures is, firstly, that each state conducts unilateral activity and pursues only its national interests. It is worth noting that the only common feature of conflict management policies in developing countries is the willingness to link their security policies to development and cooperation. Almost all forces, marked by positive dynamics, seek to play an active role in developing cooperation as an integral part of their policy to find its mission in global governance. However, these forces are not the only bloc (Syrotiuk & Oliynyk, 2021).

Their understanding of conflict management depends to a large extent on strategic culture, historical/cultural proximity to particular regions, and the interests/priorities of national security and foreign policy (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2019). Even though growing forces hold to different approaches and practices to conflict resolution, they have the ability and potential to unite based on shared global interests and under the auspices of international organizations, including the United Nations (Gros, 2021). With the emergence of new security threats provoked by violent non-state actors, and the increasing number of factors that lead to controversies worldwide, the conflicts themselves are changing (Ackermann, 2003). Accordingly, large and developing countries have to manage them differently. In today's complex, unsecured environment, developing countries face several challenges, affecting both their approaches to conflict resolution and the tools they use to manage those conflicts. The current unstable security environment calls for stronger cooperation in diplomatic and military control (Leonova, 2014).

Dorussen and Clayton (2018) stated that managing international conflicts is not aligned with a single policy and can be successfully carried out without coordination between traditional and higher or middle states in the global and regional institutional environment. In the current global governance structure, international conflict management requires a new and more effective institutional framework, new concepts, and a new division of roles between traditional and non-traditional actors (Nazarovska, 2012). In this regard, developing countries can act more quickly and actively in building peace if they use UN initiatives. The initiatives are not based on peacekeeping; they apply existing

conflict management tools and create new tools and mechanisms for conflict management (Smidt, 2020; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2021).

Compared to previous decades, international security issues are now being addressed in more detail and need to be addressed urgently in the short term. Therefore, it is necessary to study how recently occurred “new generation conflicts” have developed in the context of modern transformations in the international environment (Khovpun et al., 2019). A successful example of such a confrontation and attempts to resolve it is the conflict of interests between the two leading countries of the world –the United States and China. Relations between these states have remained one of the most difficult among bilateral relations in the international environment. Over the past 30 years, they have undergone dramatic transformations from hostility and conflict to open dialogue and constructive cooperation (Yuan, 2016). The two great powers have found common ground on trade, investment, and recently security. However, key political issues remain unresolved, and states continue to be on hold (European Commission, 2019).

The rivalry between the two states has become a paradigm of international relations that shapes the actual political, military, and economic development of many other leading countries, and it is likely to continue. However, there is a risk; the strategic rivalry between the United States and China can turn into a multilevel global conflict that poses economic and military threats. China is becoming an economic center, a military power in Asia, and a potential rival to the United States. The conflict between the United States and China is an example of an incredibly complex and multilevel bilateral relationship. The main reason for the long-lasting conflict between the states is that the United States sees the growing influence of China’s foreign policy as a threat to America’s dominance in the international system (Yuan, 2016). In addition, China is now the only country that could threaten the status of the United States, which, in turn, could shake the stability of the international system as a whole. China’s growing ambitions and preferences may make the system incapable of reaching an understanding of governance and leadership, and the world may face a repeat of a world war.

Most experts view US-China relations through the prism of rivalry, given that both states are interested in strengthening their influence. Moreover, their interests and needs are very intertwined. The above may be why this conflict is the most successful example of “new generation conflicts,” characterized by a partial lack of balance of power and the focus on their goals. It is worth noting that the conflict between the United States and China affects almost all spheres of activity, from political to economic. The Taiwanese scientist, Ying-Ming Lee (2011), states that the features of the relations between the two countries are fierce competition, complex cooperation, mutual restriction, and interconnectedness, indicating a completely new era in the formation of the international relations system. According to Lee (2011), the modern world is almost in a state of soft war, differ-

ent from the former hard ones. Sino-American relations cannot become confrontational, like Soviet-American relations during the Cold War. Nor can they be allied like US relations with Japan, Europe, and Britain (Kapitonenko, 2020).

There is no doubt that the settlement of any conflict, especially at the interstate level, involves a strategy. Therefore, its resolution requires, first of all, understanding the reason for its lack of resolution and further development. It is a known fact that the United States and China have constantly been trying to establish relations through peace talks. Unfortunately, new obstacles appear every year that hinder settling the conflict between the states. The issue of security acquires incredible significance in the conflict of interests between the United States and China. China seeks increasingly to ensure its security, especially to prevent offensives from the sea, where the United States remains the absolute world leader after World War II (China Office of the Historian, 2021; Central Intelligence Agency, 2020).

The United States has also accused China of exporting dangerous weapons and missile technology to countries such as Pakistan and North Korea. However, tensions have eased somewhat with China's recent announcement of a plan to limit missiles and other dual-use technologies exports. However, given the United States' plan to build a missile defense system, China's eagerness to improve its nuclear capabilities will significantly influence the beginning of difficult times for the international environment (Chunshan, 2021). The security dilemma is one of the most complicated issues in current relations between countries in terms of international relations. The essence of the dilemma is that the more one state is armed to ensure national security, the more other states feel threatened and begin to arm themselves as well. Such a situation calls into question any peace agreements and destroys trust between states.

It is worth noting that relations between states are often influenced by external sources. For example, the war on terrorism, which, unfortunately, remains one of the most crucial problems of our time, has provided Sino-US relations with a firmer footing (Johnson, 2017), somewhat increasing the potential for a successful and sustainable dialogue. Thus, common strategic concerns on terrorism have led to tangible cooperation where China has supported the US-led campaign in Afghanistan, the exchange of intelligence, and repression against Islamic separatists in western China.

However, the basis for negative development remains. A single case could shift relations in another direction, like a downed spy plane or a statement by the President of Taiwan in favor of independence. This instability remains a flaw in relations and US policy towards China in general. In this case, the settlement of the conflict largely depends on the stability or instability of the existing system of international relations and economic or social factors rather than the influence of external factors (Kniazieva et al., 2021). First of all, resolving any conflict depends on whether the states involved strive to ensure a peaceful existence for themselves and others (China Office of the Historian, 2021). The United

States will always speak out for its interests and values in relations with China, including its areas of trade, international security, and human rights. Furthermore, one should not be afraid of a strong and prosperous China; the best way to make China an enemy is to treat it as an enemy.

By 2021, China and the United States had already managed to build a relationship benefiting both countries and enhancing Asia and the world's stability. Enhanced ties and collaboration have allowed for the development of a stream of ideas, overcoming the United States' mistrust and misunderstanding of China while encouraging growth and, where possible, political change in both countries. Many Americans tend to think of US-China relations in terms of one issue like trade, Taiwan, or human rights. However, without diminishing the importance of these specific issues, American politicians should not allow any of these issues to dominate, disrupt, or disrupt any relationship.

There are so many questions ahead that will result in difficult periods and a clash of opinions. China is a large country with a growing economy, the future of which can be marked by both development and turmoil. If we pursue a policy that reflects the breadth of common interests between the two nations, we can hinder the turmoil that has plagued relations between the two nations over the past 30 years (Kurnishova, 2017).

As for the foreign intervention in the conflict between the United States and China, it is necessary to remember that Sino-US rivalry has a significant impact on the European Union and its member states. Europe's attitude toward China has become more critical. Other countries no longer see China as merely a negotiating partner for different interests or an economic competitor. The gap between Europe and China is enormous in matters of values, political system, and international order. Therefore, no matter how formidable the efforts are, overcoming such a gap is extremely difficult. Europe's relations with the United States as a strategic partner have been and will remain much closer. Furthermore, US policy is now aimed directly at attracting more and more participants who could take the American side (Coppeters et al., 2004). Thus, the strategic rivalry between the United States and China risks escalating into a multi-layered global conflict, which poses an economic and military threat. Compared to previous decades, the issue of constant interaction between states has become more critical. If economic and security interests are on an entirely new footing, the level of integration may decline to such an extent that it can turn into a kind of deglobalization (Yelchenko, 2017).

If the strategic rivalry between the United States and China is transformed into protracted global conflicts, it will lead to a kind of deglobalization. It will result in two parallel orders, one dominated by the United States and the other by China. If the conflict between the two countries continues to escalate and accelerate the bipolarization of the international system, the basis for global multilateralism may disappear. Moreover, the global conflict between the United States and China will compel Germany and the

European Union to rethink the extent to which and under what conditions they should support the United States against China. One thing is clear; the strategic rivalry with China will form the primary vector of US foreign policy.

Materials and methods

Settling most conflicts is impossible without the use of special methods to determine and understand the nature of a conflict and provide its possible recurrence in the future (Nye, 2008; Wallensteen & Möller, 2003; Yermeeva, 2017). The Pareto principle or the 80/20 is one of the effective methods used to analyze a conflict situation; it states that 80% of the result is 20% of the effort for many phenomena. The principle is named after Vilfredo Pareto, an Italian economist who noticed in 1895 that about 80% of Italy's land belonged to 20% of the population. The initial purpose of applying this principle is to resolve the internal conflict between the population and ruling elites.

Its main characteristics are as follows. First, the results are achieved through less effort; the greatest labor costs are simultaneously a ballast and the basis for building the final result. Secondly, pre-predicted results often become irrelevant as soon as they are achieved in practice. The main task is to make the correct final choice and apply it in the actual course of the conflict, meaning that the most satisfactory result can be achieved by choosing the correct minimum of specific actions from the hundreds proposed. The Pareto principle is a method for eliminating unnecessary actions to obtain the optimal solution (Koch, 1999).

To develop this method, one should first determine the main reasons, problem, and objective. In this case, the problem was the conflict of interest between the United States and China. The main reasons were the struggle for leadership in the international environment and the formation of a "new world order." Thus, the participants in the conflict were the United States, China, and international organizations. Our objective was to find the best solution to the conflict using the Pareto principle. Table 1 summarizes the above.

Table 1. Participants in the conflict

Main Participants	Reasons	Objectives
The United States	State aims for world leadership and winning over more territories through diplomacy.	Strengthen its position globally and end the conflict.
China	Dissatisfaction with US policy and the desire to satisfy its national interests.	End of the conflict. Obtain superpower status and recognition in the international arena.
International organizations	The emergence and development of an increasing number of international conflicts. Interest in a peaceful settlement of the conflict.	Final settlement of the conflict through peace negotiations between the states, preventing its spread worldwide.

Source: Created by the authors.

Using the Pareto optimality principle, we chose the optimal solution for this problem, working out previously defined alternatives. The solution alternatives were the following:

- A1- The cessation of extreme influence on states directly dependent on US foreign policy.
- A2- Reforming the existing security system in the states.
- A3- Ending the use of force to combat growing challenges and threats.
- A4- Revision of each state's foreign policy.
- A5- Introduction of new ways to combat the growing influence of foreign countries.
- A6- Ensuring the continued peaceful existence of the state through reforms.
- A7- Application of preventive conflict prevention methods.
- A8- Increase the number of peacekeeping missions to assist states in conflict.
- A9- Development of each state's latest methods of conflict prevention.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of one or another of the above solutions, we needed certain evaluation factors - criteria. From a number of criteria, we selected five main criteria and based our research on them. We identified the following among them:

- K1- Time spent searching for ways to resolve the conflict.
- K2- Psychological readiness of the population and the state.
- K3- The potential expended trying to prevent conflict.
- K4- Economic benefits for both states.
- K5- The impact of alternatives on the further development of events

Table 2 shows the solution alternatives vis-a-vis the criteria.

Table 2. Solution alternatives

	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5
A1	7	8	6	7	10
A2	9	7	9	6	8
A3	5	10	7	8	5
A4	8	9	10	6	9
A5	4	6	4	9	6
A6	6	8	8	10	10
A7	5	7	9	7	8
A8	10	9	7	9	7
A9	8	5	8	6	9

Source: Created by the authors

The following certain values were determined for the criteria:

$$8:(8+10+9+7+9) = 0.18$$

$$10:43=0.23$$

$$9:43=0.20$$

$$7:43=0.16$$

$$9:43=0.20$$

Table 3 presents the values obtained for the alternatives using the formula: $A_n \cdot \beta_n$

Table 3. Values of alternatives

	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5
A1	1.26	1.84	1.2	1.12	2
A2	1.62	1.61	1.8	0.96	1.6
A3	0.9	2.3	1.4	1.28	1
A4	1.44	2.07	2	0.96	1.8
A5	0.72	1.38	0.8	1.44	1.2
A6	1.08	1.84	1.6	1.6	2
A7	0.9	1.61	1.8	1.12	1.6
A8	1.8	2.07	1.4	1.44	1.4
A9	1.44	1.15	1.6	0.96	1.8

Source: Created by the authors.

Through this principle, we identified the primary and secondary alternatives. We also constructed a hierarchy of alternatives using additive and multiplicative criteria. The additive criterion was established by adding the results of the values of the alternatives obtained by the criteria:

$$A1 = (1.26+1.84+1.2+1.12+2):65.91(\text{sum of alternatives}) = 0.112$$

$$A2 = 7.59:65.91=0.115$$

$$A3 = 6.88:65.91=0.104$$

$$A6 = 8.12:65.91=0.123$$

$$A7 = 7.03:65.91=0.106$$

$$A8 = 8.11:65.91=0.123$$

$$A9 = 6.95:65.91=0.105$$

The resulting hierarchy constructed was: A6; A8; A2; A1; A7; A9; A3.

To establish the multiplicative criterion, we multiplied the results of alternative values obtained by the criteria.

$$A1 = 6.23:47.06 = 0.132$$

$$A2 = 7.21:47.06 = 0.153$$

$$A3 = 3.7:47.06 = 0.078$$

$$A6 = 10.17:47.06 = 0.216$$

$$A7 = 4.67:47.06 = 0.099$$

$$A8 = 10.5:47.06 = 0.223$$

$$A9 = 4.58:47.06 = 0.097$$

The resulting hierarchy constructed was A8; A6; A2; A1; A7; A9; A3.

Results

The data obtained indicate that the additive criterion slightly differs from the multiplicative. The difference lies in the alternative values. For example, the additive criterion shows that alternatives 8 (0.123) and 6 (0.123) are equal. Thus, it is better to apply either A8 or A6 at first; however, the order in which they are used is inconsequential. The multiplicative method shows a difference between the values in A8 (0.223) and A6 (0.216). Consequently, the hierarchy of applying alternatives will change as follows: A8 must precede A6. Therefore, it is necessary to act according to the multiplicative method, which most clearly indicates the order of alternatives and is more sensitive to them. Thus, there must be improvements in the activities of peacekeeping organizations responsible for resolving international conflicts. The United States is the main proponent of fighting for the rights of nations and resolving international conflicts. However, it now faces the essential task of encouraging China to move toward prosperity, freedom, and international cooperation, while recognizing its influential role in the world. The United States and China continue to alternate common interests and misunderstandings on many issues. If both parties commit, based on the experience of the last 30 years, they will manage to build a relationship characterized by depth, openness, and common interests.

A detailed study of the causes and nature of international conflicts allows for predicting and preventing further similar international conflicts and finding effective ways to resolve existing international conflicts. The priority in settling any international conflict task is understanding that they have different dimensions and demonstrate different degrees of suitability for their management. General strategies or approaches applicable in some conflicts may not apply at all in others. Therefore, it is necessary to consider and offer recommendations on the effectiveness of entirely different conflict management methods and strategies and how they can be used to influence the cessation of protracted or even unresolved conflicts.

Understanding that international conflicts do not manifest themselves in a series of separate, unrelated episodes is equally important. Conflicts have a past, which, to some

extent, should help to explore the root causes of disputes. States involved in the conflict should rely on experiences and consider the mistakes that have led to the conflict, its uncertainty, or repetition. Finally, one should remember that conflict management is a rational and conscious decision-making process. The parties of a conflict (with or without the assistance of other states and international organizations) must take steps to transform, deescalate, or end the conflict conventionally. The range of methods and tools for long-term conflict management is broad, including coercive measures, third-party intervention, and multilateral conferences. An effective way to choose the most effective method of resolving an international conflict can be to divide existing methods into unilateral, bilateral (negotiations), and multilateral (third-party intervention). Also important is the role of factors influencing the response choice to the conflict and how certain specific conditions affect the choice of a particular method of conflict management or its final outcome.

In modern conditions, states-parties to conflicts strive to solve this problem through peace negotiations. However, there are currently conflicts at such a stage that traditional negotiations are not enough. Thus, states must sacrifice much of their potential to even have the opportunity to try to resolve a specific dispute. Therefore, strategies should be considered and developed for both conflict prevention and resolution in the event of their occurrence. It is expedient to regard the factors that influence the management of international conflicts.

Furthermore, the nature of the international system, the conflict, and the internal characteristics of the states involved should also be included. The nature of the international system influences the expectations of states and the strategies they can use to overcome a conflict. Features such as the polarity of the international system, coordination patterns, and allocation of opportunities are associated with different approaches to conflict resolution.

Undoubtedly, the approach to the settlement of international conflicts characteristic of recent years will remain the most effective way to prevent their occurrence. This approach is negotiation by which conflicting parties can neutralize their differences through consensus. This technique is a method to fight the conflict or reach an agreement even before the conflict. There are many methods to effectively contest the enemy state and many tips on how to behave in the course of both negotiations and military confrontation. However, the best way to counter international conflicts is undoubtedly to prevent them. In this context, the states' readiness and desire to prevent any disputes play a significant role. However, not all states are willing to sacrifice, for example, their principles and existing laws and directions to simply avoid conflicts with other countries.

Therefore, the main point of positive change may be third parties, which are interested states and international organizations. For instance, organizations like the United

Nations need to push harder for foundations of peace and security, development, and human rights to shift from their current –largely reactive– position to a conflict-oriented approach. Conflict prevention should be understood in terms of outbreak prevention, as well as a continuation, escalation, and recurrence of conflict. Moreover, peacekeeping and sustainable development must function as a single rather than two separate areas as they used to be in the past. Currently, the UN and the World Bank are conducting a joint flagship study on international conflict prevention in an effort to help the system move in a new direction.

Thus, states should primarily understand and sense their potential to prevent and counteract international conflicts. At some stage, they should be ready to mind the interests of other states and not only their national interests, so they can join forces and help resolve a particular international conflict.

Discussion

In studying the emergence and development of international conflicts in constructing a modern system of international relations, an attempt was made to determine the essence and main types of international conflicts. This study identifies the leading causes of conflicts and problems in international conflict prevention, describing the most effective models of conflict resolution using the example of two leading states. The best ways to resolve the international conflict were selected at the final stage of the study, providing detailed insight. This article offers insights into the most successful methods for finding the best ways to resolve international conflicts: the criterion analysis and the Pareto principle. They enabled examining the causes of the emergence and spread of conflicts and choosing the most effective way to counteract and prevent modern international conflicts, using the conflict of interest between the United States and China as an example.

An international conflict should be considered the interaction of two or more elements of the international relations system in pursuit of mutually exclusive or mutually incompatible goals. In international political conflicts, which arise primarily between states and intergovernmental organizations, all the interests of societies are combined and have the most straightforward expression (Galkin et al., 2020). In interstate relations, one can find manifestations of the most general patterns of conflict that affect the course of world development as a whole. The nature of international conflicts has changed significantly since the founding of the United Nations 75 years ago. Currently, conflicts are usually less deadly and often waged between national groups rather than states. Murders are becoming more common in some parts of the world, while gender-based attacks are on the rise.

There are no simple explanations for the causes of conflicts and how they can escalate violence. Understanding the dynamics of internal conflicts requires considering

many specific factors, such as poverty, rapid population growth, the availability of resources, and discrimination against minorities and other social groups. At the present stage, the direct causes of the emergence and development of international conflicts can be economic, territorial, political, ethnic, and even value differences. The process of globalization has influenced the increase in conflicts based on value differences (Chyzhmar et al., 2019). Automatically it has reduced the distance between countries and peoples of different cultures, forcing them to interact more closely and regularly; the greater the involvement of participants in joint activities, the greater the opportunities for conflict (Orlovskiy et al., 2018).

There are many tools used today by the parties to resolve a conflict. In most cases, they are independent or interacting with the United Nations and regional organizations. However, the most effective means is to avoid conflict. In other words, states simply ignore or abandon the conflict, choosing a method where the discomfort of confrontation exceeds the potential reward for resolving the conflict. Improvements in conflict resolution practices have given rise to new methods based on a drastic change in the quality of the situation, often using a third party or some other form of external action. Surprisingly, the United States is the primary propagator of the idea of a democratic system, constantly trying to disseminate its hypotheses on the protection of citizens, civil society's rights and freedoms, and the law as the highest value for all (Nye, 2008). Under these auspices, the United States often acts as a direct mediator in resolving some international conflicts.

It is worth noting that despite successful peacekeeping missions in various countries worldwide to resolve existing conflicts, the United States continues to be a participant in one of the most difficult bilateral conflicts today. The main reason for the long conflict between the states is that the growing influence of China's foreign policy is currently seen in the United States as a threat to its dominance in the international system. Indeed, China is the only country today that could threaten the United States' status, shaking the stability of the international system as a whole. Therefore, as a leading state and a determinant of the main trends in international relations, the United States should become an example and a driving force for other states regarding the emergence and spread of new international conflicts.

It is worth emphasizing the constant and continuous transformation of the conflict between the United States and China. At present, predicting further developments between the two specific states and the world, as a whole is highly challenging. The only viable solution would be the relentless desire to prevent the emergence of even the slightest controversy in the international environment and the development of a concrete plan to settle conflict in the event of its uncontrolled spread. Currently, the influence of globalization, regionalization, and democratization constantly changes the traditional range of international system elements. Given the fundamental changes in the role of state sovereignty, we can conclude there is a fundamentally new system present.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that China's assertive foreign policy and military stockpile challenge US supremacy and power, despite their common interests and intensive cooperation in global and regional issues. The conducted research attempted to determine the best ways to overcome international conflicts using the example of the conflict of interests of these two leading countries. Finally, the article offered some methods to counteract and prevent similar conflicts in the future. The key conclusions of this research are as followings:

1. The primary task in settling any international conflict is to consider that international conflicts have different dimensions and demonstrate different degrees of suitability for their management.
2. In any existing models, maintaining stability will occur through the management of international conflicts; the primary purpose is to maximize their constructive functions. This management is enabled by traditional settlement procedures, considering structural features of the post-bipolar international system.
3. The most effective model for resolving international conflicts is still the negotiations model, based on the equality of conflicting countries that brings them to the status of partners.
4. To avoid the emergence and spread of international conflicts in the future, states should consider the development dynamics of the policies of neighboring states and partner states, as well as their own foreign policy, and respond to new challenges in the international environment in a timely manner.

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