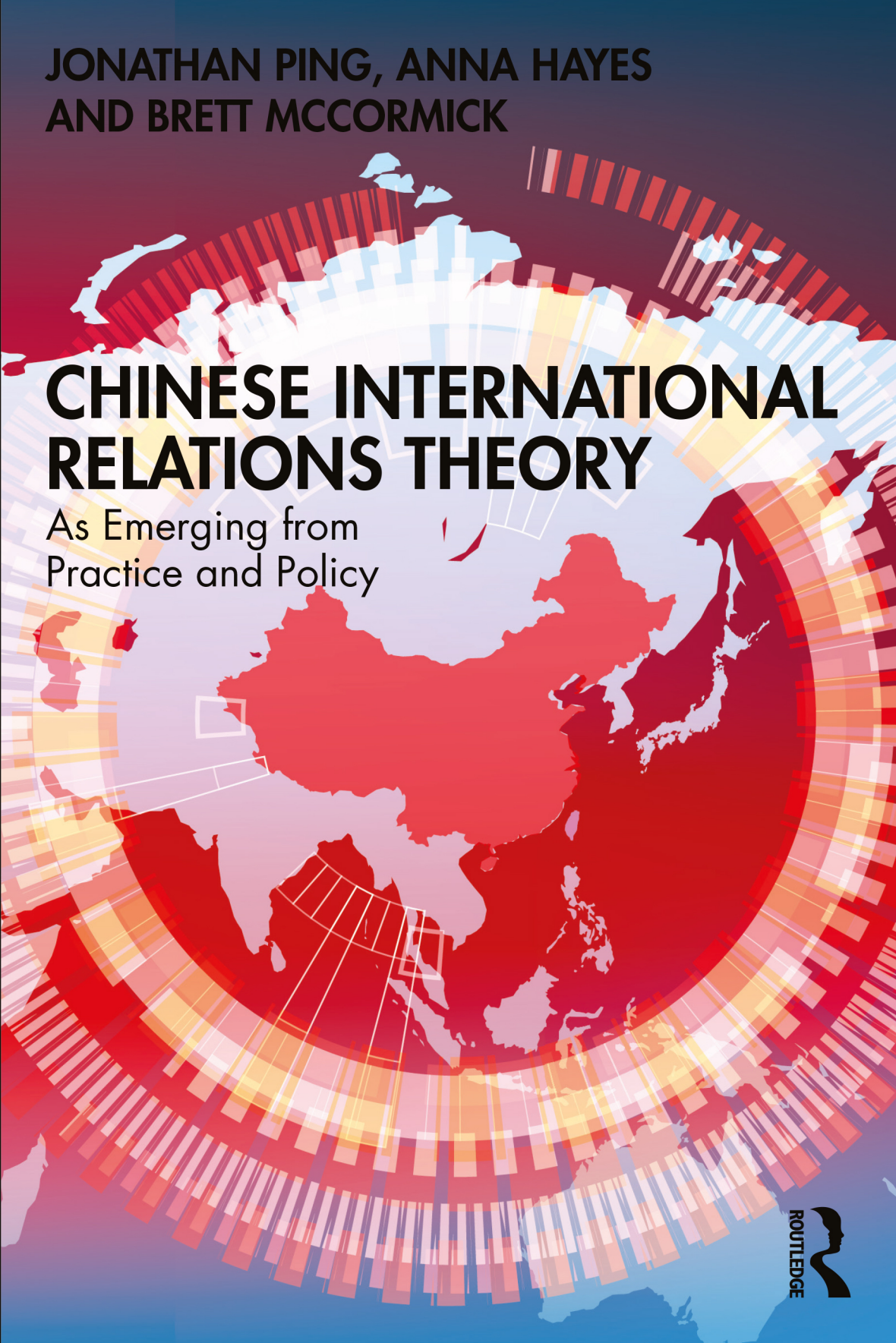
JONATHAN PING, ANNA HAYES
AND BRETT MCCORMICK



CHINESE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

As Emerging from Practice and Policy

ROUTLEDGE

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Edited by Jonathan Ping, Anna Hayes and Brett McCormick

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Acronyms

AAGC	Asian African Growth Corridor
ADIZ	air defense identification zone
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUKUS	Australia, United Kingdom, United States Security Partnership
BCIM	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar
BRI/OBOR	Belt and Road Initiative/One Belt, One Road
CD	China Dream/Chinese Dream
CCG	China Coast Guard
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	China Central Television
CIRT	Chinese International Relations Theory
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DOE	Department of Energy
ECRL	East Coast Railway Link
EDCA	Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
GMD	Guomindang
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JSDF	Japanese Ground Self-Defence Forces
LAC	Line of Actual Control
LRASM	Long-range anti-ship missiles
LSD	Leading small group
1MDB	1Malaysia Development Berhad
MSR	Maritime Silk Road
MDT	Mutual Defence Treaty

MLR	Marine Littoral Regiment
MP	Member of Parliament
NSS	National Security Strategy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAF	Philippine Air Force
PCG	Philippine Coast Guard
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PN	Philippine Navy
POK	Pakistan occupied Kashmir
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SLOC	Sea lines of communication
SOE/s	state-owned enterprise/s
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
THEC	Trans-Himalayan Economic Corridor
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UFWD	United Front Work Department
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US/USA	United States/United States of America
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VFA	Visiting Force Agreement
WIRT	Western International Relations Theory
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1 Towards a Chinese theory of international relations evidenced in practice and policy

Anna Hayes, Jonathan Ping and Brett McCormick

Introductory considerations

The discipline of international relations (IR) grew out of efforts to prevent global conflict and better understand the causes of conflict and war. Critically, in the aftermath of the First World War, it sought to improve diplomacy and increase cooperation among states. Thus, IR is rooted within what might be framed as a Western tradition based on European patterns of state-based interactions globally. As a result, Agnew (2022, p. 25) argues that its foundational assumptions are 'presumed to be universal' despite them being grounded upon a 'limited geographical experience', and this has resulted in renewed efforts by Chinese IR theorists to reshape the scholarly literature so that it includes the Chinese experience. Such an effort also reflects China's growing global power, which provides a strong rationale among Chinese academia, government and policy circles that the Chinese experience and Chinese model of development should be included within the discipline. As a result, such considerations frequently present ideas around how the Chinese outlook on the pattern of international relations is radically different from the Western tradition, historically and in the present era, and is typically framed around highlighting differences rather than seeking out the commonalities. Frequently, this has led to Chinese IR theory (CIRT) being Sinocentric in its nature, while at the same time, Chinese scholars have critiqued Western IR theory (WIRT) as Eurocentric or American-led.

In addition, atop and often eliminating the scholars' views are the People's Republic of China practitioners—the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). As a result, the understanding of CIRT is extremely limited. The limited access of China and its people to the outside world, combined with the unique and opaque government structures led by an elite and aloof leadership, obscures the international community's understanding of how the CCP maintains control and how CIRT influences practices and policy. This is reflected by the erroneous interpretation of Chinese foreign policy by Western scholars and unexpected outcomes as put forward by practitioners that contravene scholars.

Hence, there is a lack of CIRT developed from observation and analysis of the practitioners. A significant theme of this book is the quest to identify theory from CCP practice, policy and precedent and record it as canonical disciplinary

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knowledge of international relations. It enhances the theoretical element across a wide range of critical issue areas, which provides an understanding of China's position and thus will assist in explaining it to the global audience. Through the building of CIRT, China may be accounted for, behavior predicted and useful policy developed. Further, the unique elements of China (for example, history, culture and size), which limit the replication of its successful development since the 1970s, may be overcome through the abstraction of theory, with this being added to the existing predominantly Western-dominated theory of international relations.

A critical feature of CIRT is Sinocentrism. In his analysis of Chinese attempts to sinicize IR theory, Peng (2019) argued that from the 1920s to 1949, CIRT encountered sporadic Sinocentrism and conflicting worldviews between the East and the West. For Chinese scholars, the expansion of the international society was viewed as 'Western aggression', whereas for Western scholars, the expansion of international society was a process of modernization, beginning in the West and spreading out to the rest. However, following the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Sinocentrism became the dominant epistemology within CIRT during the Mao years—except for a small window of time in the 1950s when Soviet IR theory (SIRT) became dominant, during which classical Marxism was cemented within CIRT and the remaining influence of Western IR scholarship inside of China was dismantled. However, this temporary dominance of SIRT ended with the deterioration of Sino–Soviet relations, after which Sinocentrism re-emerged to dominate CIRT, with Chinese communism as the only acceptable knowledge source for CIRT.

In the immediate years after reform and opening-up, younger generations of Chinese scholars challenged the Sinocentric nature of CIRT, again engaging with works by Western IR scholars. The resultant generational conflict between different generations of scholars ultimately ended with the victory of the established scholars over the younger generations, and they reinforced the dominant epistemology within CIRT, which was that of the Chinese communists. Nonetheless, during this period, younger scholars circulated and studied Chinese translations of Western IR scholarship, and their influence was felt within CIRT across the mid-1980s to mid-1990s. However, translations of Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* resulted in tremendous academic debate in China. For over two years, there was a flurry of scholarly dissection of Huntington's work via conferences and publications, and his work was eventually denounced in China. According to Lu Peng, this was a pivotal moment for CIRT among all generations because it 'triggered increasing scepticism of Western theories of IR which eventually resulted in the return of Sinocentrism' (2019, p. 157; see also Su et al. this volume, Chapter 6). It also sparked ongoing concern over the validity of WIRT, which was routinely viewed as 'academic knowledge based on Western experience that served Western national interest' (Peng 2019). For Lu, this resulted in the second wave of the Chinese School Movement, which developed a culture-oriented theory undergirded by both China's ancient and modern historical experiences. However, Lu identifies two approaches within the second-wave Chinese School Movement. The first theorizes modern international relations using ancient Chinese thought and concepts,

while the second seeks to reconstruct 'the Chinese way of making sense of the modern world' using ancient Chinese logic. According to Lu, both have 'risked exaggerating the uniqueness of Chinese experience at the cost of historical accuracy' (2022, p. 158). Additionally, both approaches signal the strong continuation of Sinocentrism within CIRT.

Agnew sees a similar process but breaks down the approaches to CIRT differently, identifying four approaches. They include, firstly, the Pacific Rim approach, which was brightest across the 1980s and 1990s and focused on China's place within the world through the economic opportunities it presented within Southeast Asia and the Pacific Ocean. It theorized that the geoeconomic promise of the Pacific Rim would eventually shift global focus away from the North Atlantic core, instead prioritizing a focus on China within the Asia-Pacific region. The second approach is what Agnew calls the new Orientalist vision, which contains a degree of self-Orientalising in China, whereby Chinese scholars have revived Confucianism within CIRT amid selected, idealized images of China's past. This includes suggestions of applying *tianxia* ('all under Heaven') to the contemporary world as the basis for a 'harmonious' Sinocentric world system. The third approach identified by Agnew is the 'nationalist *geopolitik*' cluster, which looks to the expansionist powers of the 20th century (pre-World War II Germany and Japan) for their inspiration. While less influential in academia than the new Orientalists, this grouping has influenced China's military due to their calls for increased sea power so China can protect its access to global resources. Undergirded by a belief of Chinese exceptionalism, this approach has also seen China adopt a reactive approach to incidents within the Indo-Pacific region—particularly in the South China Sea and East China Sea—with such incidents perceived to be challenges to China's status. The final approach identified by Agnew is what he labels the 'IR with Chinese characteristics' group. They explain Chinese diplomatic practices using traditional Chinese concepts and attempt to reshape IR theory around ancient Chinese philosophical works centred upon the creation of 'harmony' and depicting China as a benevolent power. The 'IR with Chinese characteristics' group also seeks to supplement, or better still, replace the Westphalian system and, in doing so, mine Chinese history for events and concepts that strengthen their position. Common in both analyses of the still-evolving CIRT is the presence of Sinocentrism but also influential elements of IR theory borrowed from outside China.

Contribution of the book

This book has grown out of numerous discussions in Beijing centred upon increasing understanding of CIRT, but it also draws on wider discussions and scholarship of what constitutes CIRT.[1] Many of the contributors to this book were—prior to COVID-19—regular attendees of the East Asia Security Symposium and Conference (EASSC). The EASSC is an invitational event held annually in Beijing across four days. It operates as a Track 1.5 dialogue involving Chinese state and non-state actors, and international participants from over 25 countries. According to Longhini and Zimmerman (2021, pp. 1–2), Track 1.5 dialogues are 'informal

dialogues organized by non-state actors with state-level backing and participation'. They have a wider agenda than Track II Diplomacy dialogues and provide 'access to political power' on par with Track I Diplomacy dialogues. Access to political power and their degree of formality distinguishes Track 1.5 dialogues from Track II dialogues, as the latter are typically informal events that lack such political power (Longhini & Zimmerman 2021, p. 8).

While Track 1.5 dialogues are incredibly valuable within foreign affairs, they are almost completely absent from the scholarly literature for many reasons. Firstly, only a few such dialogues become regular events, so they easily go unnoticed and their impact unmeasured. Secondly, because they tend to be selective, invitational and sometimes (but not always) smaller events, researchers may have difficulties accessing such dialogues, especially across multiple years. One of the key strengths of Track 1.5 dialogues is the discursive space they provide attendees, facilitating both public statements and private discussions between state and non-state actors (Longhini & Zimmerman, 2021). This makes them an important source within international relations research as they provide deeper insights into policy decisions and decision-making processes inside individual states. However, they have also provided contributors important insights into the workings of CIRT and, more recently, how it has adjusted alongside the growing power of Xi Jinping and his goals for China.

The EASSC, beginning in 2001 and hosted by the East Asia Security Centre and the China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing, operates under Chatham House rules, so the identity of quoted sources cannot be disclosed. However, Chinese presenters at the symposium include leading Chinese academics, senior members of the CCP, senior military leaders from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the PLA-Navy, as well as government officials and Chinese Ambassadors. This symposium is invaluable in tracking both change and continuity within Chinese foreign policy and domestic affairs and has platformed diverse Chinese voices and opinions within these important discussions in Beijing. International attendees at these events represent universities, think-tanks, governments, militaries, non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations, facilitating even greater diversity in participants and viewpoints. In addition to working with China Foreign Affairs University, Jonathan Ping, in particular, has attended and organized group discussions and presented at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, the China Institute of International Studies, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences as well as other universities and businesses in China. Numerous members of the broader EASSC also attended, and all members attended the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a press conference and private discussions with the Foreign Ministry spokesperson. These dialogues are incredibly important but have a limited audience due to their invitational nature. The selected quotes and understandings from the symposia contained within corroborate and supplement secondary source materials and extend the symposia discussions to a broader audience. Moreover, the discussions in Beijing have illuminated important Chinese thinking on the shape and form of a CIRT and enabled various contributors to identify CIRT in practice.

Review of selected works on Chinese international relations

Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, profound changes have occurred in both Chinese domestic and foreign policy. These changes influence conceptions of a CIRT with Sinocentrism as an intensified underlying feature. Central to China's foreign policy is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which can be viewed as the CCP's roadmap for China's global resurgence. China is now recognized by the United States of America and an increasing array of other states as a strategic competitor, and within the Indo-Pacific region multiple flashpoints have triggered real concern over the increased potential for a conflict involving China at some point in the future. As a result, there has been increased scholarly attention on how China's rise could disrupt the balance of international relations and, in particular, how the Chinese worldview—as determined by Beijing—may disrupt established norms within the existing rules-based order. Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* is still commonly cited in Chinese academia, as the idea of civilizations and civilizational outlooks holds wide appeal to Chinese scholars due to China's long civilizational history. However, Huntington's notion of a clash is still denounced. In addition, discussions in Beijing have shown that Graham Allison's *Destined for War: Can America and China escape Thucydides' Trap?* has also been influential in shaping Chinese thinking. However, rather than being read as a warning that both China and the United States must do everything in their power to avoid war, it has often felt as though Chinese interlocutors have focused more on the 'destiny' part of Allison's thesis and the view that such a conflict is predetermined or 'destined' to happen if the international order is not remade into what China desires.

Michael Pillsbury's *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's secret strategy to replace America as the global superpower* focuses on the evolution of a CIRT and related strategy and has also clearly been widely read in Beijing, given numerous references to the work by Chinese interlocutors. For Pillsbury, a self-declared former member of the 'constructive engagement crowd', engagement with China over many decades did not lead to the anticipated outcomes of a more peaceful and democratic China. Instead, according to Pillsbury, it has eventuated in a more powerful China that believes—indeed, it has been Beijing's strategy all along—that it could soon replace the United States as the global superpower. Pillsbury argues that to prevent such an outcome, the United States needs to maintain its strategic edge over China and match Beijing's economic and military strategy. Hence, in 2016, Pillsbury called for greater recognition that China was a strategic competitor and should be treated as such in Washington, DC.

Others have since joined Pillsbury in viewing China as a direct strategic competitor to the United States. In *The Long Game: China's grand strategy to displace American order*, Rush Doshi makes a similar argument to Pillsbury, identifying how Beijing is deploying a grand strategy to displace the United States as the leading superpower, but he disagrees with Pillsbury's assertion that such a strategy has been in place since 1949. Rather, Doshi identifies that while China has long sought to 'roll back the historical aberration of the West's overwhelming global influence' (p. 4), Beijing's first strategy for displacing the United States—blunting American

power over China—took place between 1989 and 2008. The second strategy, occurring between 2008 and 2016, sought to build foundations for Beijing to be a regional hegemon in Asia. The starting point here is noteworthy, as Doshi identifies it as beginning after the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), which Beijing viewed as a clear sign of American decline, thereby emboldening Beijing to progress to this strategy. The third strategy identified by Doshi was spearheaded by the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump, which has seen a global expansion of Beijing's blunting and building efforts to displace the United States and the West. He identifies projects such as the BRI, the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, hosting diplomacy, multilateral bodies and exporting rhetoric and historical narratives as examples of Beijing's blunting and building efforts against the United States and the West. Doshi's work also provides a framework for a US grand strategy in response to China, and it identifies how the international system and international relations would be altered should Beijing successfully displace the United States as the dominant global power.

Also relevant to understandings of a Chinese theory of international relations are competing historical narratives and the lens of historical injury and sense of injustice. In Michael Schuman's (2020) book, *Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese history of the world*, the problem of competing historical narratives is highlighted, and he summarizes the Chinese narrative of global history and how China sees the world. He identifies China as a global superpower for much of world history until the 'interruption', when Chinese power crumbled in the face of the seafaring Europeans and, later, the Japanese. He examines the currency of such accounts to contemporary narratives and how Beijing seeks to correct the past by 'returning' to its position as the world's superpower. Throughout the book, Schuman highlights the inconsistencies between official Chinese accounts and non-official/external accounts of world history and details how the Chinese outlook has long positioned the external world and non-Chinese peoples. His work, like those by Pillsbury and Doshi, also identifies that there has long been a desire for China to overcome past experiences and to 'return' to being the dominant global superpower. However, like Doshi, Schuman identifies that it has been during the leadership of Xi Jinping—and the belief that the United States has begun to decline—that Beijing has felt the timing is right to make its move. Schuman prompts the reader to see these matters through Chinese eyes and, like Doshi, identifies what a Chinese-led world system might look like if historical patterns and precedents are considered. He sees a Chinese theory of IR as building on the worldview and outlook held by past Chinese leaders and philosophers prior to the interruption—that China is the gravitational centre of a world order structured hierarchically, whereby not all states are equal in theory or practice. Therefore, the 'fathers' of a theory of Chinese international relations would include Confucius, Mencius and Laozi alongside Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Xi Jinping.

In her book, *The World According to China*, Elizabeth Economy identifies what form a Chinese-led order would take by meticulously detailing how China has been altering existing international organizations from the inside out to make them more amenable to Beijing's ambitions. Like the works mentioned previously, Economy

is in no doubt that Beijing seeks to displace the United States as the world's dominant power. Moreover, she identifies the stark differences between maintaining the status quo and the emergence of a Chinese-led international order, which suggests a Chinese theory of international relations would take a very different shape and form than existing patterns. Like Pillsbury and Doshi, Economy also identifies how the United States can counter such attempts, arguing that the promotion of the rules-based order advantages the United States over China because such an order is desirable to other states, thereby enabling the United States to engage with other countries that also seek to maintain and protect the rules-based order. Economy details the contemporary world outlook of Beijing with a particular focus on how it sees international relations and what it aspires to change, ultimately arguing that Beijing seeks a radically altered international system that would reflect a hierarchical structure favoring Beijing.

To get a stronger sense of how Beijing sees international relations, *The Governance of China* series—which comprises speeches and policy statements by Xi Jinping—is a useful starting point (2014, 2017, 2020, 2022). Volume Four is the latest in the series, which consistently portrays China as a 'peaceful' and 'benevolent' state. Key themes across the series include China's historical experiences that disrupted its status (the 'interruption'), the China Dream, which encompasses domestic goals such as eradicating poverty, as well as international ambitions like becoming the dominant global leader. Other recurring elements include the evolution of One Belt, One Road into the BRI, the significance of the BRI on the international stage, the promotion of 'correct historical thinking'—referring to the adoption of Beijing's narrative of world history—and the success of China's development model. The rise of civilization states, as part of a broader remaking of the global system, also features prominently. Although they make for dry reading at times, these volumes are critically important in understanding the narratives from Beijing, which influence both Chinese theory and practice. Xi's collected speeches corroborate many of the central arguments laid out by Pillsbury, Doshi, Schuman and Economy regarding the factors shaping China's worldview and, by extension, what we can expect from a CIRT.

China and Global Governance by He Yafei is a more concise examination of the contemporary viewpoint from Beijing compared to *The Governance of China* series, and it too reinforces many of the central claims made in the aforementioned books. He argues that civilizational clash is the point at which the global order can be remade, signalling Beijing's desires to remake the global order and that the BRI is emerging as a 'new consensus' in global governance. Across his book, he draws on traditional Chinese philosophy, including Confucianism, to make his case for the necessity of remaking the global order. He stresses that such a revised order should be underpinned by harmony—which in the Chinese sense means conformity under a hierarchical positioning—and that civilization states offer alternatives to contemporary statehood. For He, one of Agnew's 'new Orientalists', 'Oriental wisdom' that draws on traditional Chinese thinking and Marxist philosophy are the critical missing elements within existing global governance structures, and it is 'China's mission', via the China Dream and the BRI, to reshape international

institutions and systems to overcome past wrongs and inequalities. He's mix of Marxist theory and China's traditional philosophy reflects what Didi Kirsten Tatlow has elsewhere called 'cosmological communism'[2] but is present within the Sinocentric approaches identified earlier by both Lu and Agnew. He also identifies that US and Western decline means the time is now for China to return to its position as a global leader, positing that China has already become the leader of the emerging states. The dichotomous positioning of China versus the United States/West is also represented in the discussions we have been a part of in Beijing and is a critical influence on a CIRT.

The significance of the longevity of the Chinese civilization and 'correct historical thinking' begins Wang Yiwei's *The Belt and Road Initiative: What will China offer the world in its rise.* Wang draws links between the ancient Silk Roads and China's BRI, arguing that it promises to 'transcend the Marshall Plan' and will be a catalyst for regional cooperation and development. He identifies that the GFC signalled American decline (as well as the decline of traditional globalization and Westernization), heralding that China's time had arrived to reshape globalization and restore the centrality of Eurasia as the gravitational centre of global trade and international power. Despite the opportunities, Wang also identifies that the BRI poses numerous risks to China, one of which is the influence of external transnational actors on the Chinese population and Chinese interests abroad. In particular, he foreshadows that a greater opening to the Middle East could increase instability along the BRI, and BRI projects could be targets for violence due to the rising extremist influence across the Middle East, including the rise of the Islamic State. Wang published these warnings in 2016, and they were heeded by Beijing, given that from 2017/2018, increasing numbers of Muslim minorities across Xinjiang began disappearing into concentration camps. Under international pressure, Beijing later justified the camps as 'counter-extremist' re-education camps, so they clearly saw the influence of the Middle East as a potential source for extremism at home.

Interestingly, Wang also identifies that China's desire to rejuvenate the Eurasian continent back to its position as the centre of world affairs would also be beneficial to the Europeans, who, he argues, lost their position of power to the United States and have been in decline ever since. Hence, he reasons that via the China Dream, which envisions China's national rejuvenation and return to its former glory, the European dream of restoring European power and prestige can be achieved. The clear overtone of Wang's work is that Chinese foreign relations via the BRI are about replacing the United States as the dominant global power, including efforts to position the United States as being in a dichotomous relationship with European states as well as the rest of the world, while at the same time presenting China as a benevolent 'win-win' alternative.

In 'China in the International Order: A Contributor of a Challenger?', Wang Jisi explains three overarching views on whether or not China seeks to oppose or overturn the existing liberal international order. He identifies the first view as rationalizing that China has given multiple assurances that it seeks to integrate, but also reform, the existing international order. The second view is unmoved by Beijing's reassurances, instead believing that China seeks to completely change

the international order to reflect its image and that such an undertaking will see the United States and China fighting a war over which of the two holds the dominant position in world power. The third view also believes China will eventually challenge the United States as the dominant power globally, after which it should remake the international order. However, it urges caution—evoking Deng Xiaoping's mantra of 'hiding one's capacities and biding one's time', warning that moving too soon will inflict devastating losses on China. For Wang, China seeks to increase its own power projections and capabilities, as well as those of its BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) partners, to the point that it forces a multipolar world, acknowledging that this could only be achieved should there be a weakening of US power and influence. At the same time, he questions whether or not it is in China's long-term interest to 'undermine Washington's position in world affairs' (2022, p. 135). He also identifies that Beijing seeks to enhance its position internationally as an economic power, reduce the influence of US-led security alliances and arrangements within the Indo-Pacific and offer resistance against 'the "wave of democratization" instigated by the Western countries and their intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, and championing democracy of international relations' (2022, p. 135). Hence, for Wang, Beijing's goals do appear to be antithetical to the critical foreign policy goals of the United States when it comes to security and democracy promotion, underscoring they are locked into a strategic competition.

What is Chinese international relations theory?

In the early 21st century, the ongoing tension between scholars and practitioners presides. This is a symptom of the scholarly affliction that overestimates the competence of the Party in the absence of access. Within the Party, a historical tension between *hide and bide* and *feeling for the stones* undermines their ability to govern—simply, they will not say what they really want so as to maintain power, and they do not really know what to do themselves as nobody has ever developed a billion-plus-population country as quickly and so successfully. The present China Dream may be clearer within the Party, but fearfully, it gives rise to international relations of conflict for authoritarian power, differing development outcomes human rights abuses, as well as disregard for the environment.

The statements made by the Party to their domestic audience thus differ from what is stated to the global audience, and concepts and terminology are applied differently by the Party and the scholars. For example, to the global audience, China states it seeks a peaceful rise and will be a democracy by the middle of the century. Speaking to the Australian Parliament in 2014, President Xi Jinping stated,

> We have set two goals for China's future development. . . . The first is to double the 2010 GDP and per-capita income of urban and rural residents and build a society of initial prosperity in all respects by 2020. The second is to turn China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious by the middle of the century.
>
> (cited Hurst et al. 2014)

However, China's actions (for example, in the South China Sea and the border with India) and Beijing's messaging to its domestic audience say otherwise. Celebrating the 100-year anniversary of the Party in 2021, President Xi Jinping declared,

> Only socialism can save China, and only socialism with Chinese characteristics can develop China . . . we will never allow anyone to bully, oppress or subjugate China. Anyone who dares try to do that will have their heads bashed bloody against the Great Wall of Steel forged by over 1.4 billion Chinese people.
>
> (cited in BBC 2021)

Similarly, regarding concepts such as democracy, IR scholars often do not account for the omnipotent power of the Party and the tension between the Party statements and outcomes. For instance, on democracy, President Xi stated,

> We must not blindly copy the development models of other countries nor accept their dictation. [T]he state system which is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class . . . [is] under the leadership of the CPC . . . [and] the principle of democratic centralism.
>
> (Xi 2014, 32 and 153)

President Xi has thus taken up the mantle of power and enhanced the authority of the CCP, resulting in triumphant declarations of having survived the 'Hundred Years of Humiliation', despite the West, to build a unique path. The ongoing *uniqueness* of the Sinocentric focus of international relations scholars is also challenged, as for example, by the eminent democracy scholar John Keane, who clearly describes the Party's position:

> [T]he recipe for Chinese success: a pinch of Marxism; a few shakes of old-fashioned, nineteenth-century European belief in evolutionary progress and science; and a generous cup of the Bolshevik principle of the vanguard party (this is what is meant by 'democratic centralism').
>
> (2009, pp. 832–833)

The aforementioned works represent just a small selection of sources that examine Chinese outlooks, Beijing's desires for the international system and the obscured Chinese theory of IR. They reflect either the view from Beijing, the debates within Chinese academia or external understandings of the view from Beijing. When read together, there is significant crossover and agreement on some points among authors. Within each of these books, the foundational elements for a Chinese theory of IR may be distilled as, firstly, that the Party's survival and considerations are first and that it will maintain omnipotent power over outcomes; differing historical accounts of world history; emphasis on traditional Chinese philosophy; the idea of China as the gravitational centre of world politics; and a remaking of the international rules and norms to better reflect Chinese experiences and preferences. From

those standpoints, we recognize that a Chinese theory of IR is firstly undergirded by Chinese understandings of global history—or what Xi Jinping has called 'correct historical thinking'. Secondly, it includes an enmeshment of both Marxist theory and traditional Chinese philosophy—or what He referred to as 'Oriental wisdom'. Thirdly, it is centred around the premise of the decline and imminent demise of the United States as the global superpower, with China then emerging as the dominant superpower—returning to its rightful or 'destined' position of world leader after a period of 'interruption'. Fourthly, it is grounded in the belief in a dichotomous relationship between China and the United States/the West, meaning Beijing's priority is competition, not cooperation. Finally, should China be in a position to do so, CIRT also hopes to remake the global order and the international system.

The chapters in this volume seek to further these discussions and to critically explore what a Chinese theory of IR entails and how it is put into practice. The authors in this book comprise a diverse group of academics who offer a wide-ranging array of viewpoints on this topic. What they share in common is that they are all interested in what China may offer international relations and critically assess the impact of such a contribution in theory and practice.

Chapter overviews

Chapter 2 explains how CIRT is both formed and put into practice. It utilizes political economy to identify and sketch the main components of CIRT and assesses the viability of the CCP's contemporary great power statecraft. The strengths and policy options of the CCP are reviewed throughout the chapter. The leader's thought as a method of power to determine the correct path—validation of ideology by the leader—is reviewed, and the thoughts of Mao, Deng and Xi are outlined. How the vanguard party then propagates a declared correct path is reasoned to be an essential component of converting CIRT into policy. However, a theory built from the ideology of Chinese Marxism–Leninism as 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' incorrectly attributes the PRC's development success to socialism rather than the liberal and mercantilist-derived policies followed since Deng Xiaoping's reforms from the late 1970s. The utility of present CIRT is thus limited as it is undermined by the ideological requirement to constantly struggle for socialism, which results in the dysfunctional policy of hegemonism (Ping 2024). As a result, the chapter disrupts the illusion that CIRT has the same broad goals of enhanced collaboration between states and the prevention of conflict that other international relations theories profess. The chapter hence examines territorial disputes, aggressions towards Australia, undermining of the global liberal market, the United Front Work Department and the CCP's BRI and relations with authoritarian regimes to demonstrate the dysfunction of CIRT. The chapter concludes by addressing the fundamental question of whether the CCP's great power statecraft is compatible with our globalizing world or whether it is irreconcilably rooted in an ideological conflict to achieve socialism that may undermine global development.

All theoretical approaches to IR are built on the fundamental purpose of managing secure relations. The most fundamental purpose is the survival of the state,

and the most common goal, theoretically, is sustaining peace. In Chapter 3, Cui Yue analyses how differing conceptualizations of peace underlay subsequent approaches to IR, providing fertile ground for exploring this element of CIRT. Although we should never take for granted that approaches in IR will vary in any fundamental ways due simply to 'ancient' civilizational variances, when essential differences are apparent, they should not be overlooked. Thus, while Cui Yue's chapter cannot definitively claim that conceptualizations of peace in modern China are entirely divergent from those of Western countries, her meticulous charting of how peace has been conceptualized in modern China illuminates a clear and distinct Chinese approach.

What is perhaps of more significance than any cultural variances that shape expressions of the concept(s) of peace are the ways that Chinese thinking around peace has emerged from the PRC's distinct status as a developing and major power, rising steadily within the international arena. It is here that her analysis illustrates not just the emergence of key concepts in practice but the evolution of corresponding policies and their potential for shaping CIRT into the future. In particular, Chapter 3 demonstrates how the hierarchical and vertical structure of Chinese foreign policymaking has given political leaders critical roles in the decision-making process. The most critical evolutions of Chinese IR directions were initiated first by Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping and, in comparable ways today, by Xi Jinping. Through the detailed analysis of their shifting uses of terminology for peace, Chapter 3 shows how this fundamental concept subsequently prioritized all strategic thinking.

Where Chapter 3 considers China's emerging and evolving approach to IR from a traditional peace/security priority of the state, Adam S R Bartley's Chapter 4 expands alternate explanations of the state's behavior. Using the most substantial recent manifestations of practise and policy demonstrated by the BRI, Bartley attempts to transcend the dominant explanatory theory, which suggests this behavior is best described by its (traditional) strategic and military needs. By way of contrast, he argues that strategic interests should be seen as part of a larger strategy to shape China's environment to better protect the Communist Party from external challenges to its authority.

Bartley's analysis draws on the theory of authoritarian diffusion to assess the extent to which the BRI acts as a function of authoritarian norms creation. His chapter demonstrates how authoritarian states like China can seek to insulate themselves from appreciably stronger liberal institutions and states. In practice, as across the contours of the BRI, this is done through the difficult and costly cultivation of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian norms. It is also accomplished through democratic diffusion-proofing, where the onus and cost of such perceived threatening norms are placed on the democratic powers. Ultimately, Chapter 4 finds that while there is little substantive evidence to suggest China intentionally seeks the growth of the more authoritative trends in its institution-building, small changes on the ground in BRI countries, even when made unintentionally, can greatly accentuate the broad-ranging strategic, political and economic influences of China in the region. Thus, as such results emerge through these practises and policies, this

broader conceptualization of security needs is reinforced as a guiding component of China's evolving international relations theory.

In Chapter 4, Adam S R Bartley identified the central concern of sustaining the power and legitimacy of the CCP's rule when structuring major practices in foreign policy. In Chapter 5, Dylan M H Loh complements this by considering the inward-focused dimensions of Chinese identity (as a distinct state within an international community). Chapter 5 explores another dimension of the centrality of sustaining the power and legitimacy of the CCP's rule in overall IRT. Specifically, Loh illuminates how various articulations of the 'China Dream' function to such ends within the context of China's place in the international community. Although the direct connections to foreign policy are limited, the nature of the 'Chinese Dream' framework is nonetheless foundational to conceptions of China's international identity and, in turn, any Chinese discourse of IRT.

The 'China Dream,' popularized by Xi Jinping starting in 2013, describes a closely intertwined collection of aspirational goals for both Chinese individuals and the nation collectively. It is infused with affect and emotions that moves people, figuratively and literally, towards shared goals and makes them pliant for nation-building (as a state operating within a distinct international community) and for sustained legitimization of the CCP's rule. By articulating this vision within a carefully constructed model of IR, the 'peaceful development' born of domestic attitudes is imagined to align with peaceful development internationally. This was exemplified by functions such as the 'China Dream and the Harmonious World' conference. In recent years, Chinese IR scholars have lamented the fact that China does not have any 'true' allies. In sync with this, the 'China Dream' discourse and its application mirrors where Chinese elites' anxieties are most pronounced—in the domestic domain and China's grappling with its place and status in the world. Part of this struggle is Xi's personal drive to consolidate power and push through his domestic and foreign policy ideas. The 'China Dream' discourse is, therefore, one of Xi's—and the CCP's—major strategy in that consolidation drive; the 'China Dream' is both a means to an end and an end itself.

Chapter 6, by Su Hao, Zhou Jiali and Ding Li, picks up on similar themes of the relations between distinct value sets and corresponding perspectives and models of IR. Where Chapter 5 focuses on the contemporary 'China Dream', Chapter 6 explores values on the macroscopic and civilizational level. Su, Zhou and Ding introduce another trend in recent Chinese approaches to IRT by engaging in a genuinely theoretical manner, primarily in terms of questions. Considering that many problems in international relations are embedded in profound cultural influences, Chapter 6 asks if we can view political issues from a more macroscopic, virtual, hypothetical perspective. For example, if we approach IR from the broad angle of *human* society, might it provide new ideas for addressing complex political problems? What kind of construct is the politics of human civilization? What does this construct entail? What is the relationship between the politics of human civilization and civilizational values? And in what ways are civilizational values the same as universal values? The authors of this chapter believe that this framework of

'civilization politics' will open new paths for understanding the broader challenges of global society and international relations.

In Chapter 7, Steven Robert Nagy connects many of this volume's threads concerning the connections between 'civilizational' approaches to IRT and practices and contemporary interactions between international affairs policies and practices and emerging civilization-centred theory. Early-modern and modern Chinese theorists seek models from China's historical '*tianxia*' worldview, retaining the priority of China's existing asymmetrical regional centrality and its aspirational global role. In the current age of equal sovereign states and the lingering global predominance of the power of the United States, it is an energizing struggle to square the two. As a consequence of the contradictions, China is faced with the conundrum of how to re-conceptualize the traditional views of itself and how to relate to other countries as equal sovereign states. This struggle is at the core of the research Nagy explores, attempting to identify and build a systematic body of thought that could be understood as a CIRT. For each element of the emerging models, confined by the immediate need to adapt to rapidly changing regional and global circumstances, the challenge is how to put practice into theory.

Hạnh Nguyen's Chapter 8 compares the CCP with the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) in order to identify the similarities and divergences between two of the world's most successful communist regimes. In 2008, the two states became comprehensive strategic partners, with Beijing's importance to Hanoi featuring in Vietnamese foreign policy. Hence, Nguyen's analysis provides a valuable comparison that seeks out the subtle divergences in political institutions and decision-making between the two communist states that might otherwise be missed. Taking an institutionalist approach, with a particular focus on power-sharing arrangements and decision-making processes, she finds that Vietnam's system has a relatively high degree of power diffusion, with a clear separation between the Party and the state. The CCP, however, concentrates power at the top of the leadership, with tighter party control over the state. Her chapter also demonstrates that while China has an inconsistent approach to collective leadership, Vietnam has a more sustained adherence to collective leadership.

Her chapter also finds that, more recently, these divergences have been narrowed due to anti-corruption campaigns in both countries. While Xi Jinping's widely known anti-corruption campaign saw China swing back to hard authoritarianism and strongman rule, Vietnam's lesser-known anti-corruption campaign yielded similar results. Under General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, high-ranking officials and business leaders were tried for corruption, and there was greater centralization of power to Trong, and the public security force was given greater authority. Similar to Xi Jinping, Trong was also granted an unprecedented third term. Hence, while Nguyen finds that institutionalization can make succession within communist parties more predictable and rules-based, something the VCP has demonstrated more consistently in the past compared to the CCP, it is not strong enough to defend against personal authority, should strongman leaders emerge from within the ranks. Hence, this is a critical commonality shared between China and Vietnam. Following Trong's death, To Lam became the general secretary of the VCP. While it is too

soon to determine whether he will deviate from Trong's approach to party leadership, Nguyen concludes that it is likely that Vietnam will not stray from its open economic policy and balanced approach to foreign policy. She also concludes that Vietnam will continue to welcome trade and investment from China, but at the same time, it will also look to extra-regional partners such as the United States to help Vietnam resist Beijing's pressures in the South China Sea and the Mekong subregion.

The strategic competition between China and the United States serves as the backdrop to the focus of Renato Cruz De Castro's chapter examining China's realpolitik approach to the South China Sea dispute. He argues that China's expansion of its navy and maritime services and declaration of the South China Sea as one of its 'core interests' are evidence of its belief that China is in ascendency while the United States is in decline. In Chapter 9, he demonstrates the options available to a middle power like the Philippines in the face of a realpolitik foreign policy deployed by an emergent power: hard balancing, appeasement and limited complex balancing. Over the past decade, the Philippines have used all three approaches. While former Philippines' President Benigno Aquino III (June 30, 2010–June 30, 2016) used hard balancing against China to challenge Beijing's expansive military claims in the region, from late 2016, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte (June 30, 2016–June 30, 2022) changed approach, instead pursuing a policy of appeasement towards Chinese claims. His concessions included downgrading the Philippine–United States alliance and putting aside the July 12, 2016, arbitral ruling on the South China Sea. Despite Duterte's appeasement towards China, Beijing's coercive diplomacy against other claimant states, as well as units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines stationed in the West Philippine/South China Sea, alongside its expanding military reach, forced a return to limited hard balancing by Duterte in 2018. Although Duterte's successor, President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. (June 30, 2022–time of writing), initially sought to maintain a limited hard-balancing approach by implementing a middle-of-the-road approach to foreign policy, engaging with both China and the United States, he has since returned to hard balancing against China. This has occurred on the back of a re-strengthening of United States–Philippines relations, including security relations, but in particular, in response to Beijing's ongoing actions in the West Philippine/South China Sea, most notably, increased Chinese naval presence near the artificial islands it constructed in the South China Sea and the harassment and bullying of Vietnamese and Filipino fisher folk. Hence, Beijing's actions in the South China Sea and its failure to deliver on pledged loans and direct investment to fund the Philippines' Build, Build, Build program saw the Philippines move from appeasement back to hard balancing in less than a decade. This is a compelling example of a failure in Beijing's approach to one of its neighbors and challenges Beijing's frequent assertions that its rise is peaceful.

In Chapter 10, Anna Hayes demonstrates some compellingly concrete examples of how China's recent practices have incurred firm responses within the international community, thus adding another layer of consideration for the evolution of any emergent CIRT. In the context of 'peaceful rise' and 'harmonious world' rhetoric, Chinese emphasis on soft power had been fruitful and difficult to counter

for many years, both in terms of theoretical challenge and by direct practice. As China's effective soft power has declined, however, new strategies have emerged that increasingly shift to sharp power disguised as soft power.

Officially, Beijing's stance has remained one of non-interference, and all public diplomacy has been promoted as being grounded in soft power. In reality, though, particularly concerning states like Australia, what has been exhibited has been more like sharp power. Chapter 10 digs deep into the details of exactly how this turn to sharp power triggered an Australian awakening, responding directly to incursions on its democratic foundations. To the extent that this has developed as a model for other states in how to identify and respond to acts of soft power by aggressor states, this illustrates an immediate and near-term push-back dynamic that constrains China's practises and policies in the international realm and thus confines the contours of the emergent CIRT.

Jagannath Panda and Eerishika Pankaj explore how China's approach to India and the wider region reflects how CIRT is undergirded by a complex interplay of geopolitical, historical and ideological factors furthered via internal debates and focuses. Moreover, in exploring China's relations with India, it is imperative also to consider the impact of various leadership styles and the geopolitical landscape on the bilateral relationship. They argue that Beijing's foreign policy contains persistent ideological underpinnings and historical factors but warn that it is dynamic given that it is also influenced by the changing priorities of Chinese leaders and contemporary circumstances within both states, the region and internationally. They also argue that the China–India bilateral relationship allows rich insights into China's strategic calculations, historical experiences and ideological underpinnings and how these things shape CIRT, noting that Marxism and the pursuit of national rejuvenation play crucial roles in determining China's foreign policy. Chapter 11 also identifies that under Xi Jinping, the rising-power paradox is present within the China–India bilateral relationship, adding complexity in areas such as cooperation and competition between the two states. They note that China's economic engagement with India is undergirded by mercantilist interests and that the mercantilism present within the BRI has caused economic and strategic concerns in New Delhi. Moreover, given that Xi Jinping's leadership challenges Western dominance within IR, seeking a multipolar world with China taking its perceived 'rightful place' within the global order increases Beijing's dynamic and multifaceted approach to foreign policy. Panda and Pankaj suitably conclude our collection by also considering the ability of both China and India to manage competition and enhance cooperation, which will be of critical importance to the future stability and prosperity of the Asian region and beyond.

Notes

1 Previous books originating from discussions in Beijing include Ping, J & McCormick, B (eds) 2016, *China's strategic priorities*, Routledge, Oxon and McCormick, B & Ping, J (eds) 2011, *Chinese engagements: Regional issues with global implications*, Bond University Press, Robina.

2 See: Tatlow, Didi Kirsten 2018, 'China's cosmological communism: A challenge to liberal democracies', *MERICS China Monitor*, 18 July, viewed August 22, 2024, (https://www.merics.org/sites/default/files/2020–04/180718_MERICS_China_Monitor_46_CosmologicalCommunism.pdf).

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2 Chinese international relations theory of statecraft and party

Jonathan Ping

Introduction

To enhance understanding of Chinese international relations theory (CIRT) this chapter employs a political economy approach to study the viability of the great power statecraft of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)—in particular, its contemporary foreign policy. Great powers influencing Asia and the global system include the United States and Japan as well as China, but China's statecraft is unique in being economically developing, structurally revisionist and determined by a Marxist–Leninist vanguard party. The Chinese people and the global population have undoubtably benefited from the creation of socialist state-directed market capitalism created by Deng Xiaoping's Open Door Policy in the late 1970s. However, critics argue that the development and status of the People's Republic of China (PRC) have been predominantly hindered by the CCP's *constant struggle* for socialism. Without the CCP, China may have developed, but it may also have been a satiated member of the society of states. Thus, CCP statecraft is arguably not economically collaborative or politically comprehensive enough to participate in the collective drive for sustainable global growth. Further, contemporary CCP statecraft under General Secretary Xi Jinping may destabilise the global political economy upon which China's domestic success has been built.

Thus, the greatest future challenge for CCP statecraft is arguably not home rule but mitigating the *hegemonism* foreign policy overreach, related to its unique character and enormous size, that negatively affects other states. Therefore, the question is: Is China, under the control of the CCP, able to obtain consent from the political economy so that it may sustain itself and not be opposed by a significant portion of the world's population? This chapter argues that the CCP under General Secretary Xi Jinping has become more a Marxist–Leninist vanguard party that aims to create a new socialist society. Moreover, CIRT is insufficient and dysfunctional. The incongruence between the CCP's domestic socialist system and the contemporary liberal global market system makes the CCP's great power statecraft ineffective in achieving its goals and appears to many to now threaten the stability of the global political economy. While a degree of mercantilism within a liberal system is tolerable, totalitarianism combined with revisionism is unendurable for the bulk of developed and developing states. The continued use of Chinese

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Marxism–Leninism, expressed as socialism with Chinese characteristics, as the basis of CIRT, that begets *hegemonism* great power statecraft, may result in China being isolated between Iran and North Korea within its One Belt, One Road initiative (known outside China as the Belt and Road Initiative).

Political economy, statecraft, vanguard party and overreach

China is the world's second most populous state, with more than 1.4 billion people, and China and India (the most populous) each have more than four times the population of the third-largest country, the United States (see Table 2.1). Their domestic policies thus have an impact on the rest of the world. Chinese investment and use of resources, goods and services is so large relative to other states that to study its foreign policy we need a correspondingly gigantic discipline. Political economy requires the inclusion of domestic and global politics and economics to build knowledge and undertake policy-driven analysis by using all four subdisciplines in combination (Murphy & Nelson 2001; O'Brien & Williams 2020; Schwartz 1996). The PRC's size relative to surrounding states is a source of strength for the CCP's foreign policy and a factor to be considered in its international relations theory (IRT). However, the fact that it shares borders with 14 neighbouring states and has ongoing territorial disputes with India and Japan, as well as with Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines over islands in the South China Sea, presents challenges as well.

The inclusion of domestic policies when studying foreign policy is common, but it is essential in understanding China's foreign policy impact and IRT dysfunction (Sørensen 2021). The opacity of the CCP's political system at the same time makes this type of domestic policy analysis less assured (Kossa 2020). China's relative size and global impact entail that its domestic policies often have 'foreign policy' outcomes. For example, General Secretary Xi Jinping's 2021 policy to restrict online gaming hours for children to three hours per week affected global technology company investors. The shares of obstructed companies such as Tencent and NetEase fell by 8.4% and 11%, respectively (Kharpal 2021; Liao 2021). As China is the largest producer and consumer of coal, of broader concern are its plans to build hundreds of coal-fired power stations during its 14th five-year plan (2021–2025) to meet its own development needs (Carbon Brief 2020; International Energy Agency [IEA] 2020). Given China's relative size, its refusal to join global efforts to restrict CO_2 emissions scuttled the 26th UN Climate Change Conference

Table 2.1 World population by country, 2024

1. India	1,450,935,791	6. Nigeria	232,679,478
2. China	1,419,321,278	7. Brazil	211,998,573
3. United States	345,426,571	8. Bangladesh	173,562,364
4. Indonesia	283,487,931	9. Russia	144,820,423
5. Pakistan	251,269,164	10. Ethiopia	132,059,767

Source: World Population Review (2024).

of the Parties, effectively making its domestic policy a foreign policy that compromises the common goal of the United Nations (UN), states, global business and societies to curb carbon emissions (Ping 2022).

Statecraft and China's great power capacity

How states understand and use power is encapsulated by the term 'statecraft' (Ping 2017). States use different forms of power within an anarchic system of Westphalian states to (re)create their sovereignty. Hard power is based on coercion and/or payment; soft power is based on co-optation and/or attraction. As deployed within a rules-based system they place a state's behaviour in a contemporary narrative about legitimacy and norms. The size and political character of the CCP enables it to use a larger range of foreign policies than most states, which is a strength. It is the oldest communist party in the world, with over 100 years of success and boasting more than 95 million members, and through *constant struggle*, it has been able to build a *collective alternative* against *dangerous thought* as a basis for its IRT (Burns 1939). As the governing party of a great power, it has successfully created its own domestic and foreign policy behavioural norms. The CCP's control over its political system and economy has allowed it repeatedly to resist pressure for democratic reform, remove domestic threats to its rule such as public protests for democracy, alternative thought from religions or minorities, or the economic turmoil caused by protests against land acquisition or uneven development and oppose external influence, for example by blocking information and restricting foreign investment. The control of the domestic narrative emanates from the CCP leaders' *thought*. The CCP controls the domestic narrative by insisting on the ideologically 'correct' interpretation of events within IRT, in media, educational settings and beyond under the supervision of such bodies as the Central Propaganda Department and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and Supervision (Johnson 2021; McGregor 2011; Shambaugh 2007).

The CCP's long-standing grip on, and unassailable monopoly of, political power results from a range of carrots and sticks. Intimidation of critics and suppression of dissent along, with relentless surveillance and ideological indoctrination, affects how its citizens view the world, including those involved in formulating the PRC's foreign policy (Wang 2019, pp. 2–3). In addition, the Chinese population has been conditioned by waves of violence directed primarily at the disloyal, resulting in a reduction in public dissent and retreat into survival through family and political factions within and because of the CCP. The education system is ideological and teaches Marxism–Leninism and leadership *thought* to be the basis of CIRT. The CCP elite, like many members of the Chinese middle class, often prefer to educate their family abroad—Xi Jinping's daughter, Xi Mingze, graduated from Harvard University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology, while the daughter of Politburo member and senior foreign affairs official and diplomat, Yang Jiechi, studied at Yale University—thereby empowering them with knowledge of the world beyond China. Yet like all Chinese who have been educated at least to high school level in China, they are also well-indoctrinated in Chinese exceptionalism:

the sense that Chinese are unique, different from other people. This, along with the victim narrative of the 'Hundred Years of Humiliation',[1] an important cornerstone of 'patriotic education' in China, gives rise to a particular kind of nationalism that, combined with (or energised by) a fear of the 'other', valorises control by the CCP (Dobson 2012; Ho 2014). This restricts the PRC's ability to be 'globalised' in the sense of blending and mixing IRT, politically, economically and culturally (a strength) but also restricts its capacity to compromise and develop functional CIRT for the good of global humanity (a weakness).

Although, theoretically, states are all sovereign, they have different capacities to create and pursue foreign policies because of their relative size. The extent of a state's resources, for example, determines the size of its foreign ministry, number of diplomats and overseas posts and other foreign policy infrastructure—and thus, what it can achieve with its foreign policy. Therefore, the resources of a state directly enable and restrict what it may achieve with its foreign policy. Great powers such as China have the capacity to impose and restrict the global political economy (Ping 2017). A fully developed China may have the largest foreign policy capacity in the world. China's relative size also lends the CCP longevity, resilience and strength that communist parties elsewhere have not enjoyed. Of the 15 Soviet republics and 12 pro-Soviet states that set out on the socialist path behind Russia from 1917, only five remain: the small powers of Cuba and Laos, and the middle powers of North Korea and Vietnam (Lowy Institute 2022; Marples 2004; Strauss 2021; see also Nguyen, this volume, Chapter 8). China is the only communist great power, as well as the most developed communist state in history (Lowy Institute 2022). Other significant differences between the CCP and other communist parties resulted from the Sino–Soviet split and the revision of socialism—including domestic narrative—inside the CCP under Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping.

Chinese Marxism–Leninism

The CCP under General Secretary Xi Jinping has re-emphasised Marxism–Leninism as the only basis for CIRT. The CCP and PRC were founded on the idea of history as a process of struggle between classes over control of the means of production, distribution and exchange that lead eventually to communism. At its core, the CCP is a vanguard party in belief, methodology and organisational structure (McGregor 2011). This identity necessitates a specific foreign policy purpose and legitimates use of types of power. Vladimir Lenin contributed the idea that this would be a process guided by a 'vanguard party' (Andrews 2007). Central to this endeavour is the creation of a pseudo-reality—a strongly upheld understanding of the history, people and contemporary events that leads to the achievement of socialism. Full-time professional revolutionaries and the party elite educate the workers and peasants about the need for constant struggle against their common class enemies to achieve victory—socialism (Burns 1939; McAdams 2017). There is no peace. Clarity of purpose is a strength of the CCP and its IRT; there is no public debate about the choice of goal or the rationale behind policies to dilute the efficiency of statecraft, giving the CCP strength and pace.

For the CCP, individuals are perceived as belonging to a class and always subservient to the party and its tasks. Democratic capitalist states are perceived as having been created and maintained by capitalists to best exploit the working class. Any opposition to the CCP is thus seen as either the result of working-class individuals who have not yet awakened to their true class interests and therefore must be educated or as a member of the capitalist class who must be ruthlessly eliminated. The Party has called on a Sinicised Marxism–Leninism to help rejuvenate China following the Century of Humiliation. This task unifies the people, which in turn gives the CCP strength and longevity, because the task of rejuvenation will take decades and requires personal sacrifice for the benefit of the larger group—the nation.

Foreign policy, CIRT dysfunction and overreach

Finally, an important concept that this chapter uses is *foreign policy overreach*. Scholars and practitioners globally—including those inside the CCP, from General Secretary Xi Jinping and government-funded think-tanks (such as the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations)[2] to scholars and the public—have increasingly debated the 'Rising China' thesis (Ahmad & Mughal 2011). China is undoubtably rising, and common themes include the implications and what knowledge may be used to study its effects. Kennedy's (1987) work, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, a best-seller during the collapse of the Soviet Union, coined the term *imperial overstretch* to describe the cycle by which great powers have risen and fallen in the five centuries up to the year 2000. Essentially, overstretch occurs when dominant states' political and military commitments outpace their economic capacity to pay for them. The idea's realist underpinning discards the liberal notions of collective security through internationalism and a global society of collaborating states (Cox 1996).

Similarly, Graham Allison's 2017 acclaimed best-seller, *Destined for War*, dug through hundreds of years of history to consider the Thucydides trap, whereby a rising state's threat to the dominance of a regional or global hegemon typically results in war (Allison 2019). Charles Kindleberger, an economic historian, meanwhile argues that the stability of the international economic system results from the hegemonic capacity of a single dominant state to set rules and provide political and economic goods (giving rise to the idea of a 'Kindleberger trap') (Nye 2017). This thesis, applied to a rising China, however, presumes that a hegemonic China will fail to provide stability and instead cause systemic chaos. In Australia, there is a strong debate over China's foreign policy, with some raising the fear of war and others stressing the threat to the country's sovereignty, democracy and human rights from a rising China (White & Hamilton 2019).

This chapter employs the Gramscian concept of hegemony, which identifies consent as a prerequisite of successful hegemony (1971). Gramscian hegemony arises when lesser states believe that their interests are best served by supporting the hegemon. The critical component is belief, rather than the fact, that their

interests are being met. This approach applies the term overreach, as used by Florig (2010) here regarding US foreign policy:

> One of the central contradictions of US foreign policy for the past century has been between the imperatives of hegemony and *the sense of messianic mission developed in America's formative years and enlarged in scope as US power expanded* [emphasis added]. These two basic elements do not always conflict, yet in certain key crises the American belief in its special mission in the world leads it to make foreign policy choices that ultimately undermine its hegemonic position.

This chapter argues that Florig's statement applies to the CCP and the PRC in the third decade of the 21st century. To paraphrase Florig, the CCP's belief in its special mission to achieve socialism, which has been chosen due to the paucity of CIRT, leads it to make foreign policy choices that ultimately weaken its proto-hegemonic potential. It is in its formative years as a potential hegemon, with rising power allowing for the expansion of its special mission. The expansion of the special mission is resulting in foreign policy overreach. This is observable as a loss of support and consent from the society of states—a retreat to defensive and mercantilist hard power acquisition and market intervention—and has prompted liberal democratic states to enter collective security pacts such as the Quad (United States, Japan, Australia and India) and AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States). Kennedy's thesis of overstretch may well apply if these alliances or the withdrawal of consent cuts off the Chinese economy from its life-giving global markets. Allison's Thucydides trap thesis seems valid if the future world is not to the interest of the present hegemon, the United States. The global political economy may well fall into a disorder such as existed between World Wars I and II.

In summary, the idea of political economy helps us better understand the enormity of China and identify the contradictions in its foreign policy due to CIRT dysfunction between political goals and economic reality in terms of overreach. Statecraft is a concept that allows us to comprehend the CCP's understanding of power and its use, and how capable it is in achieving desired foreign policy outcomes—and identifying overreach. Identifying China as a great power provides an understanding of its relative capacity to conduct foreign policy. Understanding Chinese Marxism–Leninism identifies the CCP's foreign policy 'messianic mission' that draws it into overreach. Hegemony through consent identifies the source of complaints and why the CCP's foreign policy is overreach and how it is being opposed and by whom.

China's foreign policy IRT dysfunction is a result of China being an economically developing, structurally revisionist state led by a Marxist–Leninist vanguard party. Socialist state-directed market capitalism has undoubtably benefited the Chinese people, but it does not enable the PRC's foreign policymakers to comprehend or make compromises for the benefit of humanity at large. Thus, specific states, firms and people are opposing the CCP's foreign policy overreach.

The party, leadership and the practice of statecraft

The power of China's leaders within the PRC is authoritarian; the nation lacks democracy as the term is more broadly understood: a free press, independent companies (without, for example, a supervising Party secretary), as well as autonomous non-government organisations and civil society (Museum of Australian Democracy 2022). Under President Xi Jinping, the sophistication and extent of the surveillance state, combined with the removal of PRC presidential term limits, has ushered in incipient totalitarianism (Babones 2021; McAdams 2017, p. 16). The power of Xi as president and general secretary provides the CCP with strength, but it also contributes to the CCP's bewilderment regarding the global political economy within which the PRC finds itself. It also provides insights into the significant foreign policy challenges that arise from the lack of congruence between the CCP's socialist purpose and its nascent capacity to shape global outcomes. The power of the leadership affects foreign policy because it provides the rationale for China's great power statecraft and informs its limits as well. Mao's dictum that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun' and Deng's guiding foreign policy statement 'keep a low profile and bide your time' also affect today's foreign policy and Xi Jinping's 'China Dream' of national rejuvenation (also see Loh, this volume, Chapter 5).

On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The socialist state, under tutelage from the Soviet Union, placed the omnipotent Party at the centre of government and policy, with post of Party chairman[3] above that of the state president (although both posts were initially held by Mao) and the Red Army answering to the Party rather than the state. It thus established Marxist theory as the enduring basis for contemporary Chinese international relations theory as articulated by the CCP (BBC 2021; Cheng 2018). The ideological approach is a central component of CCP foreign policy that results in overreach.

However, over the following decades, the CCP combined leadership statecraft (expressed as 'thought') and purges of any opposition to move CIRT beyond Marx, Lenin and attempted Soviet communism (Cheng & Yang 2020). Mao's battlefield success devolved into Maoism and a personality cult. He understood political power as growing from the support of the masses and organised violence, which became increasingly indiscriminate. As Wang (2019, p. 4) states,

> In May 1968, Mao mobilized new revolutionary committees to conduct his 'Cleansing the Class Ranks Campaign'. The campaign was 'a purge designed to eliminate any and all real and imagined enemies' and 'provided whoever happened to be in power with an opportunity to get rid of opponents' (MacFarquhar & Schoenhals 2006, p. 253). Although it originally had a well-defined target, that target became blurred and the process degenerated into uncertainty. As MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006, p. 256) observe, 'Local officials invariably broadened its scope and used it as an excuse to intensify the level of organized violence in general'. As a result, the violence became increasingly indiscriminate.

Theoretically, Mao's rural poor replaced Marx's proletariat as the vanguard in Chinese pre-industrial society, and this was paired with slogans and purges such as the 1950s Hundred Flowers Bloom/Anti-rightist movement and the 1958 self-reliant 'Great Leap Forward'. Hence, 1966 CCP propaganda declared: 'The sunlight of Mao Zedong Thought illuminates the road of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' (Chinaposter.net 2022). The CCP thus heralded the last of Mao's failed policies, which inflicted horrendous human rights abuses but kept the party and Mao in power.

The Cultural Revolution affected the entire society. It also directly shaped today's aging Party leaders' perceptions of the limits of foreign policy and IRT creativity. Those who were young in the Cultural Revolution recall the public beatings, arrest, torture and untimely death of the president of the PRC from 1959 to 1968, Liu Shaoqi, after he was declared a 'capitalist roader' (Colville 2021). Even if they do not fear being purged and beaten by subordinates should they advocate domestic reform and collaboration with the liberal market rules-based global economy—hence moving away from the CCP's socialist project—they would be cognisant of the fierce debate in the early 1990s over whether the Party's surname was 'socialism' or 'capitalism'.

The effect of the Mao era is thus the ready justification for extremists within the CCP to use *any* policy to advance socialism. Hence, while the rules of the international society of states were created by enemies and oppressors, the PRC will work within them to the extent that they benefit it. This is a source of strength for the party.

In practice, during Mao's rule, foreign policy was arguably constrained by the lack of economic capacity. Yet the CCP pursued a policy of ideologically-motivated violence within China's neighbourhood and borderlands. The Chinese military confronted the United States and the United Nations in Korea, for example, albeit reluctantly, and by naming its forces there 'volunteers', avoided directly declaring war. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) moved into Tibet (which the CCP insisted was part of China despite its complex history), annexed part of ceded Kashmir, conceptualised international relations as between political parties as much as between sovereign states (maintaining relations and supporting foreign communist parties primarily in the Soviet bloc and via the Comintern but importantly also non-governing parties in for example Malaysia through the Central Committee's own International Department), and pursued a policy of military aggression to support 'revolutionary peoples' against, in particular, the imperialism of the United States, which it labelled 'hegemonism' (Ping 2017, p. 169; Yong & Pauly 2013; Pringsheim 1965). While the policy was unsuccessful in both Korea and Vietnam, significant contemporary legacies of territorial disputes and weapons proliferation exist because of the CCP's support for Pakistan and North Korea (Tourangbam 2020; Corera 2006; Pringsheim 1965).

Following Mao's death, two of Deng Xiaoping's central precepts were 'hide and bide' and 'cross the river by feeling for the stones'. These slogans replaced Mao's idea of 'constant struggle' with a practical focus on economic development, which ultimately would deliver the Party more power and thus policy options. In foreign

policy, Deng visited the United States very early on in 1979 and pushed China towards cooperation and trade with Western corporations. In 2001, his reforms gained the PRC membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This granted the PRC the same access to the global market as other members.

The beneficiaries of Deng's policies, which created socialist state-directed market capitalism, are the CCP leaders of today. China's rapid economic development, present wealth and projected economic growth radically expanded its power and foreign policy options. Deng attempted to prevent the domination of the Party by one person by introducing presidential two-term limits, but Xi Jinping overturned that rule. During the 1980s, however, many in the West believed that the economic reforms were leading China to democratic change. When Deng used the army to violently crackdown on the popular 1989 pro-democracy movement, however, the West failed to uphold their principles, ultimately forgiving Deng's Tiananmen Square massacre when it became clear that they could make money in China, democracy or no democracy. This also enabled the CCP's foreign policy overreach, giving it the belief that it could get away with human rights violations.

Beginning in the late 1990s, and especially following the 2008/09 Global Financial Crisis, China emerged as a great power. The size of its economy surpassed that of all European economies and that of Japan and India in 2010 to come second behind that of the United States. It completed this transition in a little over 30 years, and with 10 times less GDP per capita than Japan (Citeco 2022; World Bank 2022). This extraordinary feat strengthened the CCP, enabling it to make a deal with the Chinese people—in essence, 'stay out of politics and we'll rejuvenate the Chinese nation'. If we accept that the PRC may develop to a comparable GDP per capita with other developed states, its population size relative to the United States will make it a far larger economy. However, it is unknown whether a state with more than a billion people will be able to manage a political economy to become fully developed, as it would be unprecedented. For General Secretary Xi Jinping, who assumed office on 15 November 2012, the belief in Chinese socialism, combined with the conviction that China's rapid growth and relative size would afford him radically different foreign policy options than his predecessors, allowed him to dream.

The China Dream, according to Xi, seeks the 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'. He has joined Mao in having his thought inscribed in the constitution, and both Deng and Mao in having his name associated with an ideology: Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era. Xi Jinping Thought aims to pioneer a uniquely Chinese path and model for human advancement. It employs Marxist–Leninist concepts such as the 'correct path' for a 'new development stage' and the goal of achieving 'common prosperity' (Mitter 2021; Xinhua 2022).

Thus, the domestic contributions to foreign policy IRT dysfunction and overreach include periodic policy collapse and human suffering, economic incompetence and political instability under Mao, the success of Deng's policy of economic reform and an open door to the world, and gigantism and exceptionalism mixed with vengeance and avarice to achieve socialism with Chinese characteristics under Xi.

China the great power: Not a socialist victory

China's status as a great power is due to a combination of access to the global liberal market as the world's most populous state and one that attracts significant foreign investment and the statecraft of the CCP under Deng, which used neo-mercantilist policies such as the special economic zones within the global liberal market to develop via export-orientated industrialisation. However, the theoretically unsophisticated contemporary CCP argues that the development and rapid economic growth of China are primarily a result of their correct socialist path. Xi Jinping Thought does not emphasise the maintenance and expansion of the post-World War II rules-based order that required liberal, not Marxist, thought. In foreign policy, Xi Jinping has deliberately rejected Deng's 'hide and bide' approach, while domestically he is undermining his program of economic reforms that, for example, allowed state-owned enterprises to wither while private companies flourished. Xi Jinping Thought has empowered the CCP to pursue socialist politics as a vanguard party to develop a new model of human advancement under a surveillance state.

The incongruence between Chinese Marxism–Leninism, or 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', and the PRC's development outcomes alongside its relative success as a global economy under the established liberal order is the primary source of the CCP's foreign policy IRT dysfunction and overreach. The overreach and IRT dysfunction are causing the PRC to become an international pariah in much of the West. Problematically for the functionality of the CCP's great power statecraft, the PRC claims many foreign policy issues as 'China's internal affairs'. For example, on the adoption of a China-related resolution by Japan's House of Representatives, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian stated, 'The so-called human rights issues claimed by the Japanese side are purely China's internal affairs, bear on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and allow no irresponsible comment by any external forces' (Takenaka 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2022). Hence the CCP misunderstands how it has developed China and will not accept any alternative assessments from the global political economy on which it is dependent, leaving it as a revisionist state compromising its own development.

Territorial disputes

The access to the global liberal market that has underpinned China's rapid development is being undermined by its rejuvenation-driven foreign policy IRT dysfunction and overreach. Approximately 90% of world trade is reliant on maritime transport (International Chamber of Shipping 2022). More than 35% of China's GDP is reliant on merchandise trade (World Bank 2022). The United States has merchandise trade worth approximately 20% or less of its GDP. The PRC is uniquely vulnerable economically because of its high dependence on energy imports and exports to the liberal global market (Ping 2014). Reliance on exports impairs the CCP's great power statecraft, which makes CCP foreign policy—that disrupts global trade—self-defeating and an indicator of IRT dysfunction. To redress this problem, the CCP announced its 'dual circulation' strategy under the 14th five-year plan,

expanding the domestic market at the same time as growing the export trade so that the two become mutually reinforcing and support China's manufacturing base, which in the CCP's view drives Chinese economic success (Huang et al. 2021). However, middle and small powers do not have the same capacity to pursue similar circular economy policy or regional territorial expansion policies, so they may withdraw consent and work collectively against China's threat to the liberal global market that they are all dependent upon. Where possible, states such as Pakistan and Malaysia are renegotiating debts to China to avoid what is called 'debt trap diplomacy', although the term is contentious and not entirely accurate. Others, such as India and Australia, are avoiding the One Belt, One Road, although by 2022, 146 countries and 32 international organisations were members of this initiative. Moreover, Australia is also among those seeking to reduce their supply chain dependence on China (*Eurasian Times* 2022; Kuang, Fang & Jose 2019; Sipalan 2019).

Intergovernmental organisations and the Bretton Woods institutions of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization, to which the PRC belongs but which are led by the largest economy, the United States, maintain the capacity to disrupt the PRC's economy. Individual great powers, and middle powers to a lesser extent, are also able to regulate their own markets by imposing tariffs (within the limits imposed by WTO, for example) or ensuring supply chain resilience, international trade agreements and taxation and foreign investment policies. In the United States, President Donald Trump began pursuing protectionist policies, which President Joe Biden continued. Politically, states are combining economic policies with liberal policies of collective security and mercantilist deterrence through the balance of hard power and strategic alliances such as the Quad and AUKUS. The CCP's foreign policy IRT dysfunction is causing states to adopt defensive policies—particularly in the Indo-Pacific—to counter the CCP's rejuvenation through socialism, which requires a foreign policy of regional territorial expansionism and systemic revisionism.

The South China Sea nine-dash line claims, and the CCP's creation of artificial islands that it has militarised, are primary examples of tension points in the Indo-Pacific. On the 5th anniversary of the—disastrous for the CCP—2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration UNCLOS invalidation of China's 'nine-dash line' (Sison 2018), US Secretary of State Blinken (2021), released a press statement that warned:

> Nowhere is the rules-based maritime order under greater threat than in the South China Sea. The People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to coerce and intimidate Southeast Asian coastal states, threatening freedom of navigation in this critical global throughway . . . [A]n armed attack on Philippine armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea would invoke US mutual defense commitments under Article IV of the 1951 US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty.

Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam are all directly affected by the CCP's assertion of its claim that would see up to 90% of several states' exclusive economic zones be ceded to the PRC (Sison 2018; see also De Castro, this

volume, Chapter 9). In addition, the Chinese claims and island-building in the South China Sea give it the potential to control crucial shipping lanes, which has many worried. The CCP's foreign policy is potentially undermining the rules that enable access to the global liberal market for itself and all other states (Petrusic 2016).

The South China Sea nine-dash line territorial claims, the ongoing stated desire to 'recover' or 'reunite' Taiwan, and the 30 June 2020 National Security Law in Hong Kong—that overturns the 'one country two systems' arrangement in the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration that was supposed to guarantee Hong Kong autonomy in internal affairs for 50 years after the 1997 handover of sovereignty from the United Kingdom to PRC, are all revisionist foreign policies that could threaten the stability of the global political economy (United Nations 2022). The East China Sea territorial dispute with Japan over Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Manicom 2008) similarly arises from a claim that China insists relates to its internal affairs and proper territory. Indian and Chinese troops have clashed along the Line of Actual Control in small-scale but violent incidents. The PRC's refusal to condemn Russia's disastrous invasion of Ukraine and amplification of Russian propaganda is a foreign policy that seriously damaged the credibility of the CCP, leading to withdrawal of consent.

The greatest instances of destruction of consent and reversion to collective security and hard power due to China's foreign policy IRT dysfunction and overreach under Xi are the Quad and AUKUS—although they do not actually name China as the main reason for their formation. Australia and the United States have also adopted power projection policies in the region, such as the 'Pacific Step-Up' and '2020 Pacific Pledge', which provide support to the Indo-Pacific for security, governance and development. They also are providing increased diplomatic support in the form of new consulates and expansion of embassies and offering whole of government training in agreed areas such as policing, climate and disaster resilience and fisheries management in, for example, the Solomon Islands. Significantly, however, the 2022 Australian Federal Election that brought in a Labor government highlighted the perceived Liberal government policy shortcomings that failed to prevent the CCP from establishing diplomatic relations with the Solomon Islands in 2019 and quickly signing a five-year security agreement in 2022 (BBC 2022; DFAT 2022a; United States Department of State 2020).

Most concerning of the developments for the CCP is AUKUS, the collective security alliance that has resulted from China's economic, and other, pressure on Australia following its early 2020 unilateral demand for an independent investigation into the origins of Covid-19 (see also Hayes, this volume, Chapter 10). Under AUKUS, Australia will purchase nuclear submarines and build an east coast base from which the Five Eyes member states (Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States) will have greater capacity to restrict the PRC's military power projection into the Indo-Pacific (Pfluke 2019). Yet as critics of the deal in Australia have pointed out, it cost Australia goodwill with both Pacific nations and France after Canberra cancelled an existing contract for French submarines, not to mention the fact that the ones being purchased under AUKUS may not be delivered before 2040. This has also contributed to Beijing's relative success with the Solomon Islands, whose then Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare said that given 'the Pacific

family' will be affected by nuclear submarines in their waters, Australia could have directly consulted with the Solomon Islands and other Pacific nations before signing up to AUKUS (Meacham 2022). AUKUS is debated in Beijing as a foreign policy failure that should have been avoided. Essentially, the withdrawal of consent should have been avoided because the perception of overreach is what prompted the creation of alliances that appear to be aimed at containing China's rise.

CCP aggression towards Australia

The clearest example of CCP foreign policy IRT dysfunction is in its relations with its immediate and economically interdependent neighbours. The 'wolf warrior' diplomacy that began in 2020 uses the kind of rhetoric that the CCP typically aims towards its domestic enemies in foreign relations—insulting, hectoring, tyrannical—along with demands that, essentially, ask foreign countries to abandon their own self-interest for that of the PRC, alongside of aggressive actions. There are numerous examples. There was the economic punishment of South Korea during its deployment of THADD from 2016–17. Another was the sudden appearance of 200 Chinese fishing boats at Whitsun Reef, a part of the contested Spratly Islands close to the Philippines, in early 2021, and to which both China and the Philippines lay claim, prompting a diplomatic protest by the Philippines. However, the starkest example of 'wolf warrior' diplomacy-style overreach has been towards Australia (Erickson & Martinson 2021; Lim & Ferguson 2021). China is relatively dependent on Australia for iron ore, coal and other commodities it needs to maintain economic development and therefore political stability. For example, there are no other sources for the reliable supply of high-volume, low-cost, and close proximity iron ore compared to Australia, making it highly convenient as a source of iron ore for China.

In 2014, President Xi Jinping acknowledged the connection when he addressed a joint sitting of the Australian Parliament. The two countries had just concluded a historic free trade deal (to be enacted in 2015) and agreed to elevate the relationship to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'. Xi spoke of his own experiences of Australian goodwill, understanding, friendship and commitment as well as China's need for peace. He stated, 'China needs peace. A harmonious and a stable domestic environment and a peaceful international environment are what China needs most' (cited in Parliament of Australia 2014).

However, for various reasons, tensions rose over the next six years and on 17 November 2020, the PRC Embassy in Canberra issued an extraordinary dossier of 14 disputes to Australian journalists (see Figure 2.1). Australia was warned if it did not comply, and modify its behaviour towards China, it would greatly compromise its sovereignty, security and democracy. A Chinese government official told one reporter, 'China is angry. If you make China the enemy, China will be the enemy' (cited in Kearsley, Bagshaw & Galloway 2020).

Since 2020, and acting against its own economic interests, China's attempts to punish Australia by restricting imports of barley, beef, lamb, wine, cotton, lobsters, timber and coal resulted in a drop in two-way trade of 40% (ABC 2021b; Sullivan 2020). This is despite both states being members of the World Trade Organization and the 2015 trade agreement. The Australian economy was not significantly

"— foreign investment decisions, with acquisitions blocked on opaque national security grounds in contravention of ChAFTA/since 2018, more than 10 Chinese investment projects have been rejected by Australia citing ambiguous and unfounded "national security concerns" and putting restrictions in areas like infrastructure, agriculture and animal husbandry.
— the decision banning Huawei Technologies and ZTE from the 5G network, over unfounded national security concerns, doing the bidding of the US by lobbying other countries
— foreign interference legislation, viewed as targeting China and in the absence of any evidence.
— politicization and stigmatization of the normal exchanges and cooperation between China and Australia and creating barriers and imposing restrictions, including the revoke of visas for Chinese scholars.
— call for an international independent inquiry into the COVID-19 virus, acted as a political manipulation echoing the US attack on China
— the incessant wanton interference in China's Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan affairs; spearheading the crusade against China in certain multilateral forums
— the first non littoral country to make a statement on the South China Sea to the United Nations
— siding with the US' anti-China campaign and spreading disinformation imported from the US around China's efforts of containing COVID-19.
— the latest legislation to scrutinize agreements with a foreign government targeting towards China and aiming to torpedo the Victorian participation in B&R
— provided funding to anti-China think tank for spreading untrue reports, peddling lies around Xinjiang and so-called China infiltration aimed at manipulating public opinion against China
— the early dawn search and reckless seizure of Chinese jounalists' homes and properties without any charges and giving any explanations
— thinly veiled allegations against China on cyber attacks without any evidence
— outrageous condemnation of the governing party of China by MPs and racist attacks against Chinese or Asian people.
— an unfriendly or antagonistic report on China by media, poisoning the atmosphere of bilateral relations"

Figure 2.1 Extract from the dossier of 14 disputes presented by the Chinese Embassy in Canberra

Source: Bagshaw, Eryk 2020, '[X—formerly Twitter]', 18 November, viewed 24 July 2024, (https://x.com/ErykBagshaw/status/1328983898911457280/photo/1).

affected because goods flowed to other consumers in the global liberal market, but the Chinese people and industry have suffered higher prices, lower-quality goods and blackouts because of the ban on Australian coal (Tan & Chen 2021).

The CCP's foreign policy IRT dysfunction and overreach may be described here as hegemonism: aggression against a weaker state (Yong & Pauly 2013).

In response to China's foreign policy IRT dysfunction and overreach, Australia announced, via the 2020 Defence Strategic Update and 2020 Force Structure Plan, A$800 million to purchase AGM-158C LRASM (long-range anti-ship missiles) for its F/A-18F Super Hornets, A$1 billion to create a sovereign missile program, the formation of AUKUS, and the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines (ABC 2021a; Davis 2020; Galloway & Hartcher 2020; Prime Minister of Australia 2021). The Quad, AUKUS and Australia's domestic and foreign policy responses to counter the CCP's hegemonism demonstrated the CCP's underestimation of the capacity of states like Australia to counter its hegemonism.

Chinese Marxism–Leninism undermining of the global liberal market

Deng Xiaoping's late 1970s Open Door Policy offered multinationals an unprecedented opportunity to expand into the world's largest single market of almost one billion people that peaked at over 1.4 billion people in 2022 to be surpassed by India in 2023 (United Nations 2023; Shen & Mantzopoulos 2013). Foreign multinational corporations initially engaged with the Chinese people predominantly as a source of low-cost labour and later as consumers (with Japanese car manufacturers and some US consumer products such as Coca-Cola being early into the Chinese market). However, the CCP's inability to manage the domestic market in line with global norms and standards of transparency, access and competition has ultimately resulted in a trade war with its largest consumer market, the United States. The United States has withdrawn consent for Chinese trade due to the *perception* and data that China is not a legitimate adherent to the principles of a global liberal market a result of its IRT dysfunction. Various statistical measures may be cited to increase or decrease the trade surplus/deficit between China and the United States with a focus on different years and between goods and services. For example, the combined perceived cost to the United States to trade with China may be as high as one trillion dollars annually. China's trade surplus with the United States annually runs to hundreds of billions of dollars—$285.5 billion in goods and services in 2020 (United States Census Bureau 2022)—which, added to the lack of protection for intellectual property rights, results in an estimated yearly cost of between US$225 and US$600 billion (Yukon & Smith 2019). While the United States and China were trying to negotiate their way out of President Trump's 'trade war' to a permanent trade deal, former US trade representative Robert Lighthizer stated the following in testimony to the House Ways and Means Committee 2019:

> If we can complete this effort—and again, I say 'if'—and can reach a satisfactory solution to the all-important and outstanding issue of enforceability, as well as some other concerns, we might be able to have agreement that does turn the corner in our economic relationship. We can compete with anyone in the world, but we must have rule, enforced rules, that make sure market outcomes and not state capitalism and technology theft determine winners.

Lighthizer's colleague, David Malpass, was nominated by President Trump to become president of the World Bank (Guida 2019). Prior to becoming president, Malpass criticised China's access to World Bank capital and, more recently, highlighted concern regarding the unknown level of national debt in China, as well as the need to reduce dependence of China:

> I met yesterday virtually with Premier Li Keqiang and he reiterated the importance China places on market-based systems based on price stability, and price liberalization. That of course is also very important in global trade. So I think there was substantial forward movement in China's trade with the world. That was welcome. But there became an overdependence by the world on supply chains from China. So that's a process that's now in evolution. I think that's an important step, for the world to diversify supply chains as global growth resumes after COVID.
>
> (Malpass 2021)

By 2022, Malpass noted that the World Bank still works well with China, and that the PRC's use of World Bank financing was shrinking. He did not believe that the current rules or Bretton Woods system was in danger: 'My view is we're not at that point now at all. There's not a sense of the world being lost'—even if he admitted that with regard to China sharing the values of other participants in the global trading system, 'I don't know that that will happen'.

Yet scholars such as Blanchette (2021) argue that Chinese state capitalism 'undermines the regulatory and legal architecture that underpins the global economy'. Lee (2021) agrees, stating,

> Hubris and overreach will come back to bite. China has crossed the line too far and too many times. Democracies in North America, Europe and Asia are starting to talk in similar ways and move in similar directions, albeit at different speeds as democratic processes are always messy and inelegant.

Without access to the consumer markets of the developed world (the United States and European Union alone have a combined population of almost 800 million), as well as globally sourced technologies, corporate knowledge, finance and innovation, the PRC would not have experienced such rapid development. Without ongoing access, which is threatened by foreign policy IRT dysfunction and overreach, the China Dream of national rejuvenation may falter.

Is socialist state-directed market capitalism a viable global development model for all states?

The CCP is Marxist–Leninist at home and mercantilist abroad. Within the liberal global market, the main economic actor is the regulated multinational corporation adhering to rules set between states to operate within a stable, transparent, efficient and expanding global liberal market. However, foreign multinational corporations

are restricted in the Chinese domestic market, and Chinese multinationals in the global market may be tasked with political obligations and are not simply independent actors providing profits for investors and goods and services for consumers.

The companies are an extension of the party and are not independent actors seeking a return on their capital, responding to the price mechanism in a rules-based global liberal market (Blanchette 2021; McGregor 2010). Their activities may extend to industrial espionage (Faligot 2019). The National Intelligence Law of the PRC 2017, Article 7 states, 'All organizations and citizens shall support, assist, and cooperate with national intelligence efforts [work] in accordance with law, and shall protect national intelligence work secrets they are aware of' (China Law Translate 2017).

Chinese financial corporations such as the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (now the world's largest corporation), China Construction Bank, Ping An Insurance Group, Agricultural Bank of China and the Bank of China are now all in the top 20 largest global companies. China also has global corporate reach in technology and energy (such as Alibaba Group, Tencent Holdings, Sinopec and PetroChina) (Forbes 2024).

The greatest concern of other states in the global market is with the Chinese telecommunications multinational corporations. President Biden has signed legislation banning TikTok (Walker 2024). The use of Huawei and ZTE to collect information on their customers that potentially may be a capacity to commit espionage is well documented (Hamilton 2018; Hamilton & Ohlberg 2020; Kaska, Beckvard & Minárik 2019; Mascitelli & Chung 2019). Earlier, in February 2018, FBI Director Chris Wray warned against buying Huawei and ZTE phones, and in May that year the Pentagon banned the use of these telephones on US military bases. In May 2019, President Trump, by National Security Order, effectively banned Huawei from the US market (Keane 2021). Australia and at least seven other countries, all US allies, have banned Huawei from their 5G networks; others such as India, Spain and Vietnam have taken what the Council on Foreign Relations calls a 'quieter approach'. Yet the Council has written, 'China's Huawei is Winning the 5G Race': the company has established a significant presence across South America, in Africa, Central Asia and Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand (Sacks 2021). With its policy 'Made in China 2025', which envisions Chinese high-technology companies replacing foreign imports at home and dominating global markets abroad—with implications for the security of data and so on—developed countries such as the United States are becoming increasingly alarmed at the national security implications of China's economic rise (Harvard 2022).

The United Front Work Department and authoritarian regimes

Celebrating the 100-year anniversary of the party in 2021, President Xi Jinping declared,

> Only socialism can save China, and only socialism with Chinese characteristics can develop China . . . we will never allow anyone to bully, oppress

> or subjugate China. Anyone who dares try to do that will have their heads bashed bloody against the Great Wall of Steel forged by over 1.4 billion Chinese people.
>
> (BBC 2021)

Within an expanding military capacity, the CCP has increasing hard power foreign policy options, including the threat of war. In addition, the CCP has sought to strengthen its soft power, including through the overseas work of its United Front Work Department. Overseas, the United Front seeks primarily to influence Chinese populations overseas to adopt a useful 'pro-China' stance but also looks to cultivate Chinese 'soft power' more generally and find allies among foreign elites (Goldrick 2018; see also Hayes, this volume, Chapter 10). The theorised task of finding allies among foreign elites, however, is exceptionally challenging within the international relations context.

In politics, the Morrison Liberal Party government was wary of China and initiated policies such as AUKUS, and while the present Australian Labor government has attempted to stabilise relations with China, Foreign Minister Penny Wong has repeatedly cautioned against a 'devasting conflict' and a 'permanent contest' and has retained the AUKUS policy (Taylor 2024). Minister Wong and the Albanese Labor government, however, have been repeatedly rebuked by former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating. His 2024 interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (state-owned broadcaster) was translated into Mandarin and widely distributed on Chinese domestic social media such as WeChat. He declared Taiwan to be 'Chinese real estate . . . and a part of China' and claimed that Albanese's policies, purposely AUKUS, would place Australia under US military control and turn Australia into the 51st state of an 'aggressive ally', the United States (Johnson 2024).

In academia, China is studied by a diverse international relations scholarly community. Australian progressive realism scholars, for example, deploy theory that tolerates '[a] successful invasion' of democratic Taiwan arguing that 'Taiwan is not crucial to the strategic balance' and that 'Australia should also work with its partners to embed Chinese power within regional institutions' (Bisley et al. 2022, pp. 153–154). However, even within realism the multiplicity is apparent with neoclassical realist analyse generally highlighting tension and distrust (Gill 2023). Thus, the attempt to find loyal allies outside of China within democratic plural societies may be elusive.

Thus, with an expanding military capacity; One Belt, One Road economic incentives for fellow autocratic regimes such as Myanmar, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan and Russia; and a strategic capacity to convince weaker, needy states to align with it, such as Pakistan and the Solomon Islands, combined with growing power to control the narrative both in China and globally, the CCP has a formidable arsenal to overcome foreign policy IRT limitations in other areas. It has foreign policy options that democratic states do not have, such as disregard for human rights, plundering of the global common, environmental destruction, hostage diplomacy, espionage, bribery, grey zone, political and cyber warfare and threatening overseas Chinese people as if they are sojourning members of a greater Chinese civilisation (Hamilton 2018; Kennedy 2021; Mantesso 2020).

The China Dream is for China, from CIRT, and not for all, and it is creating a coherent collective security response. Overreach is indicated by push back and, where more than one front is opened, distracting, causing a scarcity of required resources and an inability to alter policy, leading to catastrophic failure (such as Britain, Russia, United States and now China in Afghanistan). Unfortunately for the CCP, its IRT dysfunction may result in the division of the global community into a *class*-like split between the democratic market states and itself, which may result in China being isolated between Iran and North Korea within its One Belt, One Road initiative and given consent by similar or rogue regimes such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and Colonel Mamady Doumbouya in Guinea. Thus, its great power statecraft may be fundamentally incompatible with the contemporary liberal global system and may result in it being a declining power, having fallen into a peaking power trap (Brand 2021).

Conclusion

This chapter has used political economy to explain the CIRT dysfunction of the CCP. The CCP's great power statecraft has been characterised as hegemonism because it is using its great power capacity to threaten weaker states. The foundation for the CCP's foreign policy is Chinese Marxism–Leninism. States, firms and peoples that do not believe in the *collective alternative* and refuse the CCP's authority are conceptualised as class enemies to be 'bashed bloody'. However, the global political economy is far larger and more complex than the CCP can appreciate, and its foreign policy is readily countered through mercantilist and liberal policies that states are using because they are refusing to give consent to Chinese hegemonism. The leader-as-practitioner authoritarian statecraft of the CCP, led by *thought*, has conditioned the contemporary CCP leadership to follow a *correct path* and resist foreign policies that would more readily serve the interests of the PRC. It was Deng Xiaoping's creation of socialist state-directed market capitalism and the liberal global market that developed China, not the correct socialist path. The erroneous beliefs of the CCP have led it to foreign policy overreach. These policies have created future barriers and undermined the foundations of the PRC's present. Emblematic are the territorial disputes, hegemonism towards Australia, undermining of the global liberal market rules-based order, and impractical attempts to export socialism through multinational corporations and the United Front.

The incongruence between Chinese Marxism–Leninism as socialism with Chinese characteristics and the PRC's development outcomes provided by liberalism and mercantilism is the primary source of the CCP's CIRT dysfunction. The strengths of the CCP that enabled it to rapidly develop are dysfunctional for itself as the basis for foreign policy and are a threat to all other states and the system that they are dependent upon. Global class warfare is incompatible with the reality of the 21st century and the need for humanity to collaborate and compromise to enable an expected population of 11 billion to support itself in an environmentally sustainable manner in the 22nd century. The use of critical theory within a manipulated existence has deluded the CCP towards its own destruction. Without a purge

in the CCP to remove Xi Jinping or a revolt to remove the CCP and its dysfunctional IRT, China may be isolated within its One Belt, One Road and befriended by only the most desperate or similarly authoritarian regimes.

Notes

1 For more detailed explanation see: Wang, Zheng 2012, *Never forget national humiliation: Historical memory in Chinese politics and foreign relations*, Columbia University Press, New York.
2 For over a decade, prior to the 2020 pandemic, I regularly visited China Foreign Affairs University, the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations and other think-tanks such as the China Institute for International Studies to present and lead discussions. See X, formerly Twitter, @DrJHPing and references in other published works.
3 The change from 'chairman' happened in the early 1980s when Hua retired.

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3 Conceptualizing peace in China

Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and their strategic thinking

Cui Yue

Introduction

In peace research, we get a glimpse of how scholars in the Western world conceptualize peace in the English language. However, having grown out of an ancient Asian civilization, China is distinctive from Western countries in conceptualizing the world. It is reasonable to speculate that Chinese scholars do not necessarily conceptualize peace in the same way as the West, but not enough attention has been paid to this blank in peace research. Also being a rising power, both regional and global, China plays an increasingly significant role in making the world peaceful. Thus, Chinese thinking around peace has become more relevant in the study of international relations. As the editors of this book have pointed out, it is time to turn to China for more international relations theories. And by theory, Chinese scholars do not limit the term as defined in the Western social sciences but refer to a systematic investigation approaching a specific topic in a broader sense. This study is an effort to fill in such a blank by systematically investigating how peace has been conceptualized in the Chinese language, which leads to an explanation of the strategic thinking that dominated China's foreign policies for decades, and which has never been outdated.

The hierarchical and vertical structure of Chinese foreign policymaking gives political leaders critical roles in the decision-making processes with leaders mattering more than institutions (Yang 1995). Over time, foreign policymaking in China has trended toward less centralization, accompanied by the emergence of a small collective leadership style, but nonetheless individuals, especially paramount leaders, have extraordinary influence on national action (Heyer et al. 2014). Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping were both powerful paramount leaders. Mao wielded powerful individual authority and utterly dominated strategic and the highest-level diplomatic decision-making from 1949 to 1976 (Bachman 1998). For his part, Deng formulated an approach centring on consultation and coalitions but maintained the final say on all matters of strategic importance from 1976 to 1989 (Hamrin 1994). Scholars of China studies, both within and outside China, seem to agree that the most critical directions in foreign policies were initiated by Mao and Deng themselves (Lu 1997). By employing a typology of *heping* [Chinese word for peace], this chapter performs a systematic analysis of how Mao and Deng used

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the word, supplemented by analyses of four related Chinese words. By comparing the two leaders, the research is designed to find both connections and differences in their conceptualization of peace, and in turn how peace was prioritized in their strategic thinking.

A typology of *heping*

There is a range of key questions we may raise around peace in order to understand how it is conceptualized: What is peace? Is it a goal or a premise of something else? How can peace be achieved or whether it can be achieved at all? Is peace desirable? How important is it, or how high should it be prioritized? Who and what are positive or negative forces on peace?

This chapter proposes a typology of the Chinese word *heping* [peace] as an analytical tool to answer the aforementioned questions. Syntactically, *heping* can be used as a noun, a noun modifier, or an adverbial verb and can thus be translated as 'peace,' 'peaceful,' and 'peacefully,' respectively. Semantically, *heping* is used to refer to an ideal, a means, a condition, a state, or an idea. Based on such observations, a typology of *heping* is proposed as follows.

(1) Peace as an ideal (idealized goal): Referring to an ideal, *heping* is used to communicate the possibility of achieving the peace ideal (possible or not possible), when it can be achieved (soon or far in the future), and how it can be achieved (through peaceful means or conflicts).[1]
(2) Peace as a means: Referring to a means to act, *heping* is used to communicate the desirability of peace as a means (desirable or undesirable), or how desirable it is.[2]
(3) Peace as a condition (precondition): Referring to a condition, *heping* is used to communicate the necessity of peace as a condition for something else (indispensable or dispensable), and how indispensable it is. It is also worth noting to what the peaceful condition contributes.[3]
(4) Peace as a state: Referring to a state, *heping* is used to communicate who (supporters or opponents) is taking what actions (maintaining, promoting, or threatening) to project what kind of influence (positive or negative) on peace.[4]
(5) Peace as an idea: Referring to an idea, *heping* is not necessarily a dream to realize, but an idea that can be argued over. It is used to identify the different attitudes (support or oppose) held by people toward peace.[5]

Method

Content was gathered from three primary sources, which partly coincided with Zhang Qingmin's study on the personalities of Mao and Deng. The two sources on Mao are *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan [Selected Works of Mao Zedong on Diplomacy]* and *Mao Zedong Xuanji [Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung]*. *Mao Zedong on Diplomacy* is a compilation of 173 articles, speeches, comments, and telegrams about Chinese foreign relations from 1937 to 1974, that is, beginning two years

after Mao established his leadership within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at the Zunyi Conference during the Long March and ending two years prior to his death. Chapters and excerpts that contain focused discussions of war and peace were also selected from ten works in the five volumes of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*. This combination of the two presents a reliable source on Mao's views on foreign policy and war-peace relations. For Deng, the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (Volumes 2 and 3) were used as the primary sources of material. Volumes 2 and 3 cover early 1975 to 1992, that is, from the time Deng initially assumed a leadership role until one year before his death. The volumes provide comprehensive coverage of Deng's views on important aspects of China's governance under his leadership. Most of these selected works were either written by Mao or Deng themselves or are a verbatim record of their impromptu or extemporaneous comments; therefore, they most effectively reveal their inner worlds (Zhang 2014). The quantitative calculations are run only on the aforementioned primary sources of material; however, other sources are used to provide supplemental quotes and additional evidence.

The first level of analyses focuses on the usage of *heping* [peace]. Meaningful utterances that contain *heping* from the primary sources are identified and classified into the five categories according to how *heping* is used in context. The overall appearances of *heping* and the percentages of each category are calculated. Furthermore, in each category, qualitative analyses of Mao and Deng are made, with judgments inferred from their utterances.

Second, analyses are performed on four Chinese words—*zhanzheng* [war], *geming* [revolution], *anding* [stability], and *gaige* [reform]—to help further explain the relative positions of peace. When reading the works by the two leaders, a few themes emerge. Two words were chosen for each leader. Z*hanzheng* and *geming* are two themes that cannot be neglected in Mao's works. Also *zhanzheng* is the opposite of *heping* and frequently appears in discussions of peace. For Deng, *gaige* [reform] is the most important theme in his works. *Anding* also stands out and becomes equivalent to *heping* in a domestic context. So *anding* and *gaige* are selected for Deng. The total number of appearances is also calculated for each word to show their significance and to make comparisons, but the analyses are qualitative in nature.

Comparisons are made between Mao and Deng across all the aforementioned analyses.

Analyses and discussion

A total of 341 appearances of *heping* [peace] were found in Mao's works, whereas 164 found in Deng's works. As a percentage, the six categories follow the order of state>ideal>idea>means>condition>other for Mao, and state>means>conditio n>ideal>idea>other for Deng. Understandably, the category of 'state' is the most frequently used for both leaders because, by definition, peace refers to the state of the absence of war or conflict.[6] Notably, the category of 'ideal' is highly ranked for Mao, whereas the categories of 'means' and 'condition' are highly ranked for Deng.

Table 3.1 Categories of *heping*

Number of appearances of heping in each category	*Mao*	*Deng*
Peace as an ideal	82	13
Peace as a means	62	43
Peace as a condition	19	23
Peace as a state	97	65
Peace as an idea	78	10
Other	3	10
Total	**341**	**164**

Source: Compiled by the author.

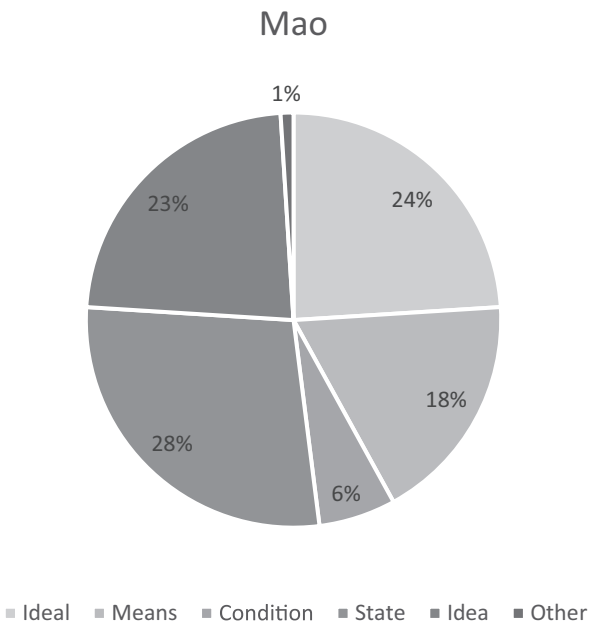


Figure 3.1 Percentage of appearances of *heping* in each category by Mao

Source: Compiled by the author.

Peace as an ideal

Unsurprisingly, both Mao and Deng took peace as an ideal for China. The nuanced differences between the two leaders are analyzed as follows.

Mao's use of *yongjiu heping* [perpetual peace] was unique and temporary. Beginning in 1936 (one year before Japan began its attack on China), and throughout the eight years of the war against Japan, Mao consistently referred to the 'peace' after the war as 'perpetual peace.' In 1938, his words were firm and optimistic about the

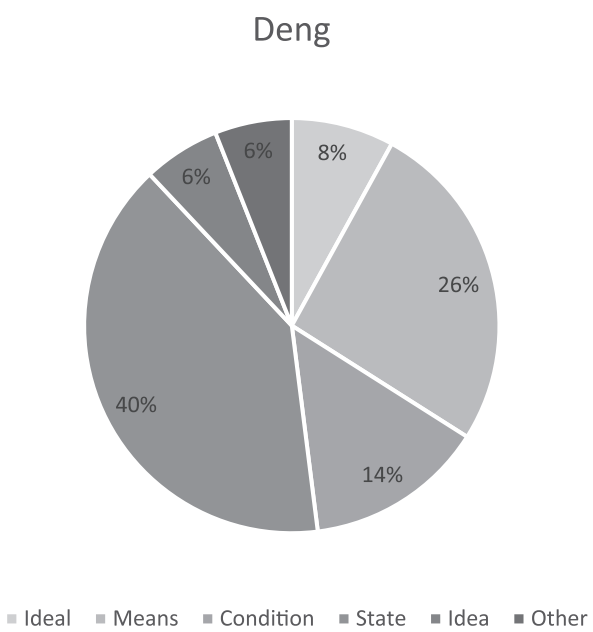


Figure 3.2 Percentage of appearances of *heping* in each category by Deng
Source: Compiled by the author.

prospect of such 'perpetual peace' (Mao 1994, pp. 9–12). Toward the end of the war in 1944, he continued to hold out hope for this ideal; Mao even contemplated cooperation between China and the United States as part of his vision for establishing perpetual peace (Mao 1994, pp. 36, 40). Mao used this term for the last time in December 1947 (Mao 1994, p. 66), after the civil war with the Guomindang (GMD) had begun, and after the United States had aligned itself on the opposite side of Mao's peace ideal by supporting Chiang Kai-shek. Between 1945 and 1957, Mao replaced 'perpetual peace' with 'lasting peace' as a goal, although it was often used in diplomatic language associated with working with friendly countries and other peaceful entities. By contrast, Deng never used the term *yongjiu heping* [perpetual peace] and rarely used *chijiu heping* [lasting peace] but focused instead on the near future of a specific number of years.

The clustered use of 'perpetual peace,' 'lasting peace,' and 'peace for a longer period'—and the switch from one to the other—show Mao's changed expectations regarding how long peace can last, as well as a fading idealism in realizing peace. In contrast to his estimation during the Sino-Japanese War, Mao admitted in 1963 that 'it will take a longer time to liberate the entire world' (Mao 1994, p. 502). In 1948, Mao discarded the usage of 'perpetual peace' as an expression and started discussing the possibility of war (Mao 1994, p. 68), although on occasion he continued to call for 'lasting peace.' The civil war with the GMD and the United States's decision to support the GMD changed his optimistic attitude into a

more realistic one about the prospect of peace. Between 1948 and 1959, 'a longer period'—of 10 to 15 years—was set as a goal for peace, as it was believed to be realistically possible to achieve (Mao 1994, p. 69).

For Deng, his belief on the prospect of peace was obviously influenced by Mao and went through a change. However, in contrast to Mao, Deng inherited Mao's wariness regarding the possibility of war but not his pessimism. In 1978, the Reform and Opening-up policy was adopted to achieve the four modernizations over the upcoming 20 years; notably, by the early 1980s, Deng had begun discussing his vision for the following 30 to 50 years, all of which was based on the belief that it was possible to achieve a longer period of peace (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 233).[7] If we consider that Deng became China's primary leader in 1975, the belief of 30 to 50 years of peace was shaped within the first few years of his leadership role and did not change dramatically thereafter.

Apart from the question as to whether peace can be achieved at all, another important aspect of the peace ideal (and a recurring theme in the analysis that follows) is how peace can be achieved. Mao demonstrated a firm belief in war as the path leading to perpetual peace. He explicitly stated that once the capitalist class was eliminated, the era of perpetual peace would come, and to him, it was only through revolutionary wars that this class could be eliminated (Mao 1968, vol. 3, p. 158). In Feng's (2005) study of Mao's operational code, she found that Mao preferred strategies based on conflict as opposed to those based on cooperation. This study validates that claim.

Deng was different in that he did not argue for force as the means necessary to realize peace. He opposed unnecessary wars. Instead, he stated that if the third world (including China) achieved significant development, and if Europe made considerable progress, the risk of war would be diminished (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 233). His anti-hegemony views—which were more directed toward the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the context of the 1970s and both the United States and the USSR in the early 1980s—were more political than militaristic in nature.

Peace as a means

Deng's use of *heping* [peace] as a means involves a convergence of the three themes, namely, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, a peaceful solution for Hong Kong's and Taiwan's separations from the Chinese mainland and the peaceful evolution from socialism back to capitalism. Mao's discussions in this category are more disparate, covering more specific topics. Mao's support for peaceful means was issue-sensitive, while Deng supported peaceful means, except regarding the peaceful evolution from socialism back to capitalism.

Mao considered peaceful means desirable in scenarios such as business, using nuclear energy, exploiting resources, and solving disputes (Mao 1994, pp. 16, 198, 213, 427). He argued for a peaceful solution to both the Xi'an Incident and the Korean War. He recognized that peace is desirable for economic and social development (Mao 1994, p. 118), which Deng later adopted as the fundamental logic in his strategic thinking. Simultaneously, Mao's *parabellum* view of peace, as posited

by Johnston (1996), is also notable. Mao emphasized that not all matters can be solved peacefully. For example, about the Japanese invasion and the survival of the Chinese nation, he was a firm believer that force must be employed to achieve an ultimate peace.

Thus, peaceful means are the first choice, but the option of military force cannot be given up and may be resorted to when peaceful means are no longer an option. This formulation best presents Mao's *parabellum* view of peace, which became China's *parabellum* view of peace when it was inherited by Deng. Deng made similar remarks that force would not be given up when discussing Hong Kong's and Taiwan's return to China (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 87). Furthermore, war or military actions could also promote peace. In the case of the Vietnam War, Mao implied that peace or the negotiation of peace was based on military action (Mao 1994, p. 505). Regarding the Korean War, Mao made it explicit that war must be fought until the United States agreed to meet and negotiate peacefully (Mao 1994, p. 149).

Both Mao and Deng praised the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence for its effectiveness in dealing with bilateral relations with all countries and were proud of this ideational creation, for which China shared ownership with India. Mao set the tone for such positions, which had a profound influence on Chinese diplomacy. In fact, the Five Principles became the main diplomatic approach adopted by Chinese leaders to achieve peace between China and other countries. Deng proved himself to be even more committed to the Five Principles by extending it to the domestic context, the peaceful solution of the Hong Kong and Taiwan questions, and even to the new field of creating a new international order. In the late 1980s, when facing difficulties after the Tiananmen Square Incident, the setback of socialism and the collapse of the USSR, Deng emphasized that China should adhere to the Five Principles in managing its relations with countries with different political beliefs and social systems, whether they were Western liberal democratic countries or Russia (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 353). Under Deng's leadership, anti-hegemonism was listed as one of China's prioritized foreign policy goals, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were thus applied as a major diplomatic tool to protect China from the two superpowers.

Another important theme for peaceful means is Hong Kong's peaceful return to China and China's peaceful reunification of Taiwan, also known as the One Country Two Systems policy. Deng devoted more than half of his use of *heping* [peace] as a means (25 out of a total of 43) under this theme. A comparison of the number of utterances made by Mao and Deng showed that Mao may have coined and initially explored the idea, but it was Deng who developed the idea more fully, transforming it into a policy. A thorough examination of the utterances supports the aforementioned observation; Deng made more elaborate explanations of the policy and engaged in more detailed discussions. Mao identified two ways of resolving the Taiwan issue—peacefully or by force—and reiterated China's orientation toward a peaceful solution (Mao 1994, p. 380, 453). Mao's talk about the idea of a peaceful solution to the Taiwan separation appeared in 1955, but only after 1983 did Deng make the proposal that Mainland China and Taiwan be united peacefully (Mao 1994, p. 211).

Although the One Country Two Systems policy was proposed to solve Taiwan separation, only Hong Kong and Macao were settled under the proposal. However, Taiwan was at the heart of Deng's development plan for China because the Taiwan 'hotspot' might cause uncertainty in the Sino-US relationship and the prospect of peace for China (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 97). Deng listed it as China's second-highest priority to complete in the 1980s (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 30); however, Deng realized that resolving this hotspot would take time (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 31).

Peace as a condition (precondition)

Because the total number of times that the word *heping* [peace] was used by Mao is about twice that of Deng, Mao's utterances exceed those of Deng in most categories. However, *heping* as a condition is the only category in which Deng's use of *heping* outnumbers that of Mao. This is also a category in which Mao's and Deng's thinking overlapped the most: both emphasized the importance of peace as a condition for China's development. It is also salient that Deng's utterances are almost exclusively focused on this theme.

Data shows that between 1954 and 1959, Mao's use of *heping* [peace] as a condition focused on development, which began an important tradition that was later taken up by Deng. In 1953, the Korean War came to its end, easing China's immediate security threat and leading Chinese leaders to shift their thinking to domestic development. This focus ended with the failure of the Great Leap Forward economic campaign.

Unlike Mao, Deng had a clear and lasting focus on economic development. He devised a blueprint for China's development consisting of the four modernizations and the Reform and Opening-up policy. Notably, a peaceful international environment was believed to be one of the two necessary conditions to achieve Deng's development goals. It is relevant in this context that the only time Deng used the term *chijiu heping* [lasting peace] is in 'the lasting peaceful environment' (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 156).

Peace as a state

This category constitutes the highest percentage of Mao's usage of *heping* [peace] and the second-highest percentage of Deng's usage. When *heping* is used to refer to a state of absence of war or conflict, peace is taken or implied as the status quo. Therefore, in such usage, Mao and Deng are found to identify who is standing with, and who against, peace, and what actions have been taken to contribute to, or damage, peace as the status quo. Again, Mao's discussions are scattered across different subjects, whereas Deng's converge on several themes.

The dichotomy of peace supporters and opponents (analysis and findings across distinct categories) sorts the subjects into two opposing camps, which lie at the root of some wars and conflict. Who is supporting peace? Who is opposing it? Chinese leaders' answers to such questions help us understand how alliances, friends, and adversaries were constructed in Chinese strategic thinking and foreign policies. Mao

and Deng both believed China to be a positive force for domestic and world peace, and they both agreed that third world countries stood with China in such a role.

In Mao's post-World War II order, China strongly supported world peace by working with four tiers of countries. The first tier was occupied by the USSR. Before the two countries split, Mao believed that the USSR had a leadership position in the peace camp as China's most reliable ally. The second tier were developing, non-aligned Asian and African countries, such as India, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Nepal. The third tier included Western countries, such as the United Kingdom, reformed Germany, and even the United States, when possible. The fourth tier included Japan. In 1955, Mao indicated his willingness to normalize diplomatic relations with Japan on the premise that Japan become democratized and abolish militarism (Mao 1994, p. 226). In 1985, Deng promised that China would shrink its military by one million troops as a concrete contribution to world peace (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 126).

Mao and Deng present notably contrasting attitudes toward the USSR. Searching through Mao's utterances containing *heping* [peace] as a state, we see the USSR depicted as the guardian of world peace and the positive role of the Sino-USSR relationship; moreover, there is no evidence of the influence of the breakup between the CCP and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Although Mao believed that the USSR was dangerous (Mao 1994, p. 597), Mao never referenced the USSR as the opponent of world peace. On the other hand, Deng explicitly criticized the USSR for its hegemonic actions and for threatening China's security (Deng 1993, vol. 2, p. 395). Under Deng's leadership, anti-hegemonism was always high on the agenda of China's foreign policy in the late 1970s and 1980s, and the hegemonism topic referred primarily to the USSR during that period.

The United States presents a more complicated case. Mao's attitudes toward the United States changed more than once. As discussed previously, the civil war with the GMD changed Mao's perception of the United States, which was reinforced during the Korean War. The United States, which had fought against Japan, changed from a potential friend to an adversary, an imperialist power as constructed in Mao's language. In 1955, Mao indicated that the United States seriously threatened China's security by invading Taiwan (Mao 1994, p. 199). The United States became the main target of Mao's attacks for threatening peace until the leaders of China and the United States found common ground in easing tensions and presenting a united front against the USSR in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Deng validated the normalization of Sino-US relations and supported Sino-US cooperation but also criticized hegemonic actions by the United States. Again, these criticisms were mostly covered under the anti-hegemonism umbrella, and no specific blame was placed on the United States, in particular.

Peace as an idea

Compared with the category of 'peace as an ideal' and 'peace as a state,' 'peace as an idea' does not involve actions taken to achieve peace as a goal or to influence peace as the status quo. For example, love of the idea of peace does not necessarily

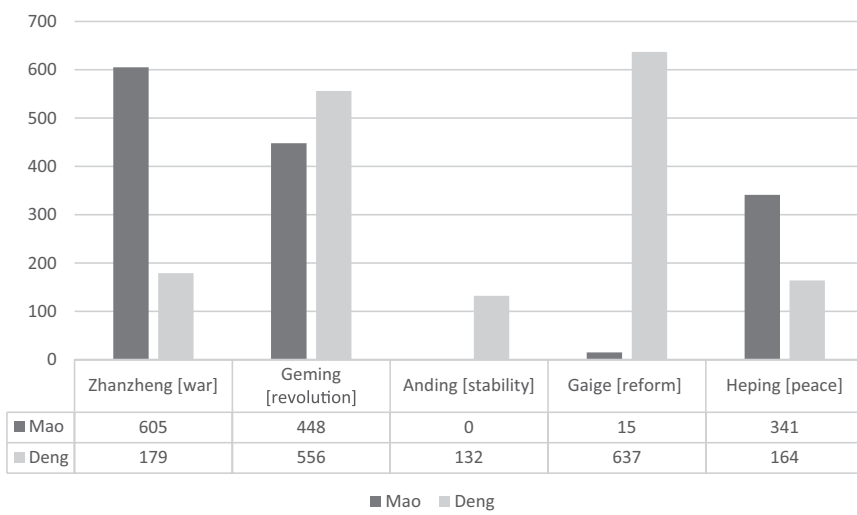
produce peace. However, as with 'peace as a state,' the use of *heping* as an idea also reflects different attitudes held by different subjects towards peace. An examination of the data in this category helps to identify who favours peace and who does not, cross-checking with the last section.

Results show staunch support for the findings in the last section. Both Mao and Deng agreed on China and third world countries, which is consistent with their efforts to support a Non-Aligned Movement and to form a broad united front against both superpowers (Shambaugh 1992). The 'peace-loving world peace front' and 'peace-loving world people' expressions used by Mao were more rhetorical. A wider range of people were included in the peace-loving camp; people across states, nationalities, and social and political systems all embraced the idea. Thus, this rhetoric was part of China's strategy to gain support from this wide range of people who argued for, and aspired to have, peace. Again, the United States and its leaders were strongly condemned by Mao for not truly favouring peace (Mao 1994, pp. 410–411).

Related key words

On zhanzheng

Based on overall appearances, Mao's data contain a striking number of references to *zhanzheng* [war]. This may be attributable to the fact that China was not peaceful when he emerged as a top leader and the war was ongoing. China fought two major wars under Mao's leadership, and as a strategist, Mao elaborated in his analysis on war in general and Chinese war in particular. When Deng used the word *zhanzheng*,



	Zhanzheng [war]	Geming [revolution]	Anding [stability]	Gaige [reform]	Heping [peace]
Mao	605	448	0	15	341
Deng	179	556	132	637	164

Figure 3.3 Five key words compared

Source: Compiled by the author.

in most cases he was attempting to draw lessons from wars fought previously and to identify themes that were relevant to the contemporaneous situation. When leading China during peacetime, his discussion of wars was limited to and focused on modern war and the challenges it posed to science and technology as well as to the Chinese military.

As the opposite of *heping* [peace], *zhanzheng* [war] is a useful reflection of how peace is conceptualized. In this sense, an examination of the use of *zhanzheng* is supplementary to the analysis that has been made of *heping*. During the Sino-Japanese War, early in his leadership, Mao was an idealist about both war and peace. He stated that the purpose of war is to eliminate war and that there was only one way to eliminate war: to oppose war with another war (Mao 1968, p. 158). This view is also consistent with his Marxist view of peace that war and peace are interrelated and interchangeable. A war is not just a war but also a path leading to peace. This logic of war and peace being unified in one lies at the heart of Mao's decisions to go to war. As he stated, 'our faith in waging this war is based upon the new China and the new world of perpetual peace and brightness for which we are striving' (Mao 1994, pp. 11–12).

Although Deng agreed with Mao on the possibility of war, his optimism was difference-making. He emphasized that 'we are not pessimists' (Deng 1993, vol. 2, p. 416). Although wary of the risks of war, Deng nonetheless made a long-term plan for development and was determined to carry it out. The primary goal to achieve development and anything else was secondary. Regarding anti-hegemonism, hegemonic actions were criticized but the two superpowers were rarely mentioned. Deng sought to normalize diplomatic relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union, and he also tried to break through the stalemate of Sino-US relations in 1990s (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 331).

On geming

A disproportionally higher number of *geming* [revolution] references in Deng's data can be explained by two factors. One is that when Deng first moved into the leadership position, he had to correct the mistakes made in the Cultural Revolution or *wenhua da geming* in Chinese. Out of 559 appearances of *geming* in Deng's data, 175 were *wenhua da geming* [the Cultural Revolution]. The other factor is that Deng developed the concept of *geming* by stating that *gaige* [reform] is also a form of *geming*. Because *gaige* lay at the heart of his arguments, the use of *geming* also increased.

Geming [revolution] is a main theme in other works of Mao Zedong, but the primary material selected here for Mao in this study, *Selected Works of Mao on Diplomacy*, does not feature a particularly large amount of this theme. *Geming*, although entailing force in its traditional definition, is highly commendatory in both Mao's and Deng's language systems. It was the cause they devoted their life to, and it was the cause they believed would create a bright future for China. According to Mao, there are just wars and unjust wars; revolutionary wars must be fought because they are just wars (Mao 1968, p. 158). *Geming* was considered an equivalent of

justice; therefore, Mao added *geming* as a modifier to *zhanzheng* [war] to indicate the justice of war.

Another factor that might help explain Mao's inclination toward military force was the dichotomy caused by the logic of *geming* [revolution]. Throughout Mao's time as paramount leader, a central question for him was who would stand with him in the cause of *geming* and who opposed *geming*. In 1939, the entities against *geming* were 'imperialism and feudalism, the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries and landlord class' (Mao 1968, p. 633). In a revolution, whoever is placed in the opposing category becomes the target to be eliminated by force. The revolutionary logic justifies a conflictual view of the political world, which also leads to a dichotomy between the supporters and opponents of peace. Although peace is desirable, it is not as desirable as revolution in Mao's priority setting.

Deng would not give up the cause of *geming* [revolution], but he used *geming* for everything he wanted to achieve in peacetime. He saw the need to develop science and technology and streamline organizations, which brought about the science and technology revolution and the revolution for streamlining organizations (Deng 1993, vol. 2, pp. 87, 396). The most important *geming* in Deng's time was reform. By presenting the rationale that 'the aim of our revolution is to liberate and expand productive forces,' he shifted the focus of *geming* from 'class struggle' to development of productivity (Deng 1993, vol. 2, pp. 231, 311). Deng redirected the concept of *geming* from the elimination of a certain class or group of people to a revolutionary change in lagging productivity (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 135). In so doing, Deng added a peaceful component to *geming*, and his pursuit of the productivity revolution made China a peace-seeking country.

On anding

Anding [stable/stabilize/stability] is mostly used to describe a stable situation or atmosphere in a domestic context, particularly as Deng used the term. The lack of recorded results on the use of *anding* [stable] from the current data in Mao's source material could be attributed to a selection bias. The *Selected Works of Mao on Diplomacy* covers works discussing foreign relations, and excerpts from the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* focused on peace and war. By contrast, Deng's material source, the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, included topics across domestic and international domains. However, even without such selection bias, *anding* appears much less frequently in Mao's works than in Deng's because Deng's main argument was that without stability and unity, nothing could be accomplished (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 331).

Anding [stable/stability] was used in combination with *tuanjie* [unified/unity] by Deng, and this combination appeared 104 times out of the 134 total appearances of *anding*. Unlike the exclusiveness in Mao's logic of revolution, the *anding tuanjie* [stability and unity] logic features inclusiveness. The first appearance of *anding tuanjie* in the data was in 1975 in an instruction from Mao, according to Deng, to consolidate the army (Deng 1993, vol. 2, p. 1). It was used to end the chaos caused by the Cultural Revolution, which had been started and supported by Mao.

Deng argued that 'unless factionalism is eliminated, stability and unity cannot be achieved and the army's fighting capacity is sure to be weakened' (Deng 1993, vol. 2, p. 2). By 1979, he could already say that China had achieved a 'political situation marked by stability and unity,' which is 'both a prerequisite and a guarantee for socialist modernization' (Deng 1993, vol. 2, p. 159).

Deng outlined two conditions for China's development: one is the peaceful international environment discussed in the previous section and the political stability and unity within China. *Anding tuanjie* [stability and unity] can be understood as the counterpart to the peaceful environment in the international context, as both mean order in Chinese society. His explanation for the necessity of the aforementioned two conditions was that only with these two conditions could China work toward its goals with effective leadership and order (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 210).

On gaige

Again, *gaige* [reform] falls in the domestic domain, and the data gathered are not representative of Mao's use of *gaige* in general. For example, there were elaborate discussions on *tudi gaige* [land reform] in Volumes 4 and 5 of the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*. However, when compared with Mao's use of *zhanzheng* [war] or *geming* [revolution], the frequency of *gaige* is much lower. If Mao is understood as a theorist of revolution, Deng is a theorist of *gaige*. Out of 119 titles in Volume 3 of the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, 19 address *gaige*.

As Deng concluded when reviewing the 7 years prior to 1985, 'we mainly did two things: First was to set things right, and second was to reform' (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 141). When he first moved into a leadership position, he not only had to end the Cultural Revolution and restore stability and unity, but he also had to prepare the people for reform. He stressed the necessity of reform, and pushed it to move forward at critical moments, making the reform comprehensive (Deng 1993, vol. 3, p. 117). He helped to tackle specific problems, and more importantly, he maintained people's confidence in challenging times. Compared with *geming* [revolution], *gaige* [reform] emphasizes gradual changes and improvements to existing systems and institutions in a society. The focus on reform rather than revolution offers clear insight regarding Deng's belief in peace.

Conclusion

Analyses present both connections and contrasts between Mao and Deng, in terms of how they conceptualize peace. A recurring pattern has been observed in which Deng adopted an idea Mao introduced and developed it into a fuller form, which then became the core of his policy. He selected ideas that best fit his needs in the new contemporaneous situation and made creative and innovative developments of such ideas. Examples include peace as a precondition for China's reform and economic development, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and the peaceful reunification of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. All these ideas were taken from Mao during an earlier period of Deng's leadership and were turned into

long-standing and fundamental policies of the Chinese government. Connections between Mao's and Deng's peace thinking helped maintain the consistency of these Chinese policies.

The most salient contrast between the two leaders is found in Mao's mixed attitudes and sometimes explicit arguments for the use of war or force and Deng's articulated preference for peaceful means. Although both considered peace to be a desirable goal, their thinking was different about how to achieve it and how long this could be finally accomplished. It shows that Mao identified—both with himself and with China—peace as being the goal but also that peace as a means was not prioritized as highly as a just war or revolution. Whereas in Deng's thinking, peace was a high priority because it was taken as the prerequisite to the reform. Analyses of four related words direct us to the dominant logic of their strategic thinking for explanation. Mao Zedong's strategic thinking featured a revolution logic and that affected his prioritization of peace. Force is a built-in component of a revolution; so, when revolution is the number one priority, peace comes in second. For Deng Xiaoping, there was a dominant reform logic in his strategic thinking, and peace was mapped accordingly. His expectations of the prospect of peace, his preference for peaceful means, his emphasis on peace as a precondition, and his unwillingness to create adversaries all serve to ensure the success of reform. It is found that each leader's strategic thinking is dominated by one or one set of concerns, which constitutes the dominant logic of their thinking, and other matters are positioned in relation to the primary concerns. The dominant logic not only helps explain some differences between the two leaders' peace thinking, but more importantly, provides a key to understand their strategic thinking.

Another important contrast is Mao's change (or learning) in peace thinking over time and Deng's consistency in holding the same positions. Specifically, Mao experienced a noticeable shift from optimism to pessimism about the prospect of peace, whereas Deng stood firmly with his peace positions since the first few years after the establishment of his leadership. A previous study comparing Mao's and Deng's personalities found that Mao was closed to new information and that Deng was open to new information. So would it be logical to predict that Mao was more resistant to changes than Deng, but a closer look at their peace thinking contradicts such a conclusion. On the surface, Mao's change/learning could be that the strategic environment facing him changed, and the reality of a domestic war following the Sino-Japanese War presented the complexity of achieving peace and difficulty in turning enemies into friends. The international environment facing Deng did not go through such dramatic change, therefore Deng did not have to adjust his positions.

A more in-depth investigation reveals that thinking scheme works as the underlying force (see Figure 3.4). It is found that a dichotomy model is bedded in Mao's strategic thinking, which may have prompted him to think in black and white terms. Under such a model, peace divided supporters and opponents, and often the opponents were placed in the shoes of adversaries. When peace was not achieved as expected, optimism about the prospect of peace was quickly replaced by pessimism. In addition, the dichotomy model fits well with the revolution logic, which

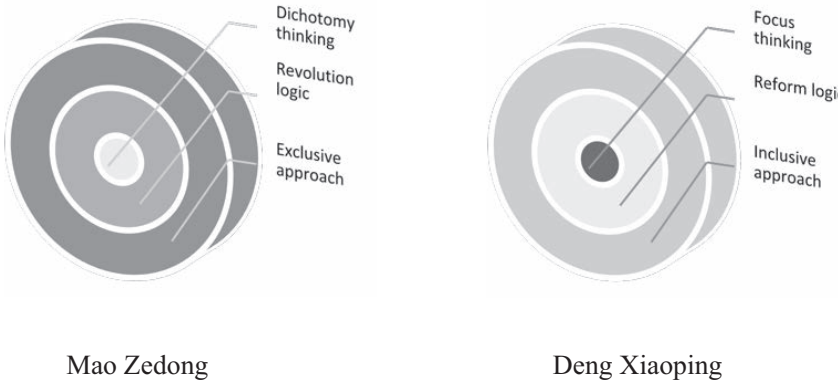


Figure 3.4 Mao's and Deng's strategic thinking compared

Source: Compiled by the author.

leads to the identification or construction of two opposing camps. In Mao's thinking, there seems to be no grey area. A foreign country either falls into the friend category or the enemy category, either our camp or the opposite camp. So when it was not possible for the United States to be a friend, it automatically became an enemy. Dichotomy model and revolution logic work like the inner core and outer shell of Mao's strategic thinking, producing the shape of the fruit—an exclusive approach. In contrast, a focus model is found in Deng's thinking, which helped him keep consistent with his peace positions. Focus thinking is centred around a focus, in Deng's case, on China's economic development and reform, and radiating out to other matters. This focus held Deng's attention, and more importantly, it persisted in Deng's strategic thinking. Working the same way as Mao, the focus model echoes with Deng's reform logic. The inner core of focus thinking, and the outer shell of reform logic, led to an inclusive approach to Deng's strategic thinking, which is shown clearly in the way he managed adversaries.

Is there an exclusiveness and inclusiveness to Mao's and Deng's respective approaches in understanding the political world and constructing their strategic thinking? Was it the dichotomy model and focus model in thinking that caused orientation to exclusiveness and inclusiveness? What are their implications to other domestic and foreign policies? These are some of the questions raised by this research that cannot be fully answered by this chapter. Further research is needed to provide a bigger picture, and the insights gained will lead to a deeper understanding of Chinese international theory.

Notes

1 In this usage, *heping* is mostly used in combination with *zhengqu* [to achieve], *shixian* [realize] or *qude* [obtain] and appears in phrases meaning 'work for peace,' 'fight for peace,' 'establish peace,' 'hope for peace,' etc.
2 In this usage, *heping* is mostly used as an adverbial or in combination with *fangshi* [way].

3 In this usage, *heping* is mostly used in combination with *huanjing* [environment] to describe a 'peaceful environment'; the context clearly shows that *heping* is a condition for something else to be achieved.
4 In this usage, *heping* is frequently used in combinations of words implying the status quo. The words indicating a positive connotation include words like *weihu* [maintain], *gonggu* [consolidate], *quebao* [guarantee], *baohu* [protect], *jianchi* [stick to], *huifu* [restore], *zengjin* [enhance], *cujin* [promote], etc., and the words indicating a negative connotation include *zu'ai* [impede], *sunhai* [damage], *zunao* [thwart], *diren* [enemy], *weixie* [threat], etc.
5 In this usage, *heping* is frequently used in combinations of words such as *ai* [love], *zhenglun* [argue over], *yaoqiu* [demand], and so forth.
6 In Chinese language, *heping* [peace] is also defined as the state absent of war. See: Dictionary Editing Office, Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 2012, 现代汉语词典 *[Modern Chinese dictionary]*, Commercial Press, Beijing, p. 524.
7 The four modernizations refer to the modernization of China's industry, agriculture, national defence, and science and technology.

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4 Exploring illiberal practices in China's Belt Road Initiative

Towards norms creation and democratic diffusion-proofing?

Adam S R Bartley

Introduction

Drawing on the theory of authoritarian diffusion this chapter examines China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI/OBOR) as a function of authoritarian norms creation. As large democratic nations have sought to insulate their political systems from challenges by illiberal institutions and entities through systems diffusion, so it is believed that authoritarian states will seek to insulate themselves from appreciably stronger liberal institutions and states (Brinks & Coppedge 2006). But norms creation to what end? While scholars have shown that autocratic states face a higher incentive to seek diffusion in their neighbourhoods, to reduce the costs and punishment for their repressive behaviour, autocracies nonetheless face a difficult task in providing an alternative counterpoint to the 'inherent appeal' of their democratic rivals (Weyland 2017). Authoritarian diffusion by this consideration may be a costly and ultimately elusive aim. Alternatively, autocratic states have also been shown to participate in democratic diffusion-proofing—where the onus and cost of diffusion are placed on democratic powers. More recent studies have sought to identify whether, and if so by what process, Chinese authorities have attempted to stifle democracy promotion in their immediate region. Chen and Kinzelbach (2015, pp. 412–413), for instance, have argued that even though the United States and the European Union have sought modestly to assist democracy promotion in Hong Kong, Beijing has been quick to countervail these attempts as most recently seen with the 2020 National Security Law. Much of this discussion has centred on the analysis of one or two associations between China and near states.

The BRI in this context is an understudied phenomenon. Outside of a general focus on the strategic implications of the BRI in the military domains, and arguments delineating patterns of 'debt book' diplomacy, the literature on diffusion-proofing has been limited. One study (Lo, Siegal & Kwok 2019, p. 8) examining the cultural, legal, and political impact of the BRI in participant countries outlines what they find as a process of 'OBORization', broadly defined as a form of socio-cultural engineering that

> involves a subtle (and at times not so subtle) process where various aspects of foreign economic, legal, and political systems of the OBOR countries

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> converge with and are assimilated by Chinese interests, practices, and perspectives. This process is arguably heavily influenced by the Chinese Communist ideology, value system, economic understanding, and worldview.

However, as far as a broader process of normative suasion is identified, the authors limit their analysis to crime and corruption. Flint and Zhu (2019) take this discussion further with their analysis of BRI scalability and the interaction between the state, non-state, and hybrid actors in the search for a collective Chinese geopolitical strategy. They argue that the ability to transform and territorialize the process of Chinese norms through economic and political linkages is inseparable from policies adopted to strategically advance broader geopolitical interests. While the linkages analyzed are highly intertwined, the authors aim only to conceptually and theoretically analyze them, highlighting that more empirical analysis is required. Consistent among these and other arguments nonetheless is that while evidence is short in linking policy and practice to autocracy promotion in the BRI, both Chinese rhetoric and BRI practice exhibit, and indeed promote, a determination to change accepted liberal norms.[1]

This chapter advances the literature further by examining the normative conditions embraced in BRI practice and associated standards of behaviour in dealings with recipient counties. Conceptually, the chapter examines authoritarian norms creation along two dimensions: through the development of leverage—or the vulnerability of neighbouring states to external pressure—and the density of financial linkages between China and the target state (Way & Levitsky 2007, p. 50). While broader definitions of leverage describe a regime's ability to avoid the pressures of autocratic inducements, punishments, or, more generally, economic and political exploitation, this analysis takes the concept of leverage further employing the use of 'passive' and 'active' leverage. Passive leverage refers to how the government can leverage its 'size, weight and market power to do the talking' and deal-making. 'Active' leverage, by contrast, demonstrates an ability to shape norms and rules more assertively by more covert means, such as through debt restructuring, economic sanctions, or financial embargoes (Feigenbaum 2017). Authoritarian norms are understood to mean the actions and patterns 'of action that sabotage accountability to people over whom a political actor exerts control'. To borrow further from Glasius (2018, p. 517), this is often achieved 'by means of secrecy, disinformation and disabling voice'.

The analysis finds that while official documentation to suggest Beijing intentionally seeks the growth of these trends in its BRI institutional building is lacking, significant anecdotal accounts can be found to demonstrate that systemic behaviours exist and that these intentionally curtail the growth of liberal practices. In BRI finance specifically, these practices can contribute to small changes on the ground, accentuating the broad-ranging strategic, political, and economic influence of China in the region. Whether by design or happenstance, these increasing illiberal trends in BRI practice have strengthened the 'obligations, dependencies and commitments' of nations to China where it can now vigorously pull 'active' and or 'passive' strings to dampen democracy diffusion and weaken democratic institutions (Bryant & Chou 2016, p. 121).

Authoritarian diffusion, norms creation, and diffusion-proofing

Diffusion theory examines how external political, social, and institutional conditions of one actor (or group) can alter the probability of adoption by another (Strang 1991). Autocracy promotion, by contrast, underscores the clear intent of an autocratic actor to bolster the growth of autocracy as an aim of foreign policy. Early studies on diffusion theory examined the propagation of democratic norms from one state to the next. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, democratic diffusion theory gained wide acceptance as 'accounting for the pronounced patterns and clustering of regime types in Europe and Eurasia' (Lankina, Libman & Obydenkova 2016, p. 1600). The failure of the Colour Revolutions in Central Asia and the adoption of autocracy based on the 'Russian model' in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan forced scholars to re-examine diffusion theory considering a new emphasis on authoritarian practices (Ambrosio 2010). The stalling, and in some places the retreat, of democratic norms in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis put greater emphasis on understanding the spread of autocratic norms and methods of authoritarian diffusion. More recently, this discussion has evolved to include the concept of diffusion-proofing, how a state is willing to employ policy instruments to counteract the diffusion of democratic norms (Koesel & Bunce 2013, p. 759). These can include the implementation of policies, processes, or practices designed to erode democratic resilience, institutions, accountability, and liberal norms.

Why would autocratic states seek the diffusion of autocratic norms in other states? On this question the rationale is mostly defined by the size and authority of the ruling coalition party to the nation they lead (Mesquita et al. 2003). Where autocratic leaders are supported by small select coalitions, often denying political representation to larger coalitions as a means to suppress challenges to authority, their claim to political legitimacy is weak (Reilly 2014, p. 25). Autocratic rulers face strong incentives to discourage political institutions where legitimate political challenges can emerge; expand and promulgate corruption as a means of shoring up support; renounce governmental and economic accountability; and join in methods of repression as a means for coaxing political orthodoxy among the people (Bader 2015, p. 6). Under these conditions, the core interest of the ruling party in autocratic states is the survival of the coalition. A second point is that autocratic regimes are often under highly competitive pressures to perform nationally, requiring leaders to seek competitive advantages externally for their national businesses (Ricter & Wurster 2016, p. 542). Corporations with low accounting transparency, such as China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs), face greater barriers in markets where operational norms are governed by liberal democratic institutions and methods. This is equally true for private entities based in autocratic states. Thus, autocracies will naturally seek to influence their immediate environments to ensure opportunities for their businesses and to see that their business practices are supported. Finally, the proposition for diffusion is more likely if, aside from the economy, these measures also build support for the ruling clique at home.

The recent proliferation of authoritarian diffusion literature reflects both the gravity of the current challenge to liberal democracy by autocratic diffusion and the

challenges to the conceptual understanding of diffusion processes in these states. According to Bader (2015), not enough is yet known about the diffusion practices of autocratic states, particularly given that it is so easy to confuse autocratic diffusion with external influence. This is made more difficult by the lack of transparency in decision-making and by the shortfall of information about policies in these states, and further by the recognition that autocratic states tend to be less ambitious, or less systematic, than their democratic counterparts when it comes to diffusion. Indeed, while studies have begun to credibly demonstrate the promotion of autocracy in states such as Russia and China, they have yet to illustrate the impact of this promotion on the receiver state (Bader 2015; Chou 2017).

Further examination of the literature reveals the existence of an empirical gap on the question of modes of authoritarian diffusion and diffusion-proofing. Factors of diffusion reflect an emphasis on geographic proximity, economic incentivization, and the conditioning policies of external entities as the key drivers of change. However, it is also recognized that spontaneous diffusion takes place through what might be termed business, cultural, trade, political, and social linkages, characterized by some as the 'change agents' of support for authoritarian norms (Ambrosio 2010, p. 378; Levitsky & Way 2006). According to this understanding, the degree of diffusion depends on the extent external leverage can be applied, including the density of the linkages, and the extent the receiver nation is vulnerable to such external pressures. In the democratic diffusion literature, it has been identified that greater linkage and cross-border flows contribute to greater consistency toward democratization (Levitsky & Way 2006, p. 379). At the same time, it is recognized that democracies such as the United States and coalitions such as the European Union (EU) employ mechanisms of democracy promotion, including normative suasion, strategic calculation, and democratic empowerment—to use the terms of Sharshenova and Crawford (2017, p. 456)—to increase the likelihood of systems adoption.

For authoritarian diffusion and diffusion-proofing, all else being equal, the diffusion characteristics of democracy promotion are found to equally apply—increasingly greater linkages can result in new norms convergence that may see trends moving away from traditional liberal international norms. This can mean greater acceptance of what might be considered formerly unacceptable behaviour or activities, sometimes 'without any collaboration' between actors (Elkins & Simmons 2005, cited in Ambrosio 2010, p. 378). While this has led some to suggest that authoritarian diffusion is less intentional than the active promotion of liberalism by Western democratic powers, it is generally accepted that autocratic states will seek some form of diffusion (Ambrosio 2010, p. 378). Others suggest that autocracies not only seek the capacity to learn and adapt to challenges of democratic diffusion but will in fact actively participate in diffusion-proofing. According to Heydemann and Leenders (2011, pp. 651–652), after the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, Arab nations with autocratic systems were observed to converge around a similar set of policies and practices that sought to maximize their chances of survival, often relying on repression, notably with little interference from democratic powers.

If autocracies seek and learn diffusion-proofing techniques from other autocracies, a working assumption proffers that they will also seek to learn the habits

and tools of promotion from their democratic challengers. Accordingly, whereas democratic states have sought to strategically condition development aid and lending based on social, economic, and political incentives, including additionally the employment of penalties for non-compliance, similar, although less overt, conditionality-based instruments have been adopted by autocratic states in pursuit of political aims (Rothschild 2018; Yun 2014). For Beijing, where this conditionality historically took the form of aid in return for diplomatic recognition, more recent financial transactions have been shown to display a preference for states that support its foreign policy in return for Chinese money (China Power Team 2018). Indeed, while bilateral relations and financial deals are difficult to penetrate given the non-transparency of Chinese policy, patterns of Chinese lending behaviour, where the growth of real economic leverage is an explicit by-product, have shown an increasing association between opportunistic investment practices and political and strategic calculation.[2]

The question of leverage here requires further unpacking. In the traditional Western BRI discourse, economic leverage has been mostly identified with strategic interests. Beijing will seek to solve its 'Malacca dilemma', undermine US regional leadership, and establish a blue water navy, this line of thinking asserts, using economic coercion to achieve its designs (Parker & Chefitz 2018). This assumes a more overt use of leverage that Beijing has so far used sparingly. A growing focus on 'grey zone' activities by authoritarian countries—activities that take place at the precipice of war and incrementally alter the status quo—however, has forced scholars to look more closely at analyzing forms of covert leverage, such as the potential for the BRI to create new norms seen as more favourable to supporting autocratic systems. These include what the 2017 US National Security Strategy (p. 28) observed, that is, employing 'sophisticated political, economic, and military campaigns that combine discrete actions . . . calculated to achieve maximum effect without provoking a direct military response from the United States'. Since outright coercion will likely draw a negative public reaction, putting pressure on politicians China may be trying to woo, the use of 'passive' leverage is used as a more attractive alternative. The size of China's market is used to drive greater collaboration on trade and economic development and, as a result, greater dependence on Chinese products. To enter the market, states and corporations must acknowledge Beijing's rules for access, which can include the adoption of norms considered in the interests of the Party. More visibly, 'active' leverage—where, for example, conditional lending terms for the BRI are shown to be an explicit outcome of negotiations—illustrates a clearer attempt to promote normative suasion and autocratic stability through overt means. Conditions supportive of Chinese political interests are actively engaged upon as a rule.

As this discussion suggests, passive/active leverage reflects what is required for the subtle propagation of illiberal norms. If the disruption of recipient country politics or policies is an explicit condition of recipient-donor exchange, nations, which must explain the conditions to the public, are likely to be less trustworthy of the donor nation and/or less conforming with the new norms. Indicatively, where the less visible pressures of passive/active leverage can be applied, diffusion-proofing

norms are likely to have a higher chance of success. At this stage, less friction with the new norms contributes to greater authoritarian stability as greater linkages are adopted, resulting in greater support for policies considered illiberal by Western standards. By employing either passive or active leverage the donor nation can protect the creation of otherwise unattractive norms since a) it is hidden from the people, b) the costs of this leverage are perceived to equally impact upon the donor nation, and c) because the recipient nation has voluntarily signed on to the conditions of entry. A further point, as the BRI is indicative, is the more highly attractive the regime the less recipient nations will object to what might be considered unfavourable conditions, particularly if the ruling clique of the recipient nation benefits directly from the regime.

A final point is the role of global power shifts and the emergence of large autocratic powers as the engines of new growth. China's rise and its growing role as an influencer of global norms offer important avenues for Beijing to showcase the benefits of its authoritarian system. Indeed, the concept of the authoritarian model of development expressed in China's impressive economic rise has caused many states to question the legitimacy of the Western way considering the perceived failure of the Washington consensus model (Barma & Ratner 2006). As such, even where receiver states may repudiate the diffusion of authoritarian practices, for instance, they may nonetheless be encouraged by the perceived 'effectiveness' and 'appropriateness' of the autocratic political system to meet the challenges of the state. The perceived 'effectiveness' of authoritarian systems—the process by which actors seek to identify better models in face of problems at home—will depend on the benefits produced (Weyland 2005, p. 271). Successes with new methods of economic growth increase the likelihood of adoption by others. These perceptions are likely to be adopted in the context of regional development and trade initiatives by actors discouraged by their own slow rate of growth, and particularly during crises or the breakdown of former (liberal) developmental regimes. The example here is the wide rejection of the Washington consensus model in the Asia-Pacific as nations moved toward more Asian-focused economic development following the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. Whether these nations will seek to use the Beijing model as a blueprint for their own development success will depend in some ways on the linkages established and the perceived effectiveness of the model (Goh 2011).

Appropriateness is measured by the acceptance of norms in the international context, standards by which actors base their own decisions on in the policy context. If autocratic states with successful economies are seen to face few or even no international sanctions against the adoption of illiberal economic and political norms, the perceived appropriateness of the autocratic norm will increase. This is not to suggest the absence of international condemnation will result in the automatic adoption of illiberal behaviours. The point, rather, is that norms are not irreversible. They reflect trends in international politics, aid distribution, leverage, and economic shifts in the global supply chain. As Ambrosio (2012; see also Gat 2007) acknowledges, the victory of liberal democracy over communism at the end of the Cold War conferred a normative power upon the former, viewed as being more

successful. More legitimacy was given to liberal norms in international institutions in regions long conditioned by authoritarian controls. To give a more recent example, the rise of China and the perceived 'democratic' retreat of the United States in the Asia-Pacific under President Donald Trump (2017) has similarly conferred a status of success on the Beijing model, particularly given American irresponsibility in the wake of the GFC and, more recently, Covid-19. As smaller regional neighbours seek to bandwagon on the back of Chinese economic growth, and without the active presence of a peer challenger, they will also be more willing to normalize the processes of China's illiberal norms in their own development practices.

BRI practices and outcomes

This section examines Chinese BRI practices and explores their ability to employ broader diffusion-proofing processes in foreign relations. While ideas about a Chinese normative framework for political and economic models may seem platitudinous—such as expressed in the widely promoted yet highly ambiguous concept of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'—the rhetorical instruments employed over time do give some indication of the revisions it seeks to make to international governance norms. Further elaboration on concepts such as 'community of common destiny' when taken together with broad-based claims for 'great changes unseen in a century' with the world entering a new 'period of historic opportunity' reveals a deepening of ideas about geopolitical, economic, and political intercourse (Doshi 2021). Further efforts to bring Hong Kong more fully under the control of Beijing after the unprecedented protests during the Umbrella Movement, and the consistent reference to the Colour Revolutions in discussions about Western influence, reinforce these themes and their empirical value in the diffusion-proofing context (Wilson 2009; Xu 2021). For many, this revisionist program emerged in the wake of the Obama administration's pivot to the Asia-Pacific where new trade initiatives in the Trans-Pacific Partnership were seen as an attempt to formulate a 'new version' of international trade norms with higher standards, putting pressure on, and purposefully disrupting, Chinese economic and political advancements (Cai 2017; Xue 2015; Lin 2015). In China, the responses developed over the next five years represented a sharp reversal of the long-standing policy of contributing to, but not taking the lead in, global platforms (韬光养晦) to seeking a more 'active exploration of a new model of international cooperation and global governance'—what Chinese political scientists later referred to as 'strive for achievement' (奋发有为) (Yan 2014; Pu 2017). Two years later, China's 'flourishing' rule and rapid progress under its model, such statements offered, displayed that there was 'a new choice for other countries' (Xi 2017).

This discussion does not attempt to rehash the larger conversation still ongoing about China's plans for global governance. Rather, the aim is to outline how such concepts overlap with a broader revisionist agenda that makes the world safe for autocracy. On the BRI more specifically, Chinese mainland sources since 2017 began to outline a new emphasis for the BRI as a vehicle for driving the government's new external political and economic engagement (Swaine 2015).

Along with the Asia Investment Infrastructure Bank and the Silk Road Fund, these programs were labelled in China as providing 'new ideas and new programs' for China's new global governance role (Chen & Pu 2017). Significantly, China would contribute US$1 trillion to the initiative and do away with 'Western' conditions of human rights, transparency, and intrusive corruption prevention policies. In the United Nations (UN), Chinese diplomats encouraged strong associations between BRI aims and the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While such proclamations did not offer a specific blueprint for new governance, they did nonetheless attempt to link notions of what was 'effective' to new ideas about what should be appropriate.

In Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia these programs have been met with strong approval. For nations on the periphery of the main foreign direct investment highways in global development, the BRI promises economic lifeblood and a blueprint for development. That Chinese firms lead in global construction initiatives, particularly in innovative projects like high-speed trains, digital networks, and telecommunications systems legitimizes these sentiments. Even with problems around labour exploitation, debt unsustainability, and corruption, studies show that the African public still view the BRI favourably (Sheehy & Asunka 2021). Others have argued that China's initiation of BRI projects is recipient driven and determined by economic needs. On this basis, Beijing is providing a much-needed public service that facilitates not only its own labour needs but those of developing countries, illustrated by the fact that many projects did not emerge from market incentives but from development needs (Jin 2022; Ly & Tan 2021; Wienland 2017).

For some, the BRI offered significant contractual and financial challenges that would require some hardship, but it also offered loans that no other nation or institution was offering. Indeed, later studies revealed that the BRI capitalized significantly on projects designated by international financial ratings agencies and multilateral development banks as 'junk' level investments, meaning the potential for debt distress was high (Kynge 2018). For those looking for evidence of a broader geopolitical strategy, this aspect of BRI practice suggested, more than any other, that Beijing looked to take advantage of debt-distressed nations to create relationships of dependency.

Examining these circumstances in the context of authoritarian diffusion raises important questions. How do we understand the challenges produced by the BRI through the diffusion lens? How does a broader repudiation of liberal norms help Beijing diffuse-proof its neighbourhood? And does it help Beijing in the long run? It is unequivocal that Beijing's BRI agreements have sought to systemically repudiate good governance in lending practices—as established by the OECD, the Paris Club of global creditors, and the UN's Principles of Promoting Responsible Lending and Borrowing (of which Beijing is a signee). These include a broad resistance to and rejection of consistent evaluation and reporting, post-disbursement audits, misstating borrowing objectives, and information sharing, with many projects also suffering from loose accounting standards. In addition to this, a rise in corruption and regulatory weakening in these countries, with respect to BRI projects, has also occurred. Such examples range from US$600 pliers and US$1500 fire

extinguishers in Kyrgyzstan to hyperinflated prices in Malaysia, almost by a third, for the East Coast Railway Link (ECRL) (Aidar 2018; Tee 2018).

In assessing a broader agenda, part of the trouble is that expansive confidentiality agreements have made it difficult for all stakeholders to determine the true financial position of BRI participants. It is often the case that information about the projects is kept unclear, at least until a financial crisis occurs or there is a change in government. Even then, they are locked into an irreversible agreement. For instance, when the new Sri Lankan government of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was elected in 2016 on a campaign to examine the corruption of the former government, it found upon entering office that it was impossible to account for how much it owed to countries like China based on the irregular borrowing habits of the former government (Shepard 2016). Wickremesinghe and the following governments were forced to continue the country's outreach to China for new loans to service the debt from projects deemed, prior to Chinese lending, economically unviable (Bradsher 2022). In the case of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the inability of the government to address BRI project inequities has been much more costly. For instance, the Chinese-built and operated Qasim and Sahiwal power projects in Pakistan contained excess set-up costs of US$1.8 billion and, once completed, charged twice the price for electricity compared to prices in countries like Bangladesh or India (Rafiq 2018; Haqqani 2020). On top of this, most profits were repatriated to China. The Gwadar Port and the Free Trade Zone offer further examples, where after agreeing to pay US$16 billion to China for the projects, with interest rates in some cases exceeding 13 percent, government leaders agreed to gift the China Overseas Port Holding Company a 40-year lease with a 91 percent share in profits and a 23-year exemption from most taxes (Parker & Chefitz 2018). In 2019, a balance of payment crisis required the government to repair its relationship with the International Monetary Fund to stave off an economic crisis. As of 2024, this crisis is still ongoing.

Adjustments such as these have been the case for Malaysia, where after seeking the cancellation of the ECRL because of national security concerns, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad back peddled significantly. Despite referring to the initial deal as the 'unequal treaties' and lacking significant transparency, the government moved ahead with the ECRL Malaysia with a massively reduced cost and continuing secrecy (Zaheer 2019). What is clear is that in each case, a change in government brought new scrutiny to BRI projects and often broader rejection of them. But all governments re-established their working relationships with BRI conduits eventually, and in each case the new government calling for more transparency and fairness was replaced. In each case, quiet bilateral dialogues were arranged with the new hostile government, and soon after these governments changed their positions. We can only speculate on what occurred in the negotiations given the secrecy employed by Chinese companies, but the broader trend reveals the workings of passive economic and political persuasion to achieve Chinese interests and so keep suppressed the democratic institutions that led to the initial protest.

One argument for this broad repudiation of liberal norms suggests that such practices resonate with political-cultural ideals. In China's one-party system, writes Ang

(2020), the systemic employment of access money—defined as both legal and illegal financial exchange for access to opportunities—has helped stimulate unprecedented economic progress. In turn, the perceived suitability of this model, and its intrinsic cultural association with success, defines a more decentralized effort to import such practices elsewhere. However, as Ang also writes, the side effects are that such practices generate significant distortions, systemic risk, and inequality. Moreover, for such practices to work in a 'China model' they required weakened institutions of accountability, regulatory quality, and rule of law—an outcome witnessed more broadly across BRI projects. Analysis of the World Bank's (2023) good governance indicators from 2011 to 2021 reveals a slowing down and in some cases a reversal of trends across issue areas in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Malaysia, Lao PDR, Pakistan, Nepal, and Kazakhstan. In many of these countries, press freedoms have been curtailed, corruption has proliferated, and regulatory quality has suffered (see Figures 4.2–4.6).

Another suggests the avoidance of liberal norms allows Beijing to develop strong risk engineering capabilities in the case of debt restructuring, particularly since many projects occur in credit-poor countries. In this case, issues of non-transparency, sovereign guarantees, expansive cross-default clauses, and non-competitive procurement offer Chinese SOEs the ability to better protect their investments and leverage state capitalism to drive further growth and influence. Research of 100 debt contracts involving key policy banks by Aid Data and the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) reveals 'that Chinese entities use standardized contracts', enforcing far-reaching confidentiality clauses across a broad spectrum of non-interspersed projects (Gelpern et al. 2021). For Bennon and Fukuyama (2022), this practice inevitably attempts to limit the 'sovereignty of the

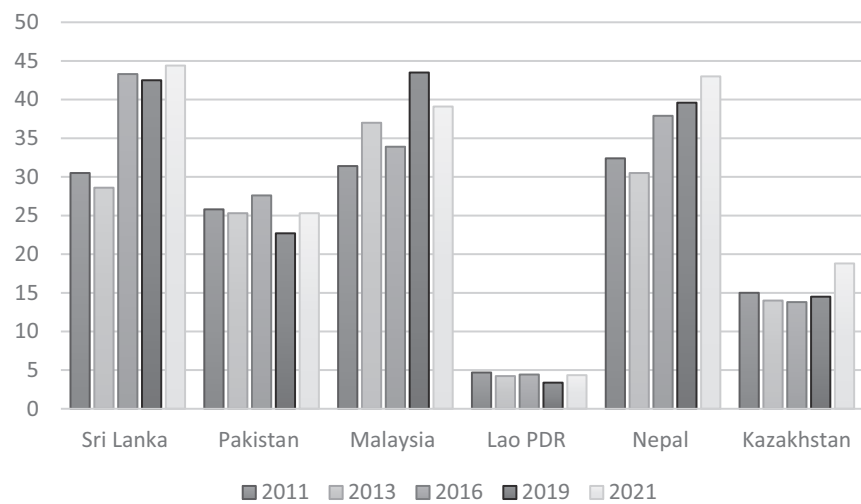

Figure 4.1 Voice and accountability

Source: Author's graph, developed from World Bank Good Governance Indicators country data, 2023.

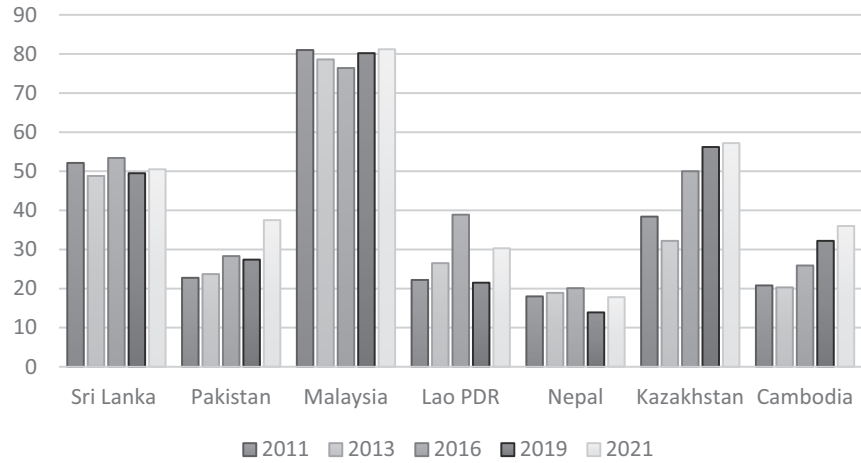

Figure 4.2 Government effectiveness

Source: Author's graph, developed from World Bank Good Governance Indicators country data, 2023.

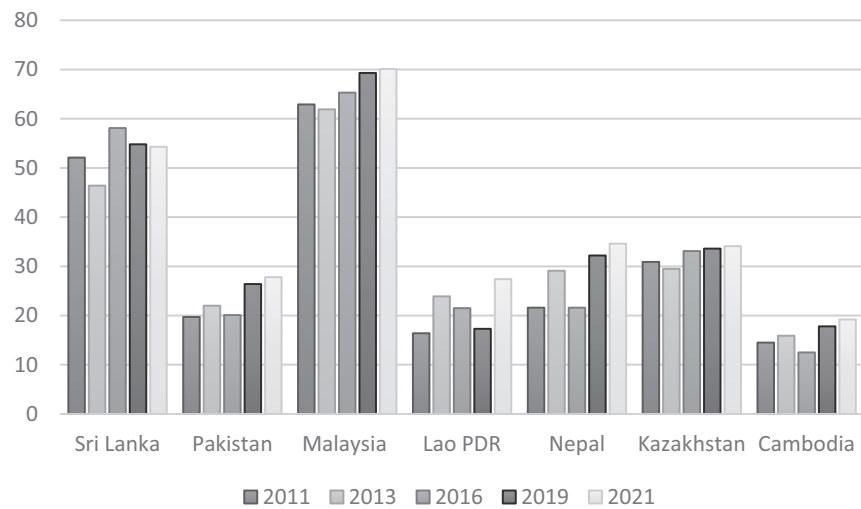

Figure 4.3 Rule of law

Source: Author's graph, developed from World Bank Good Governance Indicators country data, 2023.

host nation as a security for the project's investors', however the key trade-off is a broader failure of strategic management. If strategic management practices lead to more successful outcomes for investors, for China, the focus on risk engineering has led to stronger incentives to invest in bad projects, often with a loss for policy

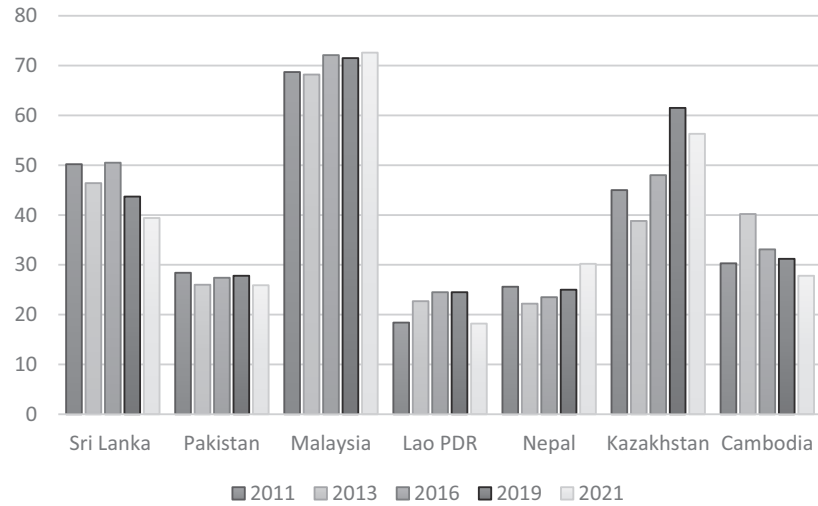

Figure 4.4 Regulatory quality

Source: Author's graph, developed from World Bank Good Governance Indicators country data, 2023.

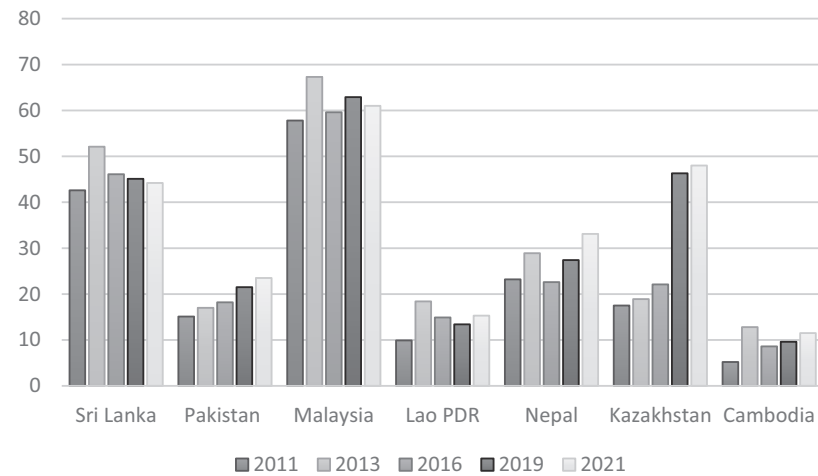

Figure 4.5 Control of corruption

Source: Author's graph, developed from World Bank Good Governance Indicators country data, 2023.

banks. The BRI, the authors argue, 'is all but designed to lead, eventually, to debt distress in the nations that accept BRI projects'.

Other arguments fail to add logical depth. For instance, one suggests that China rejects Paris Club norms on the basis that to do so would imply it adopts a 'rule

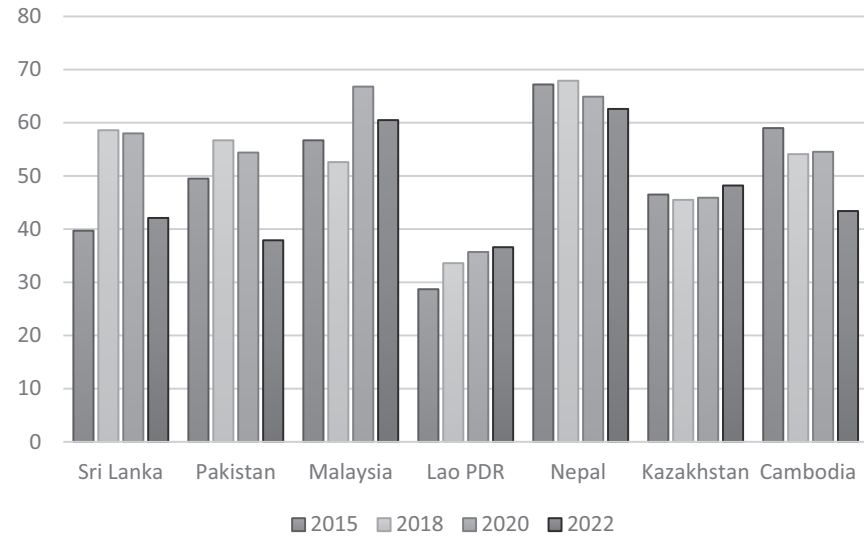

Figure 4.6 Press freedom

Source: Author's graph, developed from World Bank Good Governance Indicators country data, 2023.

taker' role (Rieffel 2021). Beijing's leaders, this line of thinking suggests, have accepted China's superpower status and, with it, the hegemonic enterprise associated with 'rulemaking' (see also Ping, this volume, Chapter 2). However, as others have found, outside of such norm-setting in projects, Beijing has participated inconsistently in 'rulemaking' initiatives in development finance or even in other UN platforms (Berger 2015; Hameiri & Jones 2018). Another is that China continues to pursue a 'brotherly' relationship role with developing nations, which explains its rationale for refusing to join in Paris Club norms of conditionality, which call on borrowing nations to adopt standard structural-adjusting policies as a means for loan relief. As Lex Rieffel illustrates (2021), however, these assessments are disingenuous given that key policy banks associated with the BRI are in fact controlled by the government, a point that defines the 'official loan' framework—meaning, by definition, that conditions are implied. Analysis from Aid Data (Malik et al. 2021) reveals that Chinese contracts across an estimated 60 percent of BRI projects contain some form of conditionality, either through collateralization arrangements, credit insurance, or pledges for third-party repayment. Others have observed higher than normal loan interest rates, special import and company tax exemptions for Chinese firms, mandated use of Chinese construction materials, and often under-hand project tender processes across BRI projects (Hao 2018). Because, by design, no one nation is aware of the arrangements of the other there is little recourse for states to mobilize together to seek redress for unfair lending practices (Reilly 2014).

Newer arrangements in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis and associated economic crises have renewed the questioning of Chinese project practices and purposes of its continued assault on liberal financing. In November of 2020, the G20 nations initiated the Common Framework for Debt Treatments Beyond Debt Service Suspension to aid heavily indebted nations in suspending payment options over three years and for some to seek debt forgiveness. However, even as China helped to establish the Common Framework, it continued to deal with BRI participating countries on a bilateral basis and not within the framework, restructuring with the aim of recouping all loans with interest. According to the report by PIIE, up to three-quarters of debt contracts contained in their analysis 'No Paris Club' clauses, explicitly prohibiting participating nations from bilateral debt restructuring with Paris Club members (Gelpern et al. 2021). Those with expansive cross-default clauses may be hindered from engaging in multilateral banks and debt relief agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or, if provided, are circumscribed in their actions by what they can disclose and how repayments must be considered. This creates a double dilemma for heavily indebted BRI nations. Paris Club members are likely to be reluctant to provide debt relief to BRI nations if those nations are required to first repay debt owed to Chinese banks and SOEs since they also want to minimize risk and debt defaults. Meanwhile, key IMF contributors, those that belong to the Paris Club, have made debt relief provisions subject to greater transparency in BRI contracts as a condition, concerned lest sovereign debt relief be used to repay Chinese creditors (Rieffel 2021; Mander 2021). As these issues illustrate, BRI nations face difficult debt restructuring conditions due to the diminishing aid provided by good governance creditor nations and the overreliance on Chinese loans, as well as the small bargaining position vis-à-vis China.

Whether this demonstrates that Beijing is unwilling to seek long-term solutions to insolvency issues exacerbated, and in some cases created, by BRI loans or that it seeks to control its liabilities through bilateral mechanisms is unclear. Analysis of the latter rationale disputes the ability for current practices to appropriately manage risk, that is if the profit motive of the investments is the goal (Bennon & Fukuyama 2022). These practices, to be sure, have not been promulgated as the principles of a new normative governance structure, even if such revisionism is indirectly implied. But their wide adoption has mounted a direct challenge to liberal development processes, in some cases creating the foundations for their erosion while establishing a basis for elite and regulatory capture. The examples on this score are manifold. For instance, after the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal in Malaysia, which exposed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's dealings with Chinese SOEs, researchers also discovered that Najib had been soft-handling the problem of Chinese fishing incursions into Malaysian waters and ignoring China's militarization of the South China Sea (Ralph 2016; Bristow 2018; Lopez 2017). Even after the new government of Mahathir Mohamad won the election in May 2018 on a campaign to redress corruption associated with IMDB and BRI projects, scrutiny into the relationship largely ceased and the BRI projects, despite their unviability, continued. In other examples, decisions in Manila and Phnom Penh to reevaluate military and diplomatic ties with Washington have been found

to be tied to promises of Chinese infrastructure loans (Hillman 2019). In Cambodia, one study by Young (2020) found that Chinese BRI projects had exacerbated regulatory capture in the country to establish special rights and influence (see also Ciorciari 2015). Following a shift in development aid from Western sources to the Chinese after 2010, support for Chinese foreign policy positions, supporting the 'One-China' policy on Taiwan, and prohibiting a statement critical of China's South China Sea policies at the 2012 ASEAN Annual Meeting—which it was then hosting, have been observed (Thol 2013). In Nepal, the former government of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal was accused of corruption after giving away the contract for the Budhi Gandaki hydropower project to a Chinese SOE, controversially, on his way out of office. Aside from the odd departure from the norms and procedures of the government, the Chinese SOE in question, Gezhouba Group Company Limited, was at the time blacklisted in Nepal (*The Himalayan Times* 2017). Meanwhile, a government-leaked report on Chinese encroachment on Nepalese land in the district of Humla has been silenced, despite periodic protests (Bristow 2022).

These anecdotal accounts, when taken accumulatively and in the context of broader systemic efforts to standardize BRI practice across the board, illustrate that more than economic considerations of influence must be considered. Until more transparency is forthcoming, scholars can only surmise the strength and system of BRI and foreign policy linkages. So far, what evidence exists points to a broader systematized agenda, even one that is more amorphous and diffuse than a simple central government policy might suggest. For instance, the PIIE report found that in more than 90 contracts, Chinese creditors included clauses that allowed them to terminate the project and demand immediate repayments in the event of significant legal or policy changes. In up to 50 percent of contracts examined, Gelpern et al. (2021) found cross-default clauses were added to trigger actions 'broadly defined by the sovereign debtor as adverse to the interests of "a PRC entity"'. They also found that such 'terms seem designed to protect a wide swath of Chinese direct investment and other dealings inside the borrowing country, with no apparent connection to the underlying CDB credits' (Gelpern et al. 2021). As such claims illustrate, passive and active forms of leverage are codified within BRI projects, formalized through a range of state, non-state, and hybrid Chinese actors. As demonstrated, such codes work as a corrosive agent to regulatory and accounting compliances, government effectiveness, rule of law, and control of corruption.

Conclusion

To the extent that these anecdotal reports in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and others suggest a greater connection between illiberal trends in BRI practice and government policy, the link between new authoritarian norms and Chinese intentions remains opaque. This is undoubtedly a shortfall in the current research brought about by insufficient information. A second point here is that there is no efficient method for measuring actor cohesiveness between Chinese leaders and SOEs. It is easy to assume that grand strategy is shared among political elites, but the assumption overestimates

the homogeneity of actors within an autocratic system (Obydenkova & Libman 2015). That said, it is difficult to dismiss these illiberal trends in BRI practices as anomalies. They are too convenient and systemically spread. As studies have increasingly shown, Chinese aid has often aided in the undermining of democratic governance in countries associated with it (Li 2017; Erasmus & Kilby 2014). The more surprising outcome perhaps is the evidence that traditionally liberal institutions like the World Bank have responded to the attraction of non-conditional Chinese loans by scaling back their own more liberal conditions for recipient countries associated with the BRI (Diego 2017). At this point in time, an analysis of the links between BRI project outcomes and intentions awaits further scrutiny.

What is attempted here is an exploration of the links between China's new search for global developmental governance and its relationship with Party security and the Belt Road Initiative. Since Western democracies have long sought the diffusion of democratic norms in autocratic states like China, it is only logical for autocratic leaders to seek to counter this diffusion. In the wake of the Obama administration's 'pivot' to Asia, this threat was brought more coherently to the fore for leaders in Beijing, and the BRI was adopted shortly thereafter. Indeed, the BRI might be Xi's greatest contribution to Chinese interests yet. The implications for Beijing, as scholars have noted, are manifold. But under-analyzed in this context is what the BRI brings to Party security: the creation of tremendous new linkages with regional states and new norms of behaviour supportive of Chinese and Party interests. These linkages confer upon Beijing a relationship where passive and/or active leverage can be brought to bear, shoring up support for small select coalitions in BRI states, nourishing authoritarianism, or disrupting democratic institutions in more liberal states. As Sri Lanka is indicative, despite widespread disaffection with the terms of BRI projects in the newly elected government in 2015, there was little option but to remain wedded to Chinese institutions and terms for financing of BRI debt.

Notes

1 An exception here is Bryant, Octavia & Chou, Mark 2016, 'China's new silk road: Autocracy promotion in the new Asian order?', *Democratic Theory*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 114–124.
2 See later section on support for Chinese policies.

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5 The discursive and affective dimensions of the 'China Dream'

Dylan M H Loh

Introduction

The 'China Dream' or 'Chinese Dream'[1] (中国梦), popularized in China after Xi Jinping's usage in 2013, describes a set of aspirational qualities, values, and goals that Chinese citizens and the nation ought to strive towards. The exact content of the dream, however, remains elusive and has attracted widespread academic discussions. While there have been attempts to conceptually define and analytically interpret it more rigorously, its ambiguousness remains understudied and undertheorized. Drawing on the literature on emotions and neuroscience, this chapter illustrates how the 'China Dream' (CD) is infused with affect and emotions that moves people, figuratively and literally, towards a shared goal which makes them pliant for nation-building and for the Chinese communist party's rule legitimation aims.

Focusing on the discursive effects of the CD on domestic legitimacy, I ask the following questions: How and in what ways is the CD applied for domestic legitimacy? How and in what ways does the CD affect citizens? Relatedly, I make three empirical observations with regards to Chinese politics: First, the conception of the CD is one that is borne out of the persistent historical need for domestic legitimation. Second, the polysemous nature of the CD discourse is strategic and purposive, allowing discursive flexibility—forming a hermeneutical device for Chinese elites. Third, disputing some claims that the CD is *merely* a continuance of previous leaders' 'isms', I argue that it is distinct as a 'somatic marker'. This helps create collective solidarity in China; it has become a guiding vision but is infused with affect, emotion, and tangibility.

Xi popularized the CD concept after he took over the reins of the Party general secretary position in 2012. He stated,

> I think that achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest Chinese dream in modern times. Because the dream carries a long-cherished wish of generations of Chinese people.
>
> (CCTV 2012)

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He further noted that

> Nowadays, everyone is talking about the China Dream. In my view, to realize the great renewal of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream for the Chinese nation in modern history.
>
> (*Xinhua* 2012b)

The earliest mention of the CD appeared in 1986 by US-based (孙惠柱) Sun Huizhu and Fei Chunfang (费春放) in a script called the 'China Dream' (China Dream n.d.). Xi himself first articulated it in 2012 two weeks after his appointment as Party general secretary (*The Economist* 2013). Scholars later joined the fray; Peking University' Zhang Yiwu described the Chinese Dream as 'Chinese citizens have expressed a desire for both continued economic development and increased environmental protection. People need both cars and blue skies. How to achieve a balance between these two interests is a long-term challenge for the government' (Zhang 2013), thus aligning it with Hu Jintao's idea of 'scientific development'.[2] Liu Yunshan, the publicity czar, was reported to have ordered that the CD concept be written into school textbooks to make sure that it 'enters students' brains' (*The Economist* 2013). Wu Jianmin, a senior diplomat said, 'The China Dream is about the rejuvenation of China; democracy; cultural strength and harmony and it is not just a dream for China but for the world' (On China 2013, para 52).[3] As this brief historical vignette shows, there has been various usage of the CD discourse, and these have frequently involved a variety of interpretations. This is a critical point to hold to illustrate the mercurial historical origins of the discourse.

Until 2023, China was the world's most populous country, and from 2014, it was the world's second biggest economy by nominal gross domestic product.[4] Estimates projected that by 2019, the size of the Chinese economy would eclipse that of the United States by 20%. Its currency also became the 5th most traded in 2015 (Li 2015a). The economic emphasis here is germane because Xi's CD has an economic dimension—realizing the 'Two 100s': China being a 'moderately well-off society' by 2021 (100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party) and China being a 'fully developed country' by 2049 (100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China) (Kamo 2014). In 2021, President Xi declared that absolute poverty has been eradicated (Xinhua 2021). Diplomatically, it is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and is member of several intergovernmental global and regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and G20 amongst others. Indeed, China under Xi has also started to use its might in more assertive ways on the global stage (see Loh 2024).

On the other hand, China faces pressing domestic and external problems. One early estimate of the cost of corruption put it at $86 billion yuan a year (Pei 2007, p. 2). China's income inequality has also shot up. According to one Chinese survey, the 'poorest quarter in Chinese citizens owned only 1% of the country's wealth' (Kaiman 2014) with the Gini coefficient at remarkably high 0.73 in 2012 according to Chinese state media (Zhao 2014). To put it into context, 20 years earlier in 1992, it was just 0.45 (Bradbury 2014). It is also revealing that China spent more

on internal defence than on external defence—USD $111 billion compared to USD $106 billion in 2012—in an indication where it fears trouble more (Buckley 2012). More recently, deterioration in the US-China relationship, its management of the pandemic, and its uneven economic recovery post-pandemic has also created new problems for China's decision makers (Huang & Mary 2023; Loh & Loke 2023).

In its international relations, Chinese scholars frequently lament the fact that it does not have any 'true' allies. Yan Xuetong noted that 'China has only one real ally, Pakistan' (Rosen 2016). The CD discourse and its application thus mirror where Chinese elites' anxieties are most pronounced—in the domestic domain and China's grappling with its place and status in the world. Part of this struggle is Xi's personal drive to consolidate power to push through his partnership in 2022 with Russia—just weeks before Moscow invaded Ukraine—is a persistent thorn in Europe-China relations (Reuters 2023). The CD dream discourse is therefore one of Xi's and the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) major strategy in that consolidation drive; the CD is both a means to an end and an end itself.

The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows: firstly, I will explain how the CD discourse serves as a hermeneutical device. Secondly, drawing on the literature on neuroscience, I discuss the affective and cognitive effects of the CD. Next, the chapter demonstrates how the CD operates as a unifier and disciplining tool for nation-building and, most importantly, party legitimacy. It also argues that as a somatic marker with cues that are mostly locally-relevant, its effect on foreign policy is limited.

Conceptual ambiguity and a hermeneutical device

There are two constituents of the conceptual ambiguity of the 'Chinese dream'. The first stems from the various interpretations by the CCP and its surrogates. The second is from academic scholars. In that connection, the chapter shall proceed to survey existing academic literature. Lu Chunlong, in his survey of 17 cities, notes that the CD as understood by the people 'is actually based on Chinese traditional culture: respect for political authority, desire for social order and support for a powerful government' (Lu 2015, p. 157). Kuhn (2014) notes that the CD can be decomposed into five elements: national, personal, historical, global, and antithetical. For Kuhn, 'national' encompasses economics, military, science, and politics, while 'personal' refers to creating individual well-being and wealth. The CD that the author alludes to is so all-encompassing that little escapes its definitional orbit, making the point that the CD discourse can be used for almost anything its key authors decide. Elsewhere, scholars such as Li stress the historical context and how the 'socialist', 'economic', 'political' and 'historical-cultural' China intertwine to create the conditions for the CD (Li 2015b).

It has also been observed by others that the 'Chinese Dream functions as an ambiguous metanarrative into which one can insert any positive developments while neglecting others' (Mahoney 2013, p. 27). Other scholars have focused their efforts not on conceptual clarity but in studying its effects. Bislev (2015), for instance, points out that the CD discourse changed when it interacted with the

public as it searched for parts of the dream that had 'greater resonance' with citizens. He suggests that the CD is a public communication campaign and contributes to the 'creation and maintenance' of an imagined community and that it is 'a potentially all-encompassing term that invites multiple interpretations quite unlike something as delimited and well-defined as *the Three Represents*' (2015, p. 586). Elsewhere, I have argued the CD discourse serves as 'signposts for actors' in clarifying what are 'relevant/irrelevant and appropriate/inappropriate practices' and to 'provide "background" stock of information where actors draw to legitimize their practices' (Loh 2021, p. 168).

Josef Mahoney, for his part, contends that the CD is a 'framing discourse' and that it serves to bring factions to heel, curb corruption, and ensure party discipline (2013, p. 30). This chapter agrees with him in that the 'Party is attempting to do this and is using the metanarrative of the Chinese Dream as a rallying point' (Mahoney 2013, p. 30). In contrast, however, the chapter understands hermeneutics less theoretically and more loosely as an 'interpretive device' that is used by the Party and its organs to advance or defend its interests and also zeroes in on the 'emotional' element of the discourse. Finally, a more critical reading of the CD sees some observers interpreting it as a sophisticated propagandistic tool to craft pliant citizens (Murong 2013). Nevertheless, this reading underrates the coercive aspects of the CD, which are present, as I will show later.

Official interpretations

The focal point of the following section will be the official enunciations of the CD and how it has been articulated. To be clear, this does not purport to be a systematic content analysis of official CD discourses but rather a small survey to highlight the ways that CD has been variously used.

Xi himself stressed that a strong military is tied to the CD—in essence, a 'Military Dream'. The military has wasted no time in marrying the CD discourse with its own agenda. The Liaoning, China's first aircraft carrier, carried the words '中国梦，强军梦' in November 2013 translating to '*Chinese Dream, Strong Military Dream*' (China Daily 2013).[5] There is also an attempt to tie in social issues with the Chinese Dream. Then Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli further observed that the CD also belongs to the millions of disabled Chinese (Yang 2013).

In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, Xi was quizzed directly on the CD and responded in vague fashion:

> The Chinese dream is as much the dream of every Chinese as it is the dream of the whole nation. It is not an illusion, nor is it an empty slogan.
>
> (cited in *The Wall Street Journal 2015)*

It is crucial to note that Xi himself translates the CD differently at various settings. In a speech delivered in UNESCO in 2014, Xi said that 'the realisation of Chinese dream is the development of material civilisation and spiritual civilisation,' and China wants to 'create a colourful civilisation for mankind and provide the correct

spiritual guidance and strong motivation' (*China.org.cn* 2014). Mirroring this aspect, Liu Yandong, China's vice-premier, opined that China should 'build up its cultural strength in pursuit of the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation' (*Xinhua* 2014). Furthermore, in another setting, Liu and Xi both emphasized that the CD can only happen with scientific progress and development (*China Embassy 2014*).

The expansive nature of the CD discourse is such that there are provincial versions of the dreams—'*Henan Dream*' and the '*Guangdong Dream*'—and theme-based dreams such as '*sports dream*' and '*aircraft carrier dream*' and even a '*pregnancy dream*' for a hospital specializing in infertility treatment (Murong 2013). It ought to be stressed that some of these dreams are bound with inherent tensions. For example, in pursuit of technological innovation to realize the CD, it is inviting foreign scientists to drive technological and scientific advancements (*The Economic Times* 2015). This, however, is at odds with governmental elites' proclamations on how China's scientific innovation must be 'independent'.

More problematically for political elites, the ambiguity creates openings for subversive dreams. *Southern Weekly*, a liberal-leaning Chinese paper, defined the CD as 'a dream of constitutionalism', implying a separation of powers (Zhang 2013b). They were later corrected by the authorities, with the article's title changing from 'The Chinese dream: a dream of constitutionalism' to 'The Chinese dream is nearer to us than ever before', removing references to constitutionalism and separation of powers (*The Economist* 2013). This is a clear signal that while the CD is ambiguous, interpretations that subvert and challenge the government will not be tolerated.

China Dream and othering

A clear distinction has been made with regards to other dreams—the 'European Dream' and the 'American Dream', for instance (Meng et al. 2013). Chinese state media makes this distinction:

> The Chinese Dream is also superior to the narrow and particularistic development model embodied in the European Dream. The aim of the European Dream is the protection of Europe's political and economic interests, to defend the current global power structure that favors European development; to defend the entire European model comprising its welfare system, regulations on immigration, merchandise, language, culture and so on.
>
> (CNTV n.d.)

The choice of text here is telling as a claim is made that the CD is qualitatively 'better'. Second, by pointing out what the purported European Dream is, a marker is thus laid down on what it is not—narrow/national political and economic interests.

Contrasting with the American Dream, Chinese state media explained:

> It relentlessly eats up the world's resources. . . . The world's resources cannot sustain this "dream" of development that undermines other countries' right to develop. Chinese traditional culture dictates that in the course of realizing

> its own development dream, China will emphasize friendship and building positive relationships, and will coordinate its actions with those of others.
>
> (CNTV n.d)

Furthermore,

> In contrast to the China's global outlook when pursuing its dream of national revival, the characteristic feature of the American Dream is the maximization of private benefit, and the profit motive is its driving force. So-called universal values are applied selectively according to US interests. The American Dream either ignores or crushes the development dreams of other nations. But the "dream" of unilaterally pursuing its own interests will inevitably lead to resistance and further world conflict.
>
> (CNTV n.d)

The aforementioned is worth citing at length as it offers the clearest indication yet on how the CD discourse is markedly distinct from the American Dream. Despite pronouncements elsewhere (Xiong 2013), the CD necessarily involves invoking a negative 'other'—in this instance, Europe and the United States. Next, articulations of the supposed virtuous qualities of China are presented through the discourse of the CD and thus form part of a crucial tool in its soft power promotion. Chinese soft power—as interpreted by the Chinese—involves substantial 'othering' which informs and contrasts against its own positive qualities (Loh 2021). Finally, it is essential to note that such a reading of the CD contradicts other kinds of Chinese dreams expounded elsewhere. In September 2015, Xi stated,

> I have the impression that the Americans and people in all other countries share the same dream about the future: world peace, social security and stability, and a decent life. . . . But all roads lead to Rome. The dreams of various peoples, however different in meaning, are sources of inspiration for them, and all these dreams create important opportunities for China and the United States, as well as other countries to engage in cooperation.
>
> (Cited in *The* Wall Street Journal 2015*)*

This is an inclusive articulation of the CD. It is also significant to note that when compared to the 'Russian Dream', it is referenced in glowing terms. Liu Yandong underscored how the 'Chinese dream and the Russian rejuvenation dream fit each other well, while the two partners see their development as opportunities for each other' (Mu 2014). The upshot of this inconsistent and sometimes contradictory enunciation of the CD is not that the account offered by China Central Television (CCTV) and other state surrogates are wrong but that all *these inconsistencies can co-exist* and can all be 'right'. Indeed, the competing multi-directional pulls for leveraging on the CD for various internal, external, sectoral, institutional, political, and organizational agendas makes it an inconsistent creature but with, nevertheless, tangible effects. Wasserstrom (2015) sums it up crisply: 'Xi's Chinese Dream is

protean. He associates it with different things at different times in different places'. Indeed, the polysemous nature of the CD fits into Xi's latest discursive projects such as the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Development Initiative.

At this point, it is important to state that the invocation of the CD is weighted towards domestic audiences. There have been articulations of the CD discourse when Chinese leaders undertake diplomatic activities, but these are used loose and ambiguous. When Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited four Latin American countries—Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Chile—in 2015, he referenced the CD dream saying: 'It will also help Latin America understand the Chinese Dream and promote mutual learning in the fields of culture, education, and society. Finally, it will fulfil a joint Chinese, and Latin American, Dreams' (cited in Wu 2015). Fu Ying, then vice foreign minister of the PRC, likewise claimed that 'The Chinese dream is also part of the dream of many in the developing world who now have a great opportunity to grow their economy' (cited in Chen 2013). These efforts, however, much like China's soft power efforts, have had mixed results.

A pattern emerges in articulating the CD—at its core is its ambiguity, and this ambiguity allows broad utility. The previous discursive articulations suggest two things: First, while there is an external facet to the CD, the official (and academic) discourse does not add up to a broad or specific foreign policy.[6] Second, the inconcreteness of the CD allows it to function as a domestic tool for nation-building and rule legitimation. What sets it further apart from previous leaders' directives is the infusion of emotion and affect: as a somatic marker. It is crucial to note the emotional significance of media's textual and visual representation in creating shared meanings. For instance, Hutchison (2016) in her study of trauma points to its 'collectivizing potential' in enacting and enabling the 'boundaries of a political community' (p. 169) and how media representations can create 'shared feelings' and 'promote meanings' (p. 180).

The Chinese Dream as a somatic marker

If the role of emotions in international relations (IR) as a discipline remains 'relatively unexplored terrain' (Fattah & Fierke 2009, p. 69) then the role of neuroscience in emotions and IR is virtually undisturbed territory. This is vexing especially since it has been proven that emotions cannot be extricated from cognition. As neurologist Antonio Damasio points out, reason and intuition are linked in the ways we construct our intuitions, beliefs, and decision-making processes (Damasio 1994, pp. xviii–xix). In short, there is an indubitable link between rational/irrational behaviour, decision-making, action, and emotions (McDermott 2004, p. 691; Prinz 2004), yet cognition in emotions has been given short shrift in IR.[7] Crucially, neuroscientists have found that the brain changes from social structure and the environment—'If the brain is like a map of lived experience, then the mind can, with directed effort, function as its own internally directed mapmaker' (Schwartz & Begley 2002, pp. 200, 253–254). Clare Timbie and Helen Barbas in their seminal work found evidence of the 'presence of fool-proof avenues for emotions to influence high-order cortical areas associated with affective reasoning'

in the brain's neuronal circuits (2015, p. 11976). That said, one should be careful in over-reliance as the emotional niche turns towards neuroscience. This chapter, thus, takes seriously Mattern's (2014, p. 593) cautioning,

> We need to face up to the limits of neuroscience for it is neuroscience that, in reducing emotion to a type of brain activation, evacuates emotion of its conceptual and analytical intelligibility.

A strictly materialist understanding of emotions would be unable to account for collective emotions as it would merely be the sum of individual emotions (Holmes 2013, p. 210). But this cannot be as our experiential and emotional understanding of the world takes place in an embodied space that shapes not just how we think/feel but what *we are able* to think/feel (Panagia 2009). What is more, studies by psychologists have shown how emotions at the individual, dyadic, group, and cultural levels are intrinsically social (Van Kleef et al. 2016). First postulated by Damasio, the somatic marker hypothesis suggests that humans possess a device by which emotional processes can lead, alter, and/or predispose one towards certain behaviour, particularly decision-making (1994). He notes that 'When a negative somatic marker [such as fear] is juxtaposed to a particular future outcome the combination functions as an alarm bell. When a positive somatic marker [such as elation] is juxtaposed instead, it becomes a beacon of incentive' (Damasio 1994, p. 174).

What is most appealing about Damasio's hypothesis is that it brings together both rational cost-benefit calculations and 'softer' somatic emotional signs. His work highlights decision-making deficiencies of patients suffering damage to their frontal lobes and how the lack of these emotional intuitions/somatic markers because of brain damage contributes to that deficiency. Damasio foregrounds reason and rationality with emotions and affect thus giving us a glimpse into how structures are embodied and embedded in the self and how these societally-influenced somatic markers form an important base for decision-making and action. The somatic marker theory allows one to account for the socially constructed and culturally local constraints to be studied and understood when one makes decision—beyond pure reasoning or biological causes. His conception of a somatic marker, coming from a neuroscientist, also serves as an important check on the reductionist and essentialist instinct that some scholars hold about the brain as *causative* (see Hirstein 2022, pp. 329–333).[8]

Other IR scholars note that this somatic marker 'can be crucial in assisting decision-making, especially when subjects face conflicting choices' (Ariffin 2016, p. 12). Gearóid O'Tuathail adds that it is 'neither wholly cultural nor biophysical but the mixing of the latter into the former, somatic markers are intersubjective structures of affect and memory' (2003, p. 858). Ringmar (2016, p. 9) further refines it:

> somatic marker attaches an affective value to an event, a person or a situation, telling us not what the event, person or situation mean in general but what they mean to us.

Crucially noting how social factors inform emotions or the affect of the 'somatic marker', he said,

> Obviously, much of this environment is social and consists of our relations with other people. As neuroscientists can explain, the attunement that takes place in relation to the social environment relies on a range of sub- and pre-cognitive processes.
>
> (Ringmar 2016, p. 109)

Considering its application in IR, O'Tuathail (2003) contends that '9/11' is a somatic marker in American society marked by 'resentment' and the desire to 'stand tall' and be 'powerful' (pp. 859–60), which turned public opinion in favor of the decision to invade Iraq. Similarly, Saurette (2006) notes how elites were humiliated by the terror attacks of '9/11' while Ross (2014, pp. 81–85) notes how the somatic marker '9/11' can animate nationalism and create the 'othering' effect post '9/11'. The CD, as opposed to the '9/11' case, is a 'positive' example of a somatic marker. Indeed, this appeal of the emotion is crucial for building solidarity as Lee (2014) observes that the CD creates

> 'we-feeling' in the audience, fostering loyalty to the state above individual agendas. The ménage of commonplace scenes, folk culture, and shared nostalgia propagates an impression of collective memory among the populace, infused with sentiments of sameness.

This 9/11 example is important because it sets a clear, intuitive manifestation of a 'somatic marker' and provides solid contrast against the softer CD which does not have a distinct and precise 'moment', 'event', or 'image' on which the somatic marker rests upon. What follows then is that accessing the CD would allow one to extract more analytic and theoretical juice from the somatic marker hypothesis within the field of emotions in IR. One way to do this is to couch the conceptualization of somatic markers through the gradations in intensity within somatic marker; this simple conceptual procedure allows one to consider less 'obvious' cases of somatic markers. 9/11 is 'easy' to understand as a somatic marker because of the global attention, intensity, and grief felt. But emotions, and, relatedly, somatic markers do not appear only in very intense periods, *are not any less important* than the more intense somatic markers. Second, while the intensity scales (less intensive vs more intense) may not yet capture the full complexities of a marker, it gives a rough approximation and is an upgrade over a singular, unquestioned interpretation of 'affect', 'gut feelings', and 'we-feelings'.

It must be added that there are various academic understandings of the CD. In addition to the ones already pointed out earlier; it has been read as being political propaganda (Forde 2013) and nationalism (Ljunggren 2015) and as a tool to shape international perceptions (Boc 2015). What has been neglected, however, is the emotional element in what is fundamentally an extremely emotive discourse. Nationalism, for instance, taps into feelings of patriotism, and propaganda is meant

to stir feelings and shift attitudes (Lee 2014). Yet emotion and the critical role it plays in the CD is muted. The somatic marker hypothesis also takes seriously the shifts in behaviour. Moreover, the emotional 'affect'—the 'less-than-conscious, embodied aspect' (Solomon & Steele 2016, p. 10) as seen in the activities and expressions of the CD discourse—is indistinguishable in the brain (Okon-Singer et al. 2015). The upshot of this is that in the CD discourse its emotional component cannot be disentangled from the people who are experiencing this.

There are three further compelling reasons why the CD discourse is a somatic marker. First, the CD discourse has shown that it is shot with positive emotion and affect that moves people figuratively and literally through firstly, mass participatory activities, and secondly, individual adjustments to behaviour. Second and relatedly, there is a conscious attempt by citizens to engage with and participate in CD related activities at individual, societal, and state levels. Third, there is a shift towards being more receptive to the messages of Xi that runs concurrently with the promulgation of the CD (Hart 2016). Dolan's work showed how positive emotions affect leaders' approach to war (2016). In a similar vein, this chapter shows how positive emotions can modify citizen's openness to regime's messaging.

The social experience of these emotions creates something more than just additions of individual emotions—a cultivation of 'we-feeling' as Lee (2014) points out. Neuroscientists have found plenty of evidence for this; neuro-scientists found that 'when two adults are both focused on a common object, their appraisals of that object and affective reactions to it often become calibrated' (Parkinson & Simons 2009, p. 1081). Importantly, when this happens, a sense of individuality is lost, and people identify more closely with the group. The CD, as an ongoing iterative and interpretive act, creates consistent streams of opportunities for collective action and effervescence. Christian Von Scheve emphasized how 'collective effervescence contributes to the emergence of a "collective conscience" and thus the reinforcement of group ties and social solidarity' (2011, p. 55). Recall also Hutchison's (2016) observation that media representation and emotional discourse 'creates shared forms of perceiving and understanding' (p. 180) and how nation-states 'can in this way be considered "emotional spaces," or "affective community"' (p. 105). This has clear implications for building shared, collective norms (Wren 2012, p. 64) which, in turn, build a social order that exists beyond the encounters that first provided it. This reification of the CD, from individual to social order, is not lost in its articulation by party elites. Liu Yunshan, China's propaganda chief, used revealingly analogous language—calling for efforts to create 'positive energy' and to make a 'common contribution' to the CD (Mu 2013).

Domestically, the narrative of the CD and its associated positive feelings tie into the need to reconcile the tension between the individual's material desires and individualization (Steele & Lynch 2013, pp. 6–8) against the state's need for collective strength where the broader community, state and the party takes precedence. What is more, Liu (2016) notes that the CD approach utilizes both social influence and government initiatives to cultivate a widespread interest in living sustainably. As others have contended, given the 'restlessness' of China owing to its diverse nature and increasing individualization that comes with economic reforms (Link, Madsen & Pickowicz 2013), there is a need for grand visions that binds.

Whether the latter has been successful or not is a matter of debate and is not the key concern of this chapter—what is pertinent here, however, is that this appeal of the CD is one that serves as a tool to preserve and legitimize the CCP's longevity. Indeed, the CD, while ambiguous, is meant to affect and inject a shared sense of destiny and finality towards the grand goal of 'rejuvenation' as bonds continue to strengthen—bodies moving together, literally and emotionally, towards a common dream that forges shared affection, attention, joint action, and collective behaviour (Vacharkulksemsuk & Fredrickson 2012, pp. 399–400). In January 2015, the top selling calendars showed Xi and his wife beneath the words 'China Dream' (Macleod 2015). Calendar giving during the new year is a traditional and cherished act (Hart 2016), and the mass display and exchange of this merchandise highlights the pervasive quality of the message. An academic survey by Lu (2015) showed that 92.4% of urban residents in 17 Chinese cities have heard of the CD concept as expounded by Xi. This is highly suggestive of a deep penetration rate of the CD discourse and the success of the propaganda efforts by the state.

At the meso- and micro-level, adjustments and alignments towards the CD can be seen amongst citizens. Academics, for instance, are encouraged to write proposals relating to the CD. There was an explosion of publications, more than 10,000 CD related works in 2013 compared to a negligible amount before Xi's articulation (Lee 2016).[9] Beyond that, 'model dreamers' were selected to visit workplaces and inspire others with their dreams (*The Economist* 2013). A cottage industry also emerged with propaganda posters on the CD being sold and stars being made from singing ballads about the CD.[10] Universities incorporated the CD discourse into their training of young academics, and parents and children across China were also mobilized to 'praise, depict and realize the Chinese Dream' (*The Atlantic* 2013), in effect making sure that the socialization and internationalization of the 'dream' starts young.

The flexibility of the discourse is seen most apparently when institutions and individuals are implicated as co-authors. One example of this is manifested in the array of CD-related activities such as essay writing competitions in schools and a country-wide photography competition funded by state organizations to tease out 'what the dream actually entails'. While there are various activities at the individual level, these are supplemented by many state-sponsored and institutionally layered CD activities that sustain the ongoing collective communication and mass participatory activities. Significantly, this institutional meso-layer also acts as a filter to discipline and keep discussions of dreams within acceptable boundaries. At the state level then, the constant (re)articulation of the CD allows societal bonds to strengthen according to the vision of the party and permits the stressing of vague national Chinese dreams such as 'patriotism', 'unity', 'solidarity', and 'rejuvenation' (Zhao 2013) *without appearing contradictory*.

Conclusion

The CD, viewed as a somatic marker and an embodied emotional discourse, has clear utility for state building, Party legitimacy, and nationalism. Berezin (2002, pp. 39–40) notices how the nation as a 'community of feeling' is united by 'emotional energy', and this in turn can mobilize and rally a polity—the CD discourse as

an emotional somatic marker is one such means of rallying the polity. For the Party, it functions as an interpretive device to be used at opportune times for both domestic and international contexts—focusing on the positive, 'striving' aspects of the Dream and tying the fate of the nation with the continued leadership of the Party. Theoretically, this chapter makes a modest addition to the emotion IR agenda by firstly, bringing to focus the emotions of citizens, the process which enables their direction and how it contributes to social solidarity and, secondly, by demonstrating the value of 'positive' somatic markers in the CD.

Empirically, this chapter shows three things. First, while anything can be placed in the CD discourse it is acceptable only if it is a state-aligned dream. Second, the consequence of the polysemous nature of the CD is that there is no overarching definition. Party elites are thus incentivized to leverage on the discourse for political mileage. Third, the CD is well-received by domestic Chinese, but this is made possible only because it has been left open to interpretations as long as it aligns with Party interests. Although it follows a political tradition of leaders' 'isms', it is qualitatively different as a somatic marker. Finally, the international relations aspect of the CD is not as successful as its domestic aspect. One could even argue that it has not been successful since most Western media coverage and analysis of the CD views it overwhelmingly in propagandistic or negative terms.

Notes

1 There has been some debate over the use of 'Chinese Dream' vs 'China Dream', but in this chapter it will be used interchangeably.
2 This concept stresses scientific development, sustainable growth, social welfare, increased democracy, and eventually the creation of a 'socialist harmonious society' (*Xinhua* 2012a).
3 Translation my own.
4 India is now the world's most populous country.
5 Translation my own.
6 This contrasts with the 'Belt and Road Initiative' which has a clear geopolitical, foreign policy element. See Loh (2021).
7 For exceptions, see Hutchison and Bleiker (2014), Mercer (2006), and Mattern (2014).
8 An important caveat here is that there is an apparent distinction between *neuroscientists* and *social neuroscientists*, the latter whom Marcus Holmes claim can 'self-reflectively keep these criticisms in mind while investigating the biological correlates in the brain that underlie behavior' (2014, p. 216).
9 While the discursive environment has expanded considerably beyond the CD to include others such as the Belt and Road Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Development Initiative, 'new productive forces', and others, CD remains important to Xi's domestic goals (see Loh 2021).
10 For instance, Chen Sisi, a member of the military song and dance group shot to popularity with her song 'Chinese Dream' and has acquired over 1.2 million followers on Weibo. See http://weibo.com/chensisi.

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6 Global 'civilization politics' with 'civilization value'

Su Hao, Zhou Jiali and Ding Li

Introduction

Due to the complexity of political and security issues in the international community, relations between countries are often mired in contradictions and frictions. Such troubles separate human beings, resulting in a seemingly perpetually divided global (human) community.

Considering that many problems in international relations are embedded in profound cultural influences, can we view political issues from a more macroscopic, virtual, hypothetical perspective? For example, if we approach international relations from the broad angle of *human* society, might it provide new ideas for addressing complex political problems? What kind of construct is the politics of human civilization? What does this construct entail? What is the relationship between the politics of human civilization and civilizational values? And in what ways are civilizational values the same as universal values? The authors of this chapter believe that this framework of 'civilization politics' will open new paths for understanding the broader challenges of global society and international relations.

Three concepts beyond international politics

International politics is a basic category in politics, taking international actors and their political behaviour as its research subject and the international society where international behaviour takes place as its research object. International politics has become an ontological concept in political science research, and it has a strong national orientation. However, human society overall is undergoing profound changes. The main actors of human society are experiencing two directions of macro expansion and micro decomposition. The macro expansion refers to regional actors based on regional international organizations (formed in the process of regional integration), and global actors (such as international organizations like the United Nations); micro decomposition refers to the political behaviour of non-state actors in human society, such as non-governmental organizations or transnational crime actors (such as terrorist organizations). Hence, current concepts of international politics are insufficient to study these new political phenomena of human society. Therefore, we put forward three ontological political concepts

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beyond international politics, namely human politics, global politics, and world politics. The three concepts share the common characteristic that they attempt to go beyond the limited explanations provided by the international political framework, considering the ever more complicated nature of the global and transnational issues. The evolution of world politics has gone through several stages, and the future direction should be a model of civilization politics that is centred on civilizational values.

Development in politics is dynamic rather than static. When the logic and structure of national or international politics change, so too does the nature of politics, and new forms come into being. In such cases, old political concepts cannot explain the new political realities, nor solve the new political problems that have emerged. There results in a need for new political concepts to define new political problems. In general, the focus of international political research is on the behaviour of sovereign states in the international community and their political relations (Ni 2001). The end of the Thirty Years' War in Europe and the concluding Treaty of Westphalia marked the start of the modern international society and the current international system. In such a system, the basic unit is a sovereign state. International politics, as a scientific field, officially makes state behaviour in the international system and the relationship among different states the ontological subject of research. However, in recent decades—with the advances in science, technology, and communication—the states of the world have been connected closely, despite being separated geographically. On the one hand, the rapid development of globalization makes the world gradually form a macroscopic world system beyond the state-centralism. State actors, sub-state actors, trans-state actors, and so on reflect the trend of multiple developments. As globalization brings many benefits and convenience, it also brings many problems and troubles to the world. And these problems and difficulties are inextricable in an international political model in which the sovereign state lies as the basic unit. On the other hand, with the development of regional integration in the world, regional international organizations play an increasingly important role as super-national actors in the international community. It seems to have proved difficult for traditional international politics and traditional international relations theory (IRT) to cover contemporary human society comprehensively, so there is an emerging need for new abstract concepts to define and explain the development of this new age. World politics, global politics, and human politics are three such concepts that go beyond the constraints of traditional international politics and IRT.

World politics is a basic concept in Western political science which takes the international politics of the global community as its research subject (Maillart 2004). In 1948, the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Affairs Studies published the quarterly journal of *World Politics* with a forward-looking vision, focusing on the relationship between countries in the world. But basically 'world politics' and 'international politics' are used interchangeably in academia, with the concept of 'international politics' more widely adopted. In fact, there are still some differences between the two concepts, with the latter being concerned with political and security relations between nations, while the former being more concerned

about the world system and configuration, namely, a worldwide pattern formed by international organizations and other actors interacting with one another in the world system. Therefore, the study of international politics should expand to the whole world. As emphasized by the world system theory, the world should be studied as a social system when researching modern social reform and world history (Wallerstein 1998). We should also recognize international politics as an integrated whole for analysis and return to the origin of world politics.

Global politics, in a sense, goes beyond the traditional parameters of world politics. World politics appeared before global politics, but global politics is richer in content than world politics. If we consider world politics an expansion from international politics in connotation and extension, then global politics surpasses international politics (Hou 2003). In contemporary international relations—particularly the process of globalization and regional integration—traditional international relations are extending beyond nation-state actors, with the power structure of the world system becoming flat, and various elements of the international community forming a horizontally connected comprehensive system (Freedman 2006). Hoshino Akiyoshi stressed in his book *Global Politics* that

> [t]oday's international politics has been sweeping the old pattern of the past, and is lifting up the curtain of the new pattern of international politics . . . the expansion of political phenomena, the complexity of its content, the routinization and the mobilization of political life, all enhanced the uncertainty of international politics. . . . Therefore, the creation of a new subject—world politics (global politics) is necessary to adapt to the needs of reality.
>
> (2000, p. 1)

In addition to studying traditional global political issues, there is also the need to make a systematic study of global security issues and global governance issues (Li & Zhang 2015).

The concept of 'human politics' also arises at this historical moment when traditional international politics faces scrutiny. The main idea is that human beings, rather than nation-states, should be taken as the ontological actor when one researches human society. In international politics, sovereign states are taken as the basic units, but each state is composed of its citizens. The discussions on problems between nation-states are held among Chinese citizens, Swedish citizens, German citizens, and so forth. Therefore, we should form a bigger vision and stand at a higher level to think about political issues. In her 2015 book titled *Human Politics*, Professor Anne Phillips argues that human beings should not look at political relations strictly in the fixed terms of nation-states, but take human beings, especially, in viewing people-people competition (2015, p. 1). This thought marks a transcendence of traditional international politics.

Therefore, political research should jump out of the traditional ontology domain of international politics and move on to wider concepts like world politics, global politics, and human politics, which will provide new ideas from a higher level of thinking, go beyond the international politics framework, and explain the world

and its political phenomenon from a new perspective. In this dimension of political study, world politics can serve as an ontological and abstract concept of research at the most macro and the highest level, under which world politics can be classified into different stages based on the historical evolution process.

Five stages in world politics evolution

The development of world politics played out across multiple eras. Seen from the perspective of the grand historic evolution of human beings, world politics progressed through five stages: dynasty politics, power politics, ideology politics, authoritarian politics, and the 'civilization politics' yet to unfold. The concept of 'civilization politics' mentioned here indicates an idealistic form of world politics in the future. The five forms of world politics can be briefly defined as dynasty politics, power politics, ideology politics, authoritarian politics, and civilization politics.

Dynasty politics came into being in accompaniment with the earliest appearance of human civilizations, states, and nations. Dynasty politics stemmed from ancient civilizations, at which time the actors of world politics were dynasties in the name of states. States were ruled by emperors or the royal clans, thus kingdoms or empires were formed. The political relations occurring among those kingdoms or empires were based on the interactions among the ruling clans and enabled a kind of regional or world governance. Such world politics were in the hands of royal clans. It lasted several thousand years, from ancient times to the beginning of modern history, and was an important form of world politics. Today, there are still some countries with political models centred on the rule of monarchs. As those remnants of the old feudalism system have lagged behind the development of history and are not a part of the mainstream of world politics, this chapter will provide only minimal discussion of them.

Power politics is represented in modern times when nation-states became the actors of world politics. The 'Westphalian System' was based on power politics, and this system came to define the general international community of states. This system was anarchic, with countries in pursuit of hegemony or absolute safety, and regularly engaged in fierce struggles for power. This led to cycles of competition, confrontation, and conflicts and clashes among countries, culminating in the two world wars (Coggins 2014). Power politics has been central to the tragic history of human beings, like the expansion of colonialism, the invasions of imperialism, and the recurrence of hegemonism.

Ideology politics appeared in the 20th century, represented by the confrontation between the East and the West in the second half of the 20th century. Actors of this kind of politics are countries with strong ideological inclinations and country groups under the banners of ideologies. Ideology politics is a political orientation that transcends individual state or national interests and boosts the global expansion of politics that appeal across the ideologies of different countries. It can be best reflected by the Cold War in the 20th century, in which two country groups competed on the two ideological dimensions of capitalism and socialism.

To a certain extent, ideology politics has not come to an end. China claims that the United States is still trying to westernize and differentiate the Chinese people. 'Westernization' is an expression with strong connotations of ideology politics. The United States indeed entitles China 'Red China' and makes efforts to channel China into its own value system. Thus, the attempts of the United States also bear strong appearances of ideology politics. In ideology politics, countries with different ideologies usually go beyond normal relations and step into confrontational relations. Behind the complicated confrontations among countries nowadays are the elements of ideology confrontations.

Authoritarian politics is a form of politics that features decision-making within the state system being monopolized by political strongmen. Ideologies are not necessarily a driving factor, and the political group determines a country's status and behaviours in the international community. In world politics today, some countries have shed ideologies and adapted to the governmental system of authoritarian politics. When interacting with so-called Western democratic actors of the international system, authoritarian political actors also usually step into conflicts with them.

Dynasty politics, power politics, ideology politics, and authoritarian politics are chronological outcomes of historical evolution, which remain full of conflicts today. If we do a horizontal analysis of today's world politics, a puzzle of human society could be identified whereas human society is like a body of contradictions without natural coherence (see Figure 6.1). This chapter tries to use a coordinate diagram to depict this body of contradictions as the conflict between historical correctness and political correctness.

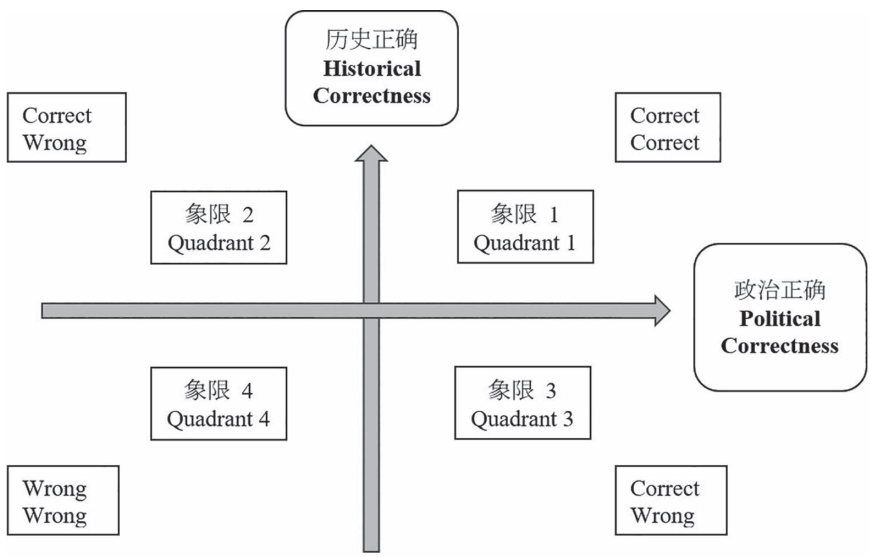

Figure 6.1 Four quadrants of world politics

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The authors of this chapter perceive the development of history as a spiral process. In ancient history, a balance between the East and the West was maintained. However, in modern times, such balance was lost, and the West assumed a dominant position in the world (Su 2011; Su & Zhou 2014). The leadership and dominance by the West have aroused power politics and ideology politics throughout modern and contemporary history.

To explore the correctness of those forms of politics, the authors adopt the aforementioned coordinate as the analytic framework. First, the vertical axis points to the direction of 'historical correctness.' Historical correctness indicates that the development of a country goes in line with the development trend of history and, thus, could not be stopped by any forces. For example, the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the rise of China are certain in history. China was once suppressed and is now rising again. Such resurgence is destined by the development of history and, hence, cannot be stopped. Adopting the strategy to suppress the development of China and to curb its rise, the United States will be proven to be standing on the wrong side of history.

Second, the horizontal axis points to the direction of 'political correctness.' Political correctness indicates the acceptance by people of political values, embodies a kind of political superiority and seems to mark the commanding height of human values. How to perceive historical correctness? It puzzles China too, whose traditional ideology is Marxism, with a contemporary focus on socialism with Chinese characteristics, and current attention is paid to the grand resurgence of the Chinese civilization. When it comes to political correctness, the United States labels itself a good example, and a similarly strong sense of superiority is widely shared by other Western countries. They think China is alien and criticize China on different accounts, especially on account of human rights. In the eyes of Western countries, China is politically incorrect, not a part of the whole world, and thus should be criticized and suppressed. In the international community, Western countries, represented by the United States, are confident and aggressive in propagating the so-called general values of democracy and freedom, while some Chinese people are less so and feel inferior to others regarding political correctness.

The conflict between historical correctness and political correctness has brought to both China and the United State a sense of confidence and lack of confidence at the same time: with historical correctness, the Chinese are confident; with political correctness, the Americans are also confident. However, the United States smells the breath of crisis at the decline of its own national strength and the rise of China, while China worries its social stability would be at stake under Westernization and differentiation of the Chinese people. The reason why some countries in Eastern Asia rely on China economically but coordinate with the United States on political safety lies in that they benefit economically from the rise of China but trust the United States more in regard of politics. So how can the conflict between historical correctness and political correctness be solved?

This dilemma is an *entanglement* of historical correctness and political correctness. The only way out is the progress of world politics. Namely, after ideology politics, world politics should evolve toward a new form—civilization politics.

Power politics and ideology politics can still be found in world politics, as can authoritarian politics, which is transitional and a not-so-mature form of politics stressing authority rather than ideology.

One thing worth mentioning is, after the appearance of nation-states, colonial expansion, and imperialistic invasions by Western powers following social Darwinism rules like 'might makes right' are neither historically correct nor politically correct. Under ideology politics, the diplomatic acts of a country are self-claimed to be politically correct and seek to suppress the opponents and achieve hegemony. Such acts have been left behind the wheels of historical progress. Under authoritarian politics, behaviours of a country are usually rooted in its social traditions and actual political situations. Thus, authoritarian politics could be seen as a natural stage of historical evolution. It is historically correct, but not so politically. In fact, different forms of world politics entwined together, as shown in Figure 6.2, have resulted in the conflict and dilemma between historical correctness and political correctness.

The Western civilization, represented by the United States, maintaining values like democracy and freedom, thinks that the West is in possession of political correctness, and that world history will end at the final form of human politics—the Western liberal democratic system (Fukuyama 1989, 2003).[1] With this thought, the West tries to reshape the world into its own mode by launching 'colour revolutions' here and there, putting many civilization systems of the world into disorder. Such behaviours politicize civilizations and ironically yield the opposition

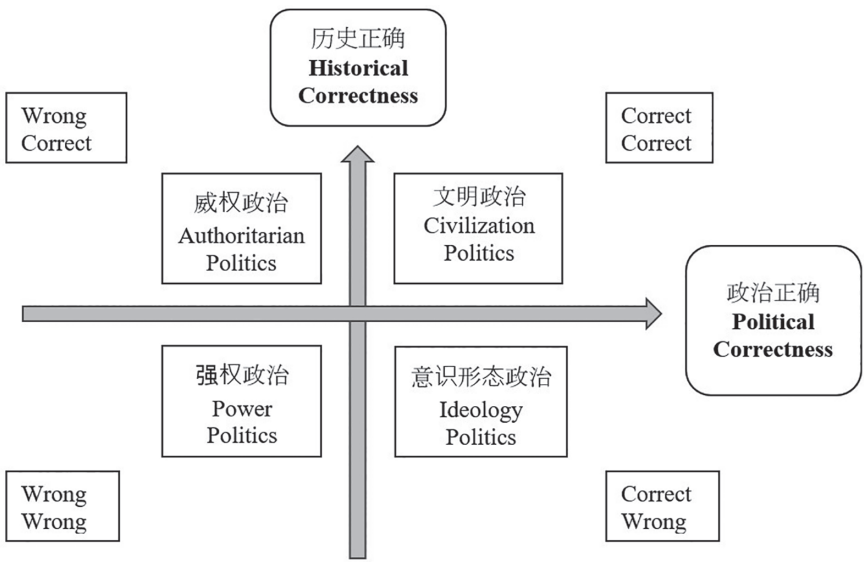

Figure 6.2 The entanglement of historical correctness and political correctness, and the way out

Source: Compiled by the authors.

of political correctness. At the same time, the rise of developing countries as a group has changed the pattern of world power and is leading the trend of historical correctness (Wei 2011). Despite this trend, the West sticks to hegemonic stability and tries to hamper the growth of China, thus choosing the wrong side of history. Meanwhile, some big developing countries are still trapped in traditional political frameworks of ideology, not willing to trust other rising countries. Worse still, some countries concerned with ideology clashes (the United States and Japan), attempt, in the name of political correctness, to suppress China and Russia and profit from power politics. China, on the other hand, is strained with political correctness and falls into a difficult situation of getting alienated from neighbouring countries and confronting the United States and Japan. Adopting the lenses of the different dimensions reflected by different forms of politics, we can realize that domestic political systems are closely tied with world political forms. Sometimes they even determine the nature of world politics. And in the future, the direction for the evolution of world politics will be civilization politics.

The establishment of civilization politics will symbolize the final integration of historical correctness and political correctness in human history. In politics, countries of the world would not simply take Western political civilization as the standard and would instead base self-cognition on the cores of their own civilizations and explore values in the cores of their own civilizations. They can take advantage of all civilizations in the world, Eastern or Western, to forge new forms of politics. World powers and regional civilizations will share common civilization values while at the same time preserving regional wisdom and playing by their own roles in the world political arena. Many problems and deadlocks currently existing in today's international politics are mostly caused by the pursuit of power. And what arouses such pursuit of power lies in the limitation of the international community that the utmost claim for sovereignty, the core of a nation-state, drives countries into the abyss of conflicts and confrontations with each other. The reshaping of world politics is expected to change the forms of politics and head toward civilization politics. Civilization politics will be an optimized form of politics, in which the United States, or China, or any other civilizations in this world, will follow the integrated direction of both historical correctness and political correctness. As a result, the upcoming construction of civilization politics will surpass the constraints of traditional international politics, observe the shared values of all civilizations, seek for the coexistence and compatibility of all human beings, and finally move world politics from 'international politics' to 'global politics.'

The civilizational value in global politics

Since the beginning of modern times, the core entity in international politics is nation-states. As a result of it being the international actor, the core function of the nation-state is protecting national interests and supporting national pursuits, which results in endless conflicts and fights in the international community, while global politics, by transcending international politics, treats human society as a noumenon. With its essence of human politics, it focuses on the relations between

all civilizations of humanity as a whole. It constructs a new model of world order for the overall, general, and common peace and development of human beings (Heywood 2006). Civilization politics is the innate presentation of global politics, as its actors are the civilizations of human society. The civilization genes generated based on specific geographical environments and societal and historical changes in each civilization will determine its social behavioural norms and moral principles and philosophy and, finally, extract the civilization values of universal significance.

The civilization in human society has two layers of connotations. The first is the civilization in which a country serves as the unit. It can contain two forms, one is uni-nationality shaped by one civilization. It can take the form of a uni-national country, such as the national countries in Europe. In Asia, examples are Japan and South Korea. Second, complex countries of pluralistic integration, such as China, India, and the United States, are different cultures aggregated through institutions. As pointed out by some scholars, with such vast yet culturally diversified area, China has de facto geographical units of pluralistic integration. Therefore, it can be identified as one civilizational entity. Though the concept of civilizational entity is not as mature and widespread as nationality entity, it is the best interpretation of the pluralistic integration of China in reality (Wang 2008).

The contemporary civilization mentioned here does not simply refer to the actors with the structure of countries as basic units, such as China, which can be called Chinese ethnicity or a multinational country (Shang 2013; Zang 2015). The second layer is the civilization with the region as the entity. One of the development trends of international relations after the Cold War is regional integration, including economic, social, and cultural processes of integration. Such integration is often formed by a 'common cultural area' shared by regional countries of similar cultures and plays the role of connectivity in the construction of the overall integration process and regional community (Li 2007, pp. 175–181; Samson 2006, pp. 93–94). The civilization constructed by ethnic and national groups of shared or similar civilization patterns plays an integrated role in world politics with relatively coordinated foreign policy and behaviour. While political relations taking place in various civilizations all over the world can constitute a world political system, for a civilizational entity—which is the core of civilization politics—it is determined by civilizational values.

Thus, the core connotation of civilization politics is civilizational value. Civilizational value is the moral principle and spiritual consensus abstracted in human society in its advanced stages of development of various civilizations. It decides the value orientation among the ethnic and regional people and lays the foundation for cultural recognition of each other. Each civilization has its own value orientation, which determines the cognition towards humanity and morality of human beings for the ethnic groups and countries of the civilization and is the basis for constructing a set of social norms and philosophical systems. Due to their own innate characteristics, different human societies in different regions form the corresponding civilizational logic.

Based on political relations among contemporary civilizations, a particular political pattern can be formulated, that is, civilization politics is a world politics

pattern in which civilizations determined by different civilizational values correlate with each other. In the foreseeable future, civilization politics will be the normal combination for the world civilization system in the field of politics.

The core of civilization politics under the grand framework of global politics is the civilizational value extracted and channelled in all civilizations in human society. The civilizational value decides the highly advanced development of each civilization. Hence, it plays a dominant role in global politics and ultimately determines the formation of civilization politics. The formation and evolution of all civilizations of humankind is decided by the geographical environment, with distinct differences in civilizational genes, and different behavioural logic among civilizations.[2] Each civilization is rooted in its own civilization genes and gradually generates directive behaviour norms and social morality, based on which a relatively complete world view and philosophical system comes into being. The civilizational value orientation is thus created and ultimately channelled to civilizational value and constructed as a complete civilization value system.

The civilizational value is formed based on different civilization genes. The Eastern and Western civilizations have formed totally different civilization systems at the two ends of Eurasia due to the distinct differences in their respective genes. Through distillation of their own civilization values, they both generated different civilizational values with different connotations yet universal application for human society, that is, they both present common features of humankind from different perspectives. Indeed, from the evolution process of Western civilization, the Western civilization has experienced the aggregation of ancient Greek civilization, ancient Rome civilization, and Christianity and formed a whole set of Western world views and philosophical systems. The starting point of the hypothesis of an evil human nature of the Western civilizational value system is determined by the core orientation of it being 'individual-oriented,' which evolves an instinct of 'individualism.' The behavioural principles and moral norms based on individualism, along with the distillation of Renaissance and Enlightenment thought, have evolved into the civilization logic of 'natural rights,' which lead to the formation of 'humanism,' setting people free from the shackles of religion. Meanwhile, the principle of 'rationalism' has been deduced, which propelled the creation of modern science and technology and the outbreak of the Industrial Revolution. Ultimately, through human noumenon and the transformation of nature, Western civilization extracts the Western civilizational value of 'democracy and freedom.' It has commonality and universality of humankind; thus, the mainstream world mentality regards it as the universal value (Weber 2009, 2012).

Eastern civilization remains at the stage of the agrarian age and has not been refined through historical processes, nor has it sublimated its civilizational value with universal significance as has Western civilization. As one of the main representatives of Eastern civilization, Chinese people—having experienced the ritual systems in the dynasty of Xizhou, the Confucianism worship in the Han dynasty, and the introduction of Buddhism in the dynasties of Jin and Tang—have formed a whole set of behaviour norms and moral philosophies within East Asia. In modern times, the evolution of oriental civilization was disrupted by the expansion

of Western colonialism and the invasion of imperialism, which caused the oriental civilization to linger at the conceptual levels of the agrarian age and lack the experience of being refined by world industrialization and globalization in modern history. But with the arrival of the age of new globalization, the oriental civilization will start its new process of evolution and sublimate the civilizational value with universal significance. To be specific, the oriental civilization starts from the hypothesis of the goodness of human nature, which is based on a 'collectively-oriented' civilization gene and has formed the ethic orientation of 'collectivism.' It deduced a holistic philosophical view of 'natural law' and 'unity of humankind' from the world view of 'oneness of man and nature,' as well as the views of continuation, dynamics, connectivity, correlativity, and entirety about the universe (Chen 2015, p. 1). Through the definition of 'humankind nature,' in the foreseeable future, with the help of an Information Age transcending industrialization and modernization, the value based on common destiny of mankind and 'life community' will be sublimated to the oriental civilizational value with universal significance for humankind. Only through the extraction and distillation of the core of oriental civilization can the civilizational value, applicable for and shared by humankind, be formed.

All in all, since a civilization is the totality of humankind's accumulated material as well as spiritual activity in certain areas, every civilization bears the positive features of adaptability to humankind's existence and development. Each civilization in the world needs to be refined and sublimated, that is, the process of evaluation to become a civilizational value. With such value, as well as reasonable definition and modelling of the relations between them, it will be helpful for us to have a better understanding and construction of future civilization politics. Therefore, when world civilizations represented by oriental and Western civilizations have their own civilizational values, humankind's civilization politics can hopefully be formed.

The orientation of civilization politics

Against the background of new globalization, human society will enter the era of global politics. Different civilization types exist in this era, and they all contain rationality of their own needs. There is no right or wrong, superiority or inferiority among these types. Nations should surpass the fence of international politics and aim at constructing civilization politics based on civilization values, which will explore brand-new routes and schemes for solving the complicated contradictions and conflicts in current world politics.

Civilization is the active and positive fruit of the human spirit and material cultures. However, today's world politics is formed upon international politics, instead of civilization politics. The logic of power politics and ideology politics are, to a large extent, still dominating behaviours in the international community. The once popular 'Clash of Civilization Theory' by Samuel Huntington shifted the research subject of international relations from nations to civilizations and opened the window of studying world politics from the perspective of civilization (Huntington

2010). But he put too much emphasis on clashes between civilizations, making such clashes absolute (Su 1998). It showed that Huntington failed to realize the existence of civilizational values, not to mention their positive significance. His theory still discusses the relations among civilizations within the dimension of international politics, instead of revealing the meaning of civilization politics. Huntington's theory reflects the logic of power politics and ideology orientation and serves the strategic interests and hegemonic position of the United States. Therefore, we can see that Huntington's analysis does not expand to the dimension of civilization politics.

We should note that the two most important civilizations of the current world—the Eastern and Western civilizations—both have their own deficiencies. In the process of constructing civilization politics, the biggest problem of the West is that they have created ideologies based upon civilizational values. Although worshiped by the West, democracy and freedom are universal values shared by all human beings. On the other hand, universal as they are, they are not the sole value of human community and have obvious limitations. Nevertheless, in current international politics, the West regards such limited general values as the one and only value, denies the existence of other civilizational values, and is determined to replace other civilizational values. Such beliefs in their own superiority led to the West's attempt to rule the world using its own values. The consequence is that the West has tried to suppress, even eliminate, other 'historically correct' civilizations by means of its 'politically correct' civilizational values, which embodied the concept of 'I am me, and only by becoming me can you be reasonable.' In today's world, the West vigorously promoted 'democracy diplomacy' and 'human rights diplomacy' in non-Western civilizations, unscrupulously blamed 'human rights situations' on the developing countries of different development phases, and forcibly implanted the Western 'democratic model and human rights criterion' onto other countries, which has caused 'democratic mal-adaptation' in those countries. In the international political arena, wherever the West implemented democratization efforts, it worsened the existing problems and made the unstable situation more turbulent.

As for the Eastern civilized countries, after the Western conquest and period of rule, the Eastern civilization was overshadowed and lost itself, falling into a condition of 'egoless' and 'who am I' (Said 1978). Some Eastern countries 'departed from Asia for Europe' or pursued 'wholesale Westernization,' attempting to take Western 'democracy and freedom' as their own core civilization values and to change Eastern 'me' into Western 'them'. By doing so, the civilization construction of Eastern countries was distorted, and they ended up losing themselves and harming their basic interests. For example, the 'Plaza Accord' in Japan caused a long stagnation in development; the significant impacts of the 1997 financial crisis in South-East Asian nations; and the Philippines' confrontation against China over the South China Sea issue, which led to its domestic political unrest and economic deterioration.[3] Hence, behind the political, economic, and security dilemmas of the East Asian nations there exists the deeper question of civilizational value identification.

In the aforementioned coordinate system, the entanglement between 'historical correctness' and 'political correctness' reflects the paradox of 'ought to be' and 'to

be' in today's international political system. To get rid of the predicament, countries in the world should re-examine their respective civilizations and establish a rational and complete civilization politics framework based on their own civilizational values. Being a major representative of non-Western civilization, China needs to shake off the West-led world politics and come back to noumenon of Chinese civilization. Not only should we regain Chinese traditional culture's guiding function in social morality (Yu 2006), but we also need to value the kernels of Chinese culture to sublime a new Chinese civilizational value. As a country with more than 5,000 years of history, China is a natural 'civilization country' (Zhang 2011). At the critical point of world political transformation, the Chinese government is qualified to stand at the forefront of social progress and vigorously initiate the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Xi 2012). It is true that the Chinese nation does need to find itself and answer such questions as 'Who am I,' 'Who are Chinese people,' and 'Where is the foundation of Chinese civilization,' and so forth. The fact is the behavioural norms and moral standards in Chinese civilization are rooted from the ancient civilization of the agrarian age. Although they were universally applicable in ancient Eastern societies, they are insufficient to regulate modern society, not to mention support future human politics. In other words, the Chinese nation's rejuvenation is not merely the return to Chinese civilizational traditions.

In view of contemporary world politics, it is far from enough to just return to Chinese civilizational traditions. The reason is that the Chinese civilization has not yet formed universally significant civilizational values and needs to further sublime by means of the scientific methodology of the Western civilization since the modern times. We should, first, return to traditions and confirm self-identification, then lay the foundation for the realization of sublimation, and eventually refine a universally significant Chinese civilizational value. The famous Chinese scholar in the early-modern times, Zhang Zhidong, advocated 'Chinese learning as the fundamental structure, and Western learning for uses' (1998, p. 9740), a very effective way for the sublimation of Chinese civilization. 'Chinese learning as the fundamental structure' stresses that the essence in Chinese civilization is the kernel, while 'Western learning for uses' means we should learn the Western methodology, logicize, and theorize the relatively abstract and vague behavioural norms and social morality in Chinese history and, finally, by taking into consideration the actual need of new globalization, sublime the rational cores of Chinese civilization into civilizational values that can be accepted and shared throughout the world. Unlike the gene of 'individual-oriented' Western civilization, Chinese civilization's connotation will extend from the gene of 'collectivism' stemmed from the 'collectively-oriented' instinct. It will, in a realm and condition of mutualism, coexistence, and compatibility, pursue the ideal of a harmonious group, harmonious society, and harmonious world and, furthermore, fulfil the ideal by constructing the community of human destiny. Through linking together the common destiny of human beings, Chinese civilization will be committed to building a just and consonant society in the 'harmonious but not identical' world. All this has laid a solid philosophical foundation for the formation of Chinese civilization (Chen 2015, pp. 1–74).[4]

As mentioned earlier, Eastern and Western civilizational values have their respective value and significance. They view the world differently and developed from two opposite concepts of good and evil in relation to human. Thus emerged two distinct civilization systems and value systems of universal significance. An integrated universal value can be created based on coexistence and compatibility between Eastern, Western, and other civilizations to produce a complete human civilizational value system. Thus, human politics will be able to surpass the fence and constraints of the 20th-century 'ideological politics,' step off the framework of ideological competition between 'capitalism' and 'communism,' transcend the 'metanarrative' tradition of ideological politics, and eventually succeed in constructing civilization politics (Sakwa 1999, pp. 1–6; Kennedy 2002). Only in this way can we push various civilizations of the world to form reasonable civilization politics based on the coordination between 'historical correctness' and 'political correctness' and usher in a new era of global politics of human society.

Conclusion

The evolution of world politics will inevitably transform from international politics to global politics, and global politics' connotation will be determined by civilization politics of human society. The actors of civilization politics will change from nation-states to nations with certain civilizational features or regional civilization groups linked by civilizations. Such civilizations will develop internal cohesiveness by sharing civilizational values. They will handle their relations through mutual respect and coordination and form an optimized civilization politics.

Nevertheless, the various civilizations all possess values of dualism, that is, distinctiveness and sharing. Distinctiveness is determined by different civilization genes, while sharing reflects that human beings have different stereoscopic sides, and each civilization embodies one side of human nature shared by all human beings. Therefore, all civilizational value includes universally applicable values which can be shared by all human beings and can be refined to human spiritual consensus of general values. They are the essence of human civilizational values and are the common wealth of all human beings. Among the many civilizations of the world, the Western civilization and Eastern civilization are the two most important civilization systems. The Western civilizational values of 'democracy and freedom' do possess universal values, while the Eastern civilization will, soon, sublime civilizational values that can be shared and accepted by all human beings. When it comes to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, China will not only rise in material wealth, but also provide the world with Eastern civilizational values and create a value standard for the construction of human civilization.

British scholar Martin Whitlock proposed the concept of 'human value' in his book *Human Politics* (cited in Phillips 2015, p. 5). On 28 September 2015, at the general debate of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, Chinese President Xi Jinping made a speech entitled 'Working together to forge a new partnership of win-win cooperation and create a community of shared future for [hu]mankind,' in which he put forward the concept of 'human values' and advocated peace,

development, fairness, justice, democracy, and liberty as shared values for all human beings (Xi 2015, p. 1). This concept includes some similarities with the community values of the Chinese civilization. It may be more significant than universal values. Likewise, the authors of this paper also hold the view that we should use human values to express such universal values, that is, the universal values are human values.

To reiterate, the Western universal values are based on the 'evilness' of human nature, while the Eastern universal values focus on the other side of human nature—'goodness.' This is like the two sides of the coin of the human body. Only by joining the two sides can we see the whole of human nature. We can differentiate the West as the 'blue civilisation' and the East as the 'yellow civilisation.' In truth, humankind is a multifaceted stereoscopic prism made up of various features, that is, a 'unity in diversity.' The different values reflected in various civilizations are just one facet of human characteristics. Only by assembling these facets together can we develop the whole value of humankind. Therefore, the authors suggest that the West and the East forge the two different civilization systems—the so-called 'blue civilization' and 'yellow civilization'—by means of mutual learning and fusion, to construct a new integrated 'green civilization.' The 'green civilization' will embody universal values of the whole humankind and eventually develop an optimal civilization politics.

Notes

1 In fact, till now, Francis Fukuyama maintains that 'the fact has not changed that democratism is the end of history' (cited in Nishimura 2015, 'Has history really ended? An interview with US politics scholar Francis Fukuyama', *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 4 January).
2 Editor's note: See Hayes, this volume, Chapter 10, for an expanded discussion of references to genes and biological determinist arguments from Beijing.
3 Editor's note: Also see De Castro, this volume, Chapter 9.
4 See: Chen Lai 2015, *Zhong Hua Wen Ming De He Xin Jia Zhi [The core value of Chinese civilization]*, SDX Joint Publishing Company, Beijing. Of particular interest are Chapter 1: 'The philosophical foundation of Chinese Civilization', and Chapter 2: 'Values and world views of Chinese Civilization.'

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7 A new model of major power relations and sources of insecurity in the region

Third country perspectives

Stephen Robert Nagy

Introduction

Zhongguo (the Middle Kingdom), as a civilizational state, was the unchallenged organizing center in East Asia for eighteen centuries due to asymmetry in its size, capabilities, and long history. In part because of this historical experience, China constructed a world view that there was a natural hierarchal relationship between China and civilizations in the region often referred to as the *tianxia* (Ford 2010, p. 19). For Mingming (2012), a major aspect of Chinese cosmology and politics (*tianxia*) was an asymmetrical relationship between inside and outside conceptualized in terms of the hierarchy of the 'above' and the 'below'.

The *tianxia* premise is challenged today by the existence of the United States, the most powerful state in existence, and by countries within China's periphery that are not willing to return to the *tianxia* hierarchical order out of strategic, ideological, and normative reasons (French 2016). Supranational organizations and alternative economic centers further erode the premise of China as 'the' center of a hierarchical, Sinocentric world order.

As a consequence of these contradictions, China is faced with the conundrum of how to re-conceptualize its traditional views of itself and how to relate to other countries as equal sovereign states. How does China view these contradictions? In what way has it responded to a region and a world in which its traditional logic of relations with non-Chinese states is no longer represented by regional and global power dynamics? The answers to these questions are at the core of current research in China to identify and build a systemic body of thought that could be understood as a 'Chinese international relations theory'. The most contemporary examples of this line of thought are the 'new model of major power relations' and 'the community of shared destiny'. The challenge for each is to put practice into theory.

Tianxia and the 'Western' international system

Today's international system has been forged largely from the European experience of international relations with the Peace of Westphalia being the basis for how states recognize and behave vis-à-via each other. In the context of Chinese international relations, Westphalian notions of equality of states and international

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law were established when China was weak and not influential, being unable to contribute to an international system that reflects Chinese ideas and history as well (Kang 2010; Kaufman 2010).

The first represents a distinct Western view of international relations based on the European experience. This experience was deeply rooted in the European religious wars and meant to bring stability and predictability to Europe. Europe's experience with war led to the conclusion that stability could best be ensured when states were treated as equals and bound together under international law (Ford 2015). This logic held sway until Germany and Japan challenged the existing international order resulting in World War I and World War II and the Japanese invasion of China.

While these conclusions and institutions may be logical in the European context, China's historical experience taught Chinese thinkers that rather than states being treated as equal and bound by international law, it was a centralized state with hierarchical relations with surrounding peoples that was the foundation of stable governance, socio-economic development, and peaceful relations with neighbors.

One of the more prominent reformulations of *tianxia* is that of the contemporary Chinese philosopher Zhao Tingyang. In his book, *The Tianxia System: An Introduction to the Philosophy of a World Institution*, Zhao outlines how the *tianxia* concept might serve as a model of global governance by comparing it to the 'failed' Westphalian order (Noesselt 2016). Zhao presents *tianxia* as an all-inclusive alternative world order that emphasizes harmonious coexistence in contrast to the current Westphalian world order, which is anarchic and, as such, fosters zero-sum competition, balance of power, inequality, and conflict. For Zhao, *tianxia* is not just a political understanding of the world but also a cosmological one and sees it as the precondition for a new and better, harmonious and rational world order. Zhao claims that the *tianxia* system maximizes 'world interests and human values' by politically prioritizing the world first and foremost, the state next, and finally the family unit (Zhao 2021). In contrast, Zhao argues that the current system undesirably and politically prioritizes the individual first, the community next, and finally the state (Zhao 2021). According to Zhao, under the globally oriented *tianxia* system, 'all the problems in the world are regarded as problems not of individual states but as problems of the world' (Dreyer 2015, p. 1022).

The latter represents a set of rules and obligations that were conceived without real Chinese input, thus understood as inherently not representative of Chinese world views. These realities have led to a cottage industry of scholars, think tanks and policy centers attempting to create Chinese international relations theory, a set of theories that represents Chinese experiences, Chinese history, and Chinese values (see also Su et al., this volume, Chapter 6).

This *tianxia* mindset continued for centuries until China was challenged first by the Europeans and then the Japanese during the first and second Sino-Japanese wars, both of which brought an end to the Sinocentric system that existed in the region.

Chinese international relations theory?

Employing historical documents and strategic manuals, different scholars have come to different conclusions about the possibility of a subset of international

relations called 'Chinese international relations theory'. For instance, Ford (2015) stresses that Chinese international relations could be best described as having 'Confucian flesh and realist bones'. He argues that China has long practiced a carrot and stick approach to dealing with neighboring peoples that was well camouflaged in Confucian ritual, but when push came to shove, it was notions of hard power that were deployed to achieve diplomatic result.

French (2016) echoes Ford's realist assertion stressing the utilitarian nature of adopting Confucian and Chinese centrality by neighboring states at a superficial level to garner supremacy over regional rivals. When states did not submit, French argues they were dealt punitive measures such as the case of Vietnam (Cossa 1998; Path 2012). These punitive measures are not merely a historical behavior, but rather are also practiced in contemporary time with informal rare earth embargos on Japan (Nagy 2014), as well as punitive trade deployed on the Philippines, Norway, France, and Japan again after 2012 when each country engaged in political activities that Beijing understood as implicitly anti-Chinese (Nagy 2013). Interestingly, French points out that the *tianxia* mentality was in many ways not representative of how regional peoples viewed their relationship with China. Rather, Japan, Vietnam, and other peoples often refused to send tribute or strived for equality in their relationships with the 'Middle Kingdom'.

While some scholars look to China's long history for a historical pattern that could be understood as Chinese international relations, in interviews with scholars in the fall of 2017 in Beijing many asserted that Chinese international relations look to contemporary modern Chinese history, in particular post-civil war and China's post-World War II alliance experiences with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), North Korea, and Vietnam. The view was that these alliance relationships, rather than bringing stability and security, brought trouble to a state deeply interested in regional stability. As a result, Chinese international relations are premised on a deep aversion to alliances and a deep desire for preserving regional stability such that the government can concentrate on stable and sustainable socio-economic development.

While scholars may debate whether a theory of Chinese international relations or approach exists, we do see new diplomatic concepts emerging such as the *Xin-xing-daguo-guanxi*/新型大国关系/New model of great/major power relations. First enunciated at the Sunnylands summit with US President Barack Obama in June 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping explained that the 'new type of great/major power relations' was based on the principles of 'no confrontation or conflict', 'mutual respect', and 'win-win cooperation' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2013; Xinhua 2013). The initial Chinese phrasing of the concept was a 'New Model of *Great Power* relations' mostly focusing on how the United States and China could avoid the perils of a destructive rivalry that some scholars have called the Thucydides' Trap (Allison 2017). The thinking behind that new model would prevent the destructive hegemonic rivalries of the past such as with the Germans and Japanese.

Critics view the new model as a 'G-2' with Chinese characteristics (Zeng & Breslin 2016). Such a G-2-like model has been criticized by scholars in China arguing that only focusing on a 'new model of great power relations' that solely

focuses on Sino-US relations would be dismissive to the larger community of powerful nations (Wei 2010; see also Ping, this volume, Chapter 2). These criticisms have led scholars such as Zhimin (2013) moving the core of the new model concept away from the locus of great powers to a model that could be deployed with so-called major countries, that may include developing and developed countries but also international organizations. This shift away from a US-China centered model towards a model formulated by Chen as 'new model of relations between major powers', is a typology that could include Russia, India, Germany, Great Britain, France, and the United States as 'major countries'.

In contrast to Wei Ling, Zeng Jinghan, and Shaun Breslin, scholars such as Zhongying (2013) stress that the new model does not put US-China relations above other relations, while others such as Yun (2014) explain the new model as a way to make US-China relations more institutionalized and predictable. Western observers such as the Australian National University's Hugh White argue that the new model elevates fears of abandonment as countries in the region fear that they would be compelled to give up their long-standing relationship with the United States in any new model that focuses on a Sino-US agreement (White 2013). This would be especially true of countries such as Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea who have decades-long relations with the United States. Others see the Chinese proposal as an opportunity for smaller countries squeezed between China and the United States. For example, this model may provide South Korea the political space if properly arranged to avoid choosing between China and the United States (Snyder 2013). Critics, however, stress that 'from the perspective of US allies, the "new model of great power relations" was simply the latest effort by China to assert a bipolar condominium, spheres of influence, core interests, and a US-China "strategic partnership" at their expense' (Green 2017, p. 527).

The new model of major power relations leaves us with an important puzzle of whether countries in the vicinity of China will respond to the model using a new logic of IR that incorporates this new model or will they respond according to the logic of so-called Western IR. In the context of this chapter, this puzzle will be explored by answering the following questions: 1) How do third countries and regional institutions (South Korea, Japan, Philippines, Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN]) view the 'new model of great power/major power relations'? 2) Does this new model inculcate security/insecurity in the region? and 3) Why and how would they respond to this proposal?

This chapter finds it plausible that China's new model of major powers relations has the potential to reshape traditional IR thinking of the relations between states, especially during a power transition period. Notwithstanding, a new model has to go hand-in-hand with behavior that supports and sustains confidence in the rhetoric associated with that new model. With that, this chapter argues that the new major power relations initiative elicits various balancing and hedging strategies (soft, hard, engagement, dual hedging) by countries within China's geographic neighborhood, which are largely related to two variables—fear of abandonment and state capacities. In short, it does not shift the logic of IR away from so-called Western IR notions because great power behavior has not changed *in practice*.

The discussion is organized into four sections. The preceding section serves to frame this chapter by introducing scholarly interpretations of the new model of major power relations. The second section then introduces this chapter's theoretical framework and methodology, including limitations. Using case studies, the third section then analyzes the various responses to the new model. The last section concludes by returning to the questions raised at the outset of this chapter and discusses the implications of its findings for regional relations, Sino-US relations, and Chinese IR theory.

Theoretical framework and methodology

Great power politics have re-emerged from a long hibernation following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR. China's surpassed Japan as the world's second-largest economy and engaged in prolonged and sustained militarization. The Chinese lead in creating institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have signaled that China has become one of the great power centers in the world. Its recent declaration of an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) (Rinehart & Elias 2015), island construction in the South China Sea (Zhu 2015), actions in the East China Sea, and a rejection of the Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling in July 2016 (Glaser 2016) have further left the impression to established powers and regional neighbors that China's rise may not be one bereft of friction, especially as it jostles with the United States for regional and global influence.

In the midst of this power transition, China has often relied on the 'new model of major power relations' rhetoric to avoid conflict with the United States as it expanded its power and influence. Historically, countries in the vicinity of a country in the process of a power transition have responded in predictable ways by either bandwagoning, hedging, or building alliances to absorb or at least reduce the impact that an emerging great power may have on their country. This new-realist approach acknowledges that in a state-centric, anarchic world, states cannot depend on other countries. Such an approach echoes new-realist scholars such as Mearsheimer (2014), who argues that China and the United States are inevitable competitors as each seeks to either acquire regional hegemony or maintain regional hegemony to maximize security.

The question for IR scholars in the context of the 'new model of major power relations' is how states will respond to an approach that stresses 'win-win relationships' and 'mutual respect and cooperation' (Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China 2017). Major variables affecting that response within the context of this analysis are fear of abandonment and capacity. Fear of abandonment and state capacity function as the independent variables, while the response to the new model is the dependent variable. How states are able to respond to China's proposed model is related to their concerns about the US security guarantee and their nation-state's capacity to mount a substantive response to China's new IR logic.

Snyder (1984) defines abandonment as a 'defection', but it may take a variety of specific forms: the ally may realign with the opponent; they may merely de-align,

abrogating the alliance contract; it may fail to make good on its explicit commitments; or it may fail to provide support in contingencies where support is expected. This echoes Cha (2000), who understands fear of abandonment within the functional context of US-South Korea and US-Japan relations as a concern over each respective country's alliance.

This chapter adopts these approaches to argue that the states and institutions within the region that are being used as case studies recalibrate their behavior toward China based on their confidence in the US security guaranteed in the region.

Capacity or power relates to the core components of national power. Kocher (2010) understands capacity as disaggregated units of a state's power to mitigate and achieve state interests. Others such as Guzman and Simmons (2005) conceptualize power and capacity as the ability of a state to influence and pursue a foreign policy course of action. According to the case studies (see Table 7.1) employed in this chapter, we can see that there are various levels of capacity depending on economic size, proximity, penetration and dependency on the Chinese economy, level of development, alliance relationship, institutional design, and vulnerability to division by extra-regional powers.

This chapter employs a case study approach to examining how countries in the region interpret and may respond to China's new model of major power relations. Utilizing government documents, think-tank policy papers (Japanese, Chinese, and English) and unstructured interviews with scholars and Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials in South Korea, Japan, Philippines, and selected ASEAN countries, this chapter will convey to the reader how policymakers view China's new model.

While important, this chapter does not consider recent geopolitical dynamics on the Korean Peninsula and the evolving impact of the BRI. The former, while

Table 7.1 Responses to the new model of major power relations

Country/region	*Fear of abandonment*	*Considerations*	*Capacity*	*Predicted response*
South Korea	High	North Korea/ reunification, economic independence	Medium	Reject proposal, maximize takeaways, strengthen capabilities, hedge
Japan	High	ECS (territorial), SCS (thoroughfare), regional influence, erosion of security environment	High	Reject proposal, normalize military, hedge in all directions, strengthen relationships with India, Vietnam, extra-regional powers
Philippines	High	Territorial economic independence	Low	Extract benefits, bandwagon
ASEAN	Mixed	Security vs economic relations	Mixed	Mixed approaches: Hedging and bandwagoning

Source: Compiled by the author.

important, is still unraveling, and its larger implications are still difficult to predict. The latter, on the other hand, is too early to include in this analysis with the expected fruits of a successful BRI to manifest in the decades to come. (Chapters 4, 9, and 11 explore other dimensions of how the policies and practices of the BRI are reshaping Chinese international relations theories.) The case studies adopted do not include Laos or Cambodia as these countries are already deeply influenced by the People's Republic of China and cannot be incorporated into the model. Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and Myanmar are case studies that could be considered in future studies.

Discussion

1. South Korea

The South Korean response to the new model of major power relations is grounded in its historical, contemporary, and future relationship with China. China represents South Korea's largest export destination (see Figure 7.1), making South Korea vulnerable to direct or indirect punitive economic measure in the case of political disagreements. The 2017 response to Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) installment in South Korea through indirect punitive economic penalties, such as 'recommending' tourists not to visit South Korea (Institute for Security & Development Policy 2017), inspections on South Korean firms in China (Kim 2017), and other forms of economic pressure, is estimated to have resulted in a negative

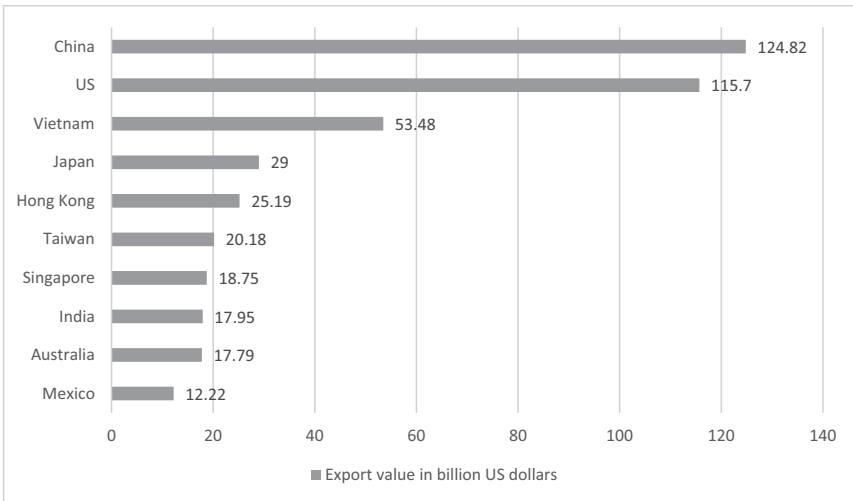

Figure 7.1 South Korea's top 10 trading partners, 2023

Source: Compiled by editor using data from: Statista 2024, 'Main export partners for South Korea in 2023 (in billion US dollars)', viewed 24 July 2024, (https://www.statista.com/statistics/618514/south-korea-main-export-partners/).

impact on GDP (Mokuyama & Matsuda 2017) and is illustrative of South Korea's vulnerability to economic coercion.

Aside from South Korea's economic dependency as a source of structural vulnerability in its asymmetric relationship with Beijing, security also looms large in the bilateral relations. Reunification, nuclear disarmament, and North Korean behavior are all dependent on Chinese strategic interests, which are tangentially linked to its views on the peninsula's utility for the United States in Sino-US relations (Ji 2001). As China continues to grow economically, its asymmetric influence on South Korea will only increase, leaving South Korea less and less room to maneuver independently vis-à-vis China. In short, economic and security dependency decreases strategic flexibility and possibly infringes on internal affairs dependent on related issues (THAAD installment as an example).

The proposed new model would require South Korea to choose between the United State or China. In this sense, costs would be understood as unacceptable, and as a result, this chapter argues that South Korea would reject the new model because of its moderate capabilities. In striving for status quo and to maximize its independence, South Korea would try to maximize concessions from China and the United States, strengthen independent capabilities, and focus on long-term, omnidirectional economic hedging.

2. Japan

The new model of major power relations touches upon Japan's perennial fear of abandonment. China and the United States coming together in any form of agreement would be understood in Tokyo as Japan either being retained into Washington's sphere of influence in the Western Pacific or being pulled into Beijing's orbit. In either case, a compromise between the United States and China would be unacceptable to Japan as it would have connotations for East and South China Seas related to sea lines of communication (SLOC) and sovereignty claims. This assumes that the new model of major power relations concept embodies, as Yuichi Hosoya explained, a G-2 new condominium relationship in which the United States and China come to create spheres of influence in the Eastern and Western Pacific (Hosoya & Green 2020).

Beijing's strong interest in disrupting the US alliance network in East Asia (Cha 2007), its construction of a blue water navy in which it can project power globally, and heavy investment in anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) (Ngo 2017) are all strong evidence that China seeks to push the United States out of the region to become the regional hegemon. As a result of these investments in offensive and defensive power in the region, the new model of major power relations in the region is strongly oriented to a sphere of influence approach to international relations.

Japan's policymakers understand that rhetoric that stresses mutual respect and win-win cooperation has not been operationalized on the ground. As Mearsheimer argued in his seminal work on *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, China has taken an offensive realist approach to regional relations, maximizing is power in the region to eventually push out the United States. The construction of military bases on artificially

constructed land in the South China Sea, A2/AD systems, and the rejection of decisions made by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in July 2016 (De Castro 2017a; see also De Castro, this volume, Chapter 9) provide further support to his hypothesis.

Tokyo's perspective on the new model, especially reflecting on Chinese *practice* rather than *rhetoric*, leads policymakers to the conclusion that the model increases vulnerability to the economy and erosion of Japan's security environment. These costs would be unacceptable to Tokyo, and as a result, they would reject the new model, strengthen independent capabilities, and engage in omnidirectional hedging (Nagy 2017) through the expansion of extra and intra-regional strategic partnerships and long-term economic hedging.

We are already seeing Tokyo's response to Beijing's proposal being manifested in an investment in multilateral trade deals such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (Goodman 2018), the Japan-European Union Economic Partnership Agreement (Suzuki 2017), and the establishment of strategic partnerships within and outside the region such as the Vietnam-Japan strategic partnership (see Table 7.2).

These partnerships have been pursued regardless of the political party in power but were accelerated and enhanced under the Abe administration beginning in December 2012. The election of President Trump and his withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has pushed Japan to simultaneously strengthen the Japan-US alliance but also commit to multilateralism in trade, strategic partnerships, new and resurrected institutions such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Panda 2017), and the Asian African Growth Corridor (AAGC) (Panda 2017).

These initiatives are in part related to concerns over abandonment, as well as Japan's industrial capabilities and strong roles in international institutions, but also its schizophrenic foreign policy identity. On the one hand, Japan is a great power due to size, level of development, wealth, and capabilities. On the other hand, its post-World War II pacifist identity and constitution, which prohibits using war as an instrument of foreign policy, prevent it from responding to changing power balances and concerns over abandonment in the region, as a 'normal' country would. In other words, by engaging in defensive realist responses to a neighbor pursuing regional hegemony or one's long-time alliance partner potentially abandoning the region in a G-2 kind of arrangement.

Table 7.2 Japan's intra- and extra-regional strategic partnerships

Bilateral relations	*Name of the partnership*
Japan–Australia	Special Strategic Partners
Japan–India	Japan-India Global Partnership
Japan–Indonesia	Strategic Partnership for Peaceful and Prosperous Future
Japan–New Zealand	Strategic Cooperative Partnership
Japan–Malaysia	Strategic Partnership
Japan–Philippines	Strategic Partnership
Japan–Vietnam	Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia

Source: Compiled by author.

3. The Philippines

The Philippines represents the third case study in this chapter. Like South Korea and Japan, China's new model of great/major power relations impacts Manila's strategic thinking. The primary difference compared to the previous examples is that the Philippines has low capacity as defined earlier by Cha and Snyder, while it has concerns about fear of abandonment with its current US ally.

Concerns related to China's new model revolve primarily around the possibility of a permanent absorption into a Chinese economic and security sphere of influence. While this may benefit the Philippine's economically, differences in norms and political institutions, as well as concerns about Chinese influence in the Philippines (Thompson 2017), are harbored at the elite bureaucratic level as well as by ordinary Filipinos.

Heydarian (2017) writes that undeterred revisionism in the South China Sea is occurring hand-in-hand with disputes settled on conditions favorable to the Philippines. This was in line with China's historical pattern of being overly generous with smaller countries in dispute resolution (Randall & He 2017).

The shift toward a more balanced approach to China and the United States under the Duterte administration has allowed Manila to extract more economic benefits from China at the cost of its close ties with Washington (De Castro 2017b). Under China's proposed new model of major power relations, the shift toward China would deepen as the lure of economic benefits becomes more and more attractive to the political leadership and citizens in the Philippines. The end result will be an increasing inability to prosecute effective foreign policy that is counter to Beijing's interests such as sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, decreased political independence, and a distancing of the security partnership with the United States.

In terms of costs, Manila's calculation would reveal that the new model is not unacceptable, but simply a model that Manila could not reject as a result of the Philippines lack of capabilities. As a result, Manila would be inclined to reluctantly accept the new model, bandwagon, and maximize benefits with its new patron, China.

4. ASEAN

The last case study in this chapter is ASEAN. As the oldest institution in East Asia, ASEAN has a track record of cooperation in non-contentious areas. Its ASEAN-way of consensus building has allowed it to incrementally inculcate trust in the organization, while at the same time make progress on issues that its members deem important. Only until recently has ASEAN struggled with consensus making, especially over matters in the South China Sea (Nagy 2017).

The new model of great/major power relations is a challenge for ASEAN as an institution already being torn apart and made ineffectual by regional rivalries (Pugliese & Insisa 2017). China has deployed its economic relations with certain member countries to promote ASEAN disunity in order to obfuscate cooperation on an agreed-upon stance related to territorial disputes in the South China Sea (Acharya 2018).

The asymmetry within ASEAN in terms of capabilities, their historical relationship with China, and ontological securitization result in a fragmentation of interests when dealing with certain issues. The new model of major power relations would increase this fragmentation of ASEAN as a result of the division between those countries who favor a US presence versus those who favor Chinese influence, resulting in decreased effectiveness of the regional institution in dealing with issues important to ASEAN.

With this in mind, ASEAN may find China's new model to have unacceptable costs, and as a result, they would reject the Chinese proposal based on China's track record of dividing the institution when its decisions overlapped with Chinese core interests.

Conclusion

From the case studies considered in this chapter, it is clear that not all powers are created equal. That differentiation of powers dictates that they would receive China's proposal of a new model of major power relations differently depending on their concerns about abandonment and their latent capacities. What is more, each case studied in this chapter also reveals that countries and institutions in the region view China's rhetoric distinct from its practices, echoing Ford's (2016) colorful metaphor of Chinese international relations having 'Confucian flesh' and 'realist bones'. This gap in rhetoric and practices strongly suggests the countries considered in this chapter base their national security considerations on past practices.

Reflecting on each case study, we can conclude that as a middle power, South Korea has mixed capability to respond to this proposal and a concern over abandonment, resulting in trying to maximize benefits from both China and the United States. Japan as a semi-great power, in contrast, is trapped in an ontological security challenge with China, fearing being abandoned by the United States and falling under the influence of an autocratic China. The Philippines, the least developed state in the region, would be seen as divided, with very little latitude to pursue a relationship that allows it to be fully independent of Beijing's influence in this new model. Last, the new model would fracture ASEAN unity as countries within this organization could not find consensus on which way the institution should evolve in light of China's proposal. This would lead to ASEAN agreeing only on the least controversial initiatives, allowing China to conduct regional foreign policy on a bilateral bias in which its asymmetry would give it the upper hand. In short, a 'new model of major power relations' inculcates insecurity into the region as the model, if realized, results in such a diversity of responses by stakeholders.

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8 The divergence between the Vietnamese communist party and the Chinese communist party

Hạnh Nguyen

Introduction

In a small grouping of remaining communist states after the Cold War, China and Vietnam stand out as the two most successful regimes. Communist parties in both countries preside over rapidly growing economies and modernising societies yet retain their stronghold on power. Furthermore, strong economic ties and shared culture and history might imply a high level of affinity in bilateral relations. Indeed, Chinese and Vietnamese leaders regularly mentioned the 'Sixteen Word Guideline' and 'Four Good Guiding Spirits' mottos as the framework to direct bilateral relations in countless meetings and consultations.[1] Since 2008, China has become Vietnam's comprehensive strategic partner, signalling Beijing's importance to Hanoi's foreign policy approach.

Nevertheless, under the surface, subtle divergences and simmering tensions appear. Despite belonging to the same category of authoritarian one-party regimes, restrictions on freedom and civil liberties are less severe in Vietnam. While Google, Gmail, Facebook, and other Western social media platforms are blocked in China, they are easily accessible in Vietnam. Anti-China sentiments within the Vietnamese public, aggravated by a bitter territorial and maritime dispute in the South China Sea, periodically put Sino-Vietnamese relations to the test and is considered the main driver for the evolving United States-Vietnam partnership (Le 2020, pp. 8–9).

These atypical features in Sino-Vietnamese relations raise several questions: How similar are China and Vietnam? What are the divergences between the two communist regimes? Accounts of Vietnam-China relations often emphasise the South China Sea disputes as the main divergence (Le 2020; Do 2021; Vu 2024). Other aspects of this perspective include an emphasis on Vietnam's high threat perception of China or simmering anti-China sentiments within the Vietnamese public (Nguyen 2020). A by-product of this view is increased attention to Vietnam's partnership with the United States—a former enemy during the Cold War—as a counterbalance against China's rising assertiveness in the South China Sea and, lately, the Mekong subregion (Mai, Poling & Quitzon 2024). However, these accounts are often informed by structural perspectives, analysing China-Vietnam relations under a great power competition lens while neglecting other, more subtle divergences in political institutions and decision-making.

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This chapter provides an institutionalist account of Vietnam-China relations, paying attention to differences in power-sharing arrangements and decision-making processes within the communist parties of each side. On one hand, Vietnam's system exhibits a relatively high degree of power diffusion, clearer separation between the party and the state, and a more sustained adherence to collective leadership. On the other hand, China favours a system where power is concentrated at the top of the leadership, tighter party control over the state, and an inconsistent approach to collective leadership. This divergence is enhanced as China, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, is swinging back to hard authoritarianism and strongman rule. However, Vietnam's institutionalisation and collective leadership has been challenged by its recent anti-corruption campaign, which led to the prosecution of high-ranking officials and prominent business leaders, power centralisation in the hand of the late General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, and enhanced authority for the public security force. These developments bear striking similarities with Xi Jinping's quest for power centralisation and a stronger role for the party in China's economy and society. Anti-corruption campaigns and their implications have thus reduced the divergence between the two communist regimes. Nevertheless, the death of Trong brought new uncertainty about the future of Vietnam's anti-corruption efforts and its power-sharing arrangements.

This chapter contributes a more nuanced understanding of China-Vietnam relations. Mainstream narratives portrayed this relationship as two states with a shared history and shared political ideology locking horns over territorial disputes. However, there are subtle divergences in party institutions and power-sharing arrangements, which contribute to Vietnam's relatively more open attitude compared to China. At the same time, a comparison of anti-corruption campaigns and their implications to both countries, particularly the turn towards top-down policy and power centralisation to respond to significant external and internal challenges, suggests that China and Vietnam are more similar than expected, and these divergences might not have long-lasting holds.

This chapter also offers a more cautious perspective on institutionalisation in authoritarian regimes, particularly in elite politics and succession politics. Recent examples from the anti-corruption campaigns and centralisation of power in China and Vietnam show that while institutionalisation might introduce more stability and predictability to power-sharing arrangements and succession politics, it ultimately cannot replace personality authority as the main mechanism to settle differences among political elites in authoritarian regimes.

The chapter begins by probing cultural similarities and shared history between China and Vietnam, as well as the asymmetry in terms of material powers between them. Subsequently, it explores the institutional divergences between China and Vietnam, focusing on each country's preferences for collective leadership and power-sharing arrangements. The final section compares the anti-corruption campaigns in each country, particularly their contexts, purposes, and implications for each country's elite politics, economy, and society.

Two unequal partners with a shared history

Vietnam and China have largely homogenous populations. Han Chinese accounts for 91.1% of the total Chinese population (according to 2021 estimation), while the other 56 officially recognised ethnic groups make up the remaining 8.9% (CIA World Factbook n.d.a.). Kinh people accounted for 85.3% of the total Vietnamese population (according to 2019 estimation) (CIA World Factbook n.d.b.). The ethnic majority in both countries live in densely populated cities and wet-rice areas, while the ethnic minorities are concentrated in the peripheral areas (Womack 2006). Being a dependency of China for nearly a thousand years also guaranteed that the Vietnamese people were influenced deeply by the literature scholarship, political theories, familial organisation patterns, and bureaucratic practice of the Chinese culture. The Vietnamese borrowed from the Chinese model to develop their civil administration and bureaucratic practices (Woodside 1971). One example is the civil service examination, in which candidates compete over knowledge of Chinese classics, which emerged in Vietnam in the 11th century and continued until the early 20th century.

Vietnam and China shared similar modernisation experiences during the 20th century. Both suffered from Western imperialism, adopted communist ideologies to guide the fight against colonialism and imperialism, experienced disastrous civil wars, and later undertook economic reforms (Womack 2006, pp. 25–28). Both countries are one-party authoritarian states with the ruling communist parties controlling all aspects of politics, economy, and society. In foreign policy, China and Vietnam hold similar positions in selected issues. Both chafe at Western criticism regarding their human rights records and restrictions against civil liberties and oppose interference in internal affairs due to concerns about regime survival. These similarities are not surprising considering the close relationship and cooperation between the two communist parties and Chinese military support for the Vietnamese communist forces during the First and Second Indochina wars (Li 2020, pp. 23–99).

However, there are critical differences between the two countries. A prominent feature of China-Vietnam relations is their extreme inequality. China is the world's fourth biggest country by total area and the second most populous nation with 1.4 billion. China is also the second-largest economy, whose GDP in 2023 was valued at approximately $17 trillion (World Bank Open Data n.d.a.). In comparison, Vietnam's total land area ranks 67th worldwide, and with a population of 96 million, it is the world's 15 most populous nation. While these figures are not tiny, Vietnam's population is just one-tenth of China's and about the size of Guangdong province's population (around 126 million in 2022). Vietnam's GDP in 2023 reached approximately $430 billion, far smaller than Guangdong's GDP of US$1.89 trillion in the same year (World Bank Open Data n.d.b.; *Global Times* 2024).

Regarding military capabilities, the contrast becomes more extreme. China has the world's largest military, with over 2 million active-duty military personnel. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), one of China's main tools to project power in the South China Sea, is numerically the largest navy in the world,

with approximately 340 ships and submarines (US Department of Defence 2022, p. 50). In comparison, the People's Army of Vietnam has 482,000 active-duty military personnel, about one-fourth of China's. Vietnam's maritime forces have also undergone a major military modernisation, acquired modern equipment, and strengthened cooperation with a more diverse set of partners (Nguyen 2022, pp. 351–360). Nevertheless, the imbalance in terms of power between China and Vietnam remains largely the same. The inequality in material powers and the turbulent history between China and Vietnam, particularly during the Third Indochina War, contributed to significant anti-China sentiments within the Vietnamese public.

Despite both countries being categorised as 'not free' by the Freedom House, China's aggregated Freedom Score from 2016 to 2024 was always lower than Vietnam's and has decreased remarkably since 2018, indicating an increased restriction on freedom and civil liberties, while Vietnam's score has plateaued (see Figure 8.1). This subtle difference is more noticeable in the way China and Vietnam manage the flow of information through the Internet and social media. While Google, Gmail, Facebook, and other Western social media platforms are blocked in China, they are easily accessible in Vietnam (Le 2019). In fact, Facebook is wildly popular in Vietnam with an estimated 43.5 million users, which accounts for half of the Vietnamese population, and this number is projected to increase to more than 52 million users in 2024 despite attempts by the authorities to introduce indigenous social media platforms (Statista n.d.).

A possible explanation for Vietnam's more lenient approach compared to China is the country's reliance on international trade and investments to boost economic growth. Data shows Vietnam's trade-to-GDP ratio has consistently been over 100% of GDP since 1999 and recently increased to over 180% after the pandemic (see

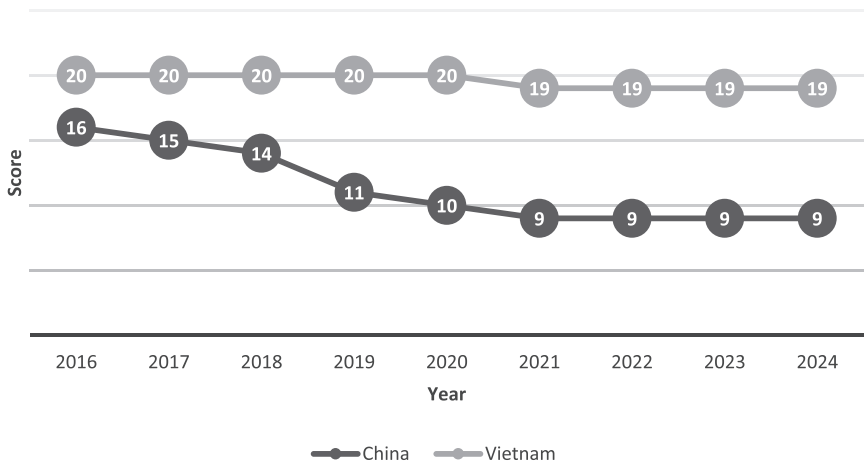

Figure 8.1 Freedom in the world: Aggregate scores for China and Vietnam

Source: Author's compilation based on data from Freedom House (2024).

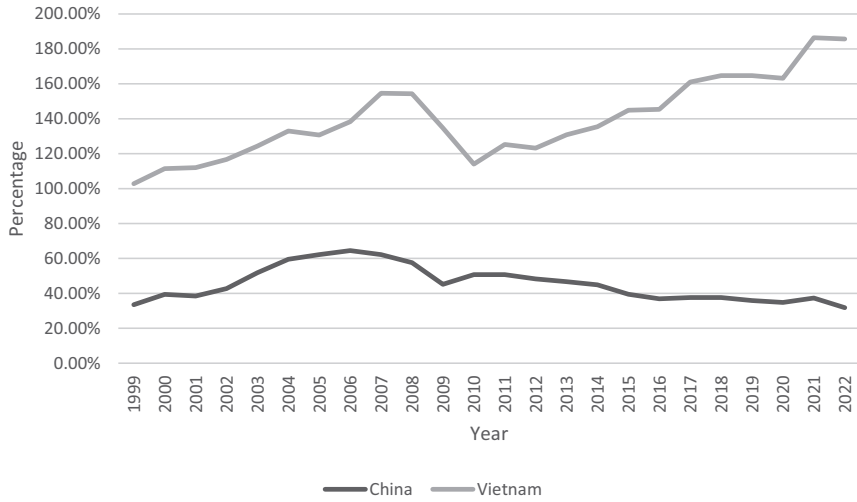

Figure 8.2 China's and Vietnam's trade-to-GDP ratios, 1999 to 2022*

Note: * Sum of exports and imports of goods and services, divided by gross domestic product, expressed as a percentage. This is also known as the 'trade opened index'.

Source: Reproduced from Our World in Data n.d., 'Trade and globalization', viewed 5 September 2024, (https://ourworldindata.org/trade-and-globalization#all-charts).

Figure 8.2). In comparison, China's figure is much smaller. It accounted for only 33% of GDP in 1999, reached its highest phase in the early 2000s and declined to the 30% range after the pandemic. The reliance on international trade and investments might cause the authorities, despite their authoritarian nature, to tolerate relatively open flows of information to attract more foreign investors and create a more facilitating investment environment. Vietnam's conclusion of two major trade agreements, the European Union (EU)-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), required the country to ratify the International Labor Organization Convention on Freedom of Association and the Right to Collectively Bargain. This is an important concession from Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP), given its perennial concerns over independent labour unions and labour strikes.

Institutional divergence

Power-sharing arrangement

China and Vietnam are both authoritarian one-party states in which the communist parties ultimately command and control the government, the judiciary, the legislature, the armed forces, and political organisations. Economic reforms have brought greater dynamism and vibrancy to both economies, and civil societies still exist despite being kept within tighter constraints. Party organisations penetrate deeply

within the government structure from the grassroots to the central levels in both countries. The governing structure of each communist party is relatively similar. The Party National Congress, which convenes every five years, is nominally the highest leading body of the party and is responsible for reviewing the implementation of party solutions in the previous term, setting the policy agenda for the next term, and electing Central Committee members. The Central Committee directs the implementation of party resolutions and selects members for the Politburo and the general secretary.

However, subtle divergences remain in each party's governing structure (Abrami et al. 2013). In China, even though the constitution stipulates that the highest leading bodies within the party are the National Congress and Central Committee, the Central Committee is only considered 'the first rung on the ladder of top leadership' (Li 2016, p. 46). While the Central Committee is responsible for selecting members for the Politburo, the Politburo Standing Committee, the Central Military Commission, and votes for the general secretary, in reality, these processes are led by the outgoing Politburo Standing Committee under the guidance of retired or retiring senior leaders (Li 2016, p. 49). The Central Committee only convenes at least once annually, according to the party charter, making it challenging for this organisation to exert its influence and authority. For example, the 20th Central Committee, which was elected in October 2022, just had its third plenary session in July 2024. In comparison, Vietnam's 13th Central Committee has already convened nine plenary sessions since its election in January 2021, notwithstanding several extraordinary sessions to discuss personnel matters. Authority is thus concentrated on the next two rungs of the leadership structure, which are the Politburo Standing Committee and the Politburo. In China, the Politburo Standing Committee supersedes the Politburo in terms of authority. Created in 1956 during the Mao Zedong era, the Politburo Standing Committee eventually became the main decision-making body, while the Politburo was relegated to a 'backbencher' role (Abrami et al. 2013, p. 247). Therefore, the actual hierarchical order in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) power structure would look like a pyramid with the Central Committee at the bottom, followed by the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee at the top.

In contrast, the VCP does not have a Politburo Standing Committee and entrusts greater power to the Central Committee. Before 1975, senior party officials occupied top positions in the Politburo, and the Central Committee was merely there to approve the party leadership's decision (Abrami et al. 2013, p. 250; Nguyen & Nguyen 2022, p. 58). However, an economic downturn in the 1980s, as well as the crisis and subsequent collapse of the communist Eastern bloc, undermined the authority of the central leadership and presented an opportunity for reformers within the party to expand the membership and authority of the Central Committee (Abuza 2002, pp. 130–133; Nguyen & Nguyen 2022, pp. 59–62). By bringing provincial leaders into the Central Committee, reformers brought a greater diversity of opinions, empowered consensus-based policymaking, and weakened the authority of the conservative-leaning party elders. A bigger and more diverse Central Committee and the need to achieve consensus-based decisions mean that the Committee

no longer accepts the role of 'backbencher' and actively pushes back against the Politburo's decisions when necessary. An example of the Vietnamese Central Committee's power was displayed during the 9th Party Congress (2001) when it voted to oust the incumbent General Secretary Le Kha Phieu even though he had secured a pre-approval from the Politburo to be re-elected for another term (Abuza 2002, pp. 121–122). In 2012, it again overturned a decision by Politburo, which sought to discipline then Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung for his mismanagement of the economy (Le 2015).

Variations also exist in power-sharing arrangements between political elites (Abrami et al. 2013). In China's system, one leader holds three powerful positions: general secretary, president, and head of the Central Military Commission. This practice of concentrating authority on one person started with the appointment of Jiang Zemin, due to Deng Xiaoping's concern about power struggles, and was institutionalised when Hu Jintao took control in 2002 (Abrami et al. 2013, p. 254). As a result, the leader holding all three positions often wields greater power over other leaders in state, party, and military affairs. Another difference in China's model is the presence of the leading small groups (LSG). As ad-hoc coordinating organisations, these groups serve to ensure the coordination and implementation of policy guidelines according to the Party's preferences (Cabestan 2018, p. 81). These groups report directly to the Politburo and are generally led by Politburo Standing Committee members. They help the Party maintain oversight over the premier and government ministries. Xi Jinping himself already leads many critical LSGs, such as groups concerning Taiwan affairs, national security, foreign affairs, finance and the economy, cybersecurity, military, and defence reform (Li 2016, p. 60). With these groups, the power balance between the general secretary/president and other leaders becomes more lopsided.

On the other hand, the positions of general secretary, president, and prime minister are divided between three leaders in Vietnam's model. Before 1991, Vietnam maintained a relatively similar organisational structure to China's, with the general secretary as the centre of authority. However, a major power struggle among conservatives, reformers, and the armed forces in the lead-up to the 7th Party Congress in 1991 led to a compromise in Vietnam's revised constitution, which was adopted in 1992 (Abrami et al. 2013, pp. 255–256). The new constitution provided a relatively clear separation of power between the aforementioned three positions, which was maintained in Vietnam's current constitution. Article 95 affirmed the role of the prime minister as head of the government, and the government is also granted the right to draft policies and laws (National Assembly of Vietnam n.d.). The president's authority is guaranteed in Article 86 as head of state and commander of the military force, with power that goes beyond what might be expected from a relatively weak position, such as the power to sign international treaties and the right to appoint or dismiss the deputy president, prime minister, and military generals based on the National Assembly's resolutions (National Assembly of Vietnam n.d.). Moreover, while Article 4 affirmed the power and authority of the Communist Party as the 'leading force of State and Society', it does not provide the general secretary with any executive and legislative role (National Assembly of Vietnam n.d.).

The level of power separation requires Vietnamese leaders to build consensus on policy issues and encourages patronage politics and loyal following for each leader, which creates a balance of power between them and prevents one leader from accumulating too much power at the expense of others. The general secretary is thus more of a *primus inter pares* (first among equals) rather than a supreme leader (Abuza 2002, p. 34). There have been attempts to change this status quo from time to time, such as former General Secretary Le Kha Phieu's efforts to consolidate his power before the 9th Party Congress in 2001 and a similar endeavour by former Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung before the 12th Party Congress in 2016, but these attempts were rebuffed by the Central Committee (Abuza 2002, pp. 121–122; Vuving 2017, pp. 421–423).

Collective leadership

Variations in governing structures generate divergences in each regime's practice of collective leadership (Abrami et al. 2013). In Vietnam, the diffused troika model produces a more egalitarian power-sharing arrangement, in which the ultimate authority is not held by an all-powerful strongman but shared more equally among several stakeholders within the Party's leadership, which includes the general secretary, the prime minister, and the president. The chairman of the National Assembly is subsequently added to this group, leading to a new unofficial term—'four pillars' (Vietnamese: '*tứ trụ*')—to refer to the four leading figures in Vietnam's politics. This practice has been maintained except for a brief time from 2018 to 2021 when Nguyen Phu Trong simultaneously held both general secretary and president positions after the abrupt death of the late President Tran Dai Quang. This division of labour within the top leadership ensures a certain degree of independent authority for each leader, making it challenging for one leader to accumulate power rapidly. This practice also gives rise to patronage politics, in which each leader cultivates his/her networks of protégés and loyalists within the armed forces, government agencies and party organisations (Abuza 2002, p. 125). As the power of the Central Committee, a large and diverse body of around 200 members, has been enhanced with a greater provincial voice, policymaking often requires a certain level of bargaining.

These characteristics thus influence preferences for leaders in Vietnam's system. In general, Vietnamese leaders tend to adhere to collective leadership. While having a solid power base, they also need to be able to forge consensus among different factions within the Party, particularly between the reformists and the conservatives. Furthermore, they often are not personalistic figures since this type of leader will run roughshod over the 'collective leadership' principle. The 9th Party Congress offered evidence for this assessment. General Secretary Le Kha Phieu was not re-elected for a second term during the Congress despite receiving an endorsement from the Politburo (Abuza 2002, p. 122). Instead, the Central Committee picked Nong Duc Manh, who previously held the Head of the National Assembly. Besides his self-inflicted mistakes, such as corruption and giving China too much deference, Le Kha Phieu's downfall could be explained by his lack of power base, his

failure to bridge differences between reformist and conservative camps within the Party, and his aggressive efforts to consolidate power, which run counter to the collective leadership principle (Abuza 2002, pp. 127–130, 134–136).[2]

The 12th Party Congress provides further evidence of Vietnam's collective leadership approach. The Congress was marked with unprecedented intra-party tensions over the race for the position of general secretary between former Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and the incumbent Nguyen Phu Trong (Vuving 2017, pp. 422–424). Nguyen Tan Dung, who was considered the most powerful politician in Vietnam in the past 30 years, had built an extensive patronage network within the industrial and financial sectors, the police, the military, and the provincial levels (Vuving 2017, p. 421). Unlike his predecessors, Dung aspired to become the next party chief and did not refrain from showing his ambition. Therefore, it was not a surprise that Dung's manoeuvre might have irked party members who still hold on to the notion of 'collective leadership'. In contrast, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, a political theoretician due to his experience working as editor-in-chief of the *Communist Review* and president of the Central Committee's Theoretical Council, upheld the Party's traditions, including the principle of collective leadership (Hutt 2017; Schuler & Truong 2019). The power struggle ended with Trong being re-elected for a second term despite the age limit, while Dung had to retire.

In China, adherence to collective leadership is more checkered. Under Mao Zedong's rule, the lack of an institutionalised power system caused fierce power struggles between different factions over the issue of Mao's successor, pushing the nation towards economic stagnation and national upheaval (Torigian 2022, pp. 84–192). Under Deng Xiaoping's reign, a new process of restructuring party governance towards the direction of collective leadership occurred (Zeng 2014, pp. 299–307). The rationale for this institutionalisation process was straightforward: to curb excesses under strongman rule and to develop a stable and reliable power transition without 'life or death' political struggles. Mindful of these painful lessons from the past, Deng Xiaoping set in motion the institutionalisation process by introducing term limits and age limits for party leaders. In 1982, the CCP began to implement a tenured system in which the president and vice-president of the People's Republic of China; chairman and vice-chairman of the People's Congress; and premier, vice-premier, and members of the State Council shall not serve continuously for more than two terms, while the retirement age of Politburo Standing Committee members was set at 68 (Zeng 2014, p. 300). Another feature was the selection and promotion of officials based on their merits and skills rather than ideological zeal or 'the ability to shift with changing political lines or personal loyalty to the top leader' (Nathan 2003, p. 10). This process is carried out through competitive civil service examinations and a gruelling training and working process from the primary-level office to province or ministry levels.

Factional rotation between different factions within the Party also contributed to the relative stability during power transitions. While the number of factions might change depending on assessments of China experts and scholars, these factions created unique bipartisanship in China's politics, or what Li Cheng called 'one party, two coalitions' (Li 2016, pp. 251–256).[3] While these factions represent different

socio-economic constituencies and promote different policy agendas, thus creating competition for power between them, they share the same fundamental goals of maintaining China's social and political stability, promoting economic growth, enhancing China's global status, and preserving the CCP's monopoly on power (Li 2016, p. 254). As a result, they also cooperate in policymaking and have alternately shared the position of general secretary since the third-generation leadership. While this power-sharing arrangement is not without risks, such as failure to reach compromises and the possibility of faction rivalry getting out of control, it is an improved mechanism and transformed China's politics into a consensus-based, coalition-building process. The institutionalisation of power ensured orderly and peaceful power transitions from the third to the fourth generation (from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao) and from the fourth to the fifth generation (from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping), providing stability and certainty for China's domestic politics. The predecessors in both transitions served their full terms in office and generally did not stay past their allowed time.[4] Deng Xiaoping's efforts also brought an enormous transformation to China's governance system. Policymaking is guided by highly competent officials who have already proven their skills and knowledge through various positions at both local and national levels, rather than highly ideological considerations.

Anti-corruption campaigns in China and Vietnam: Same approach to a similar problem?

Much has been written about China's anti-corruption campaign and Xi Jinping's efforts to concentrate power in his hands. This section thus focuses on a short comparison between China's and Vietnam's efforts to curb corruption. Both campaigns share similar traits: They were initiated to manage mismanagement and perceived widespread corruption. They were employed to shore up the political legitimacy of both communist parties and enhance party control over the state, the economy, and the society. Both campaigns employ the same playbook, leading to significant political and economic implications. The comparison thus demonstrates that even though Vietnam and China have certain divergent preferences for power-sharing and collective leadership practices, the communist parties in both countries ended up pursuing the same strategy to curb corruption.

In November 2012, Xi Jinping succeeded Hu Jintao as general secretary, heralding the era of fifth-generation leadership. In his first speech to the Politburo as the party's general secretary, Xi (2012) singled out 'corruption and bribe-taking' as a severe challenge to the party. He then initiated an extensive anti-corruption campaign that removed both low-level and high-ranking officials, including major figures such as Politburo Standing Committee member Zhou Yongkang, People's Liberation Army General Xu Caihou, and vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Ling Jihua. By May 2021, approximately 4 million officials and cadres had been investigated, of which 3.7 million were punished (Li et al. 2024, p. 2).

Vietnam's anti-corruption campaign, which officially started in 2016, has also achieved significant accomplishments. After eight years, corruption investigations

conducted by party committees and inspection commissions at all levels have resulted in the punishment of more than 2,700 party organisations and nearly 168,00 party members (Ngoc 2022). This figure includes 33 current and former members of the Central Committee and 50 high-ranking officers in the armed forces. Since the 13th Party Congress (2021), 26 former and current Central Committee members have been disciplined, including 7 Politburo members (Pham 2024). Recent high-profile cases involve the dismissal of two presidents and one chairman of the General Assembly, which were part of the 'four pillars' arrangement, in 2023 and 2024. These dismissals at the highest level of the leadership and the wave of discipline and arrest of both rank-and-file and eminent party members are the first similarity between the two campaigns and represent a major shock for each country's politics. They demonstrated the determination of each party to root out corruption from their organisation to the point that they are willing to go after high-ranking officials who previously were deemed as 'untouchable' as well as rank-and-file party members.

Both campaigns were initiated as a response to stagnation and perceived widespread corruption in China and Vietnam. Economic opening and a slight relaxation of political control have generated rapid economic growth for both countries. However, this rapid development is accompanied by perceived widespread corruption. High-profile cases like the scandals involving Vietnam's state-owned enterprises like Vinashin and Vinalines, or China's Sichuan school corruption allegations, as well as the spectacular fall of Bo Xilai, undermined public trust and generated discontent both within and outside the parties (Ang 2020, pp. 205–227; Carothers 2022, p. 178; Nguyen 2024, p. 377). Both party leaders, Xi Jinping and Nguyen Phu Trong, thus see corruption as a threat to regime survival and accorded high priority to anti-corruption measures.

To curb corruption, both communist parties employed the same playbook of power centralisation around the leading figures of each campaign. In his first term, Xi Jinping pushed through institutional reforms to enhance his authority over the decision-making process, such as the establishment of a National Security Council under his helm and several LSGs, in which Xi himself leads (Carothers 2022, p. 184). He also unified several anti-corruption agencies within the state and the party and enhanced the power of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) and lower-level commissions, bypassing legal constraints (Carothers 2022, pp. 187–191). Growing power for anti-corruption agencies goes hand-in-hand with the enhancement of Xi Jinping's personal authority. His political thought—Xi Jinping Thought—was incorporated into the party's constitution, which elevated him to the rank of two founding leaders of China, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. In 2018, the National People's Congress removed the presidential term limit, which stipulated that the president could not serve two consecutive terms. At the 20th Party Congress, Xi Jinping maintained his position as the top leader for a third term and staffed the Politburo Standing Committee with loyal supporters (MERICS 2022; Bush et al. 2022).

Similar developments also occurred in Vietnam's anti-corruption campaign. Nguyen Phu Trong also led and empowered three major anti-corruption agencies

within the party, the Central Inspection Commission of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Central Internal Affairs Commission, and Central Inspection Commission, thus shifting the responsibility for anti-corruption from the government to the party (Nguyen 2024, p. 377). Trong also enhanced his authority at the Ministry of Public Security, which works alongside these party organs and enforces their decisions (Nguyen 2024, p. 377; Tran 2024, p. 4). Trong's far-reaching authority within the anti-corruption campaign thus granted him much expansive power, making him the most powerful leader in Vietnam since the Doi Moi reform, even though the level of personalisation around him is not as intense as in the case of Xi Jinping.

Both campaigns also have a broad scope. China's anti-corruption campaign went through several phases, jumping from provincial and city government, party institutions, and state-owned enterprises to the private sector (Carothers 2022, pp. 180–181). Vietnam's campaign also broadened its scope from prosecuting party members to targeting prominent business actors who exploited their political connections with high-ranking officials for private gains (Bui & Malesky 2023, p. 263). Some high-profile cases include the arrest of FLC Group's Chairman Trinh Van Quyet for stock market manipulation, the multibillion-dollar fraud case involving real estate developer Van Thinh Phat Holding Groups, and the AIC bribery case related to major public investments in the health sector.

Furthermore, these campaigns are also institutionalised to ensure their longevity in each country's political landscape. According to Nguyen Khac Giang, a scholar on Vietnam's politics, the VCP has issued over one hundred documents on anti-corruption and party building, supplemented by 88,000 policy documents on the same topic issued by government agencies (Nguyen 2024, p. 378). Anti-corruption committees are set up at the provincial level and answer to the central authority (Nguyen 2024, p. 378). In China, the party also introduced laws and measures to shape the behaviour of officials and bureaucrats at a level that can be deemed intrusive (Carothers 2022, p. 188). These steps are crucial to ensure that anti-corruption remains a priority for the party regardless of who is at the helm of the party leadership.

Most importantly, efforts to curb corruption have generated a radical and far-reaching impact on each country's economy and politics. The broad scope and the prosecution of senior officials have had a chilling effect on officials and bureaucrats, creating a perception that no sectors or figures can be above the party's reach. This perspective led to a phenomenon of bureaucratic shirking, in which bureaucrats, fearful that they might be investigated, delay making decisions related to project approval, public investments, and public procurement (Abuza 2023; Tu & Gong 2022, pp. 259–261). Bureaucratic shirking and crackdown on the private sector through anti-corruption investigations contributed to the economic slowdown in Vietnam and China. Additionally, the empowerment of party agencies and public security forces in anti-corruption campaigns heralded a new era in Vietnam and China, in which the communist parties significantly enhanced their control over the economy and the society after a period of technocratic governance by the government (Nguyen 2024, pp. 379–380, 384; Yu 2019, pp. 346–347).

Nevertheless, minor differences persist. China's anti-corruption campaign has a strong connection with Xi Jinping's concentration of power and cult of personality, particularly his elevation next to Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, as well as his unprecedented third term with no heir apparent in sight. Nguyen Phu Trong was also widely perceived as the most powerful leader in Vietnam since Doi Moi, and he undoubtedly left a significant mark on party building and foreign policy, particularly the publication of his theoretical works and the elevation of his 'bamboo diplomacy' concept in Vietnamese media. However, his personal authority is rooted in his seniority and perceived clean record and has never reached the level of the cult of personality like Xi's case. Vietnam's anti-corruption campaign also weakened the power of the Central Committee and provincial leaders vis-à-vis the Politburo and the general secretary himself (Nguyen & Nguyen 2022). However, this is not the case in China, as its Central Committee has always been a relatively weaker player compared to the Politburo Standing Committee. Finally, the death of Nguyen Phu Trong poses new questions regarding the longevity of the anti-corruption campaign and power-sharing arrangements in Vietnam. Will the new leader—To Lam, a public security general whose governance preferences are not well-known—continue the campaign with the same intensity as his predecessor?

New leader, same old direction?

In short, despite having relatively different preferences in power-sharing and collective leadership, the communist parties in both countries converged in the approach of using top-down campaigns to root out corruption while simultaneously reinforcing their position as the leading force in each country. Furthermore, power centralisation around leading figures of these campaigns highlights the fact that institutionalisation of power in authoritarian Leninist regimes can be easily dismantled by personal authority, a conclusion echoed by Torigian (2022) in his work on succession politics in China and the Soviet Union. While institutionalisation, such as rules regarding age limit and term limit, can help 'soften' the ruthlessness of power struggles and make the succession process more predictable and rules-bound, in the end, these rules cannot replace personal authority as a means to settle differences among party elites. Both Xi Jinping and Nguyen Phu Trong were granted unprecedented third terms as party leaders, breaking both term and age limits. Xi's position was further cemented by the National People's Congress's decision to remove the presidential term limit, and until now, he has not appointed any apparent heir.

The stronger degree of power concentration and the cult of personality associated with China's anti-corruption campaign might be related to the magnitude of China's structural challenges. Successful economic reforms brought spectacular growth and rapid modernisation to China but also laid the groundwork for new challenges that stem from a more complex economy and society (Overholt 2018). From a growing cohort of elders requiring greater state assistance, reshaping the country's growth model, and managing an increasingly pluralist society to geopolitical tensions, these challenges might have led China to conclude that consolidation of power and personalistic rule are the appropriate responses. Vietnam is also

facing a similar situation, but given its smaller size, economy, and population, the magnitude of these problems will be less intense (Ljunggren & Perkins 2023). Furthermore, China's ambition of becoming a great power equal to the United States might have contributed to the drive towards hard authoritarianism. Vietnam, on the other hand, only seeks security and prosperity in an uncertain environment.

Vietnam's trajectory under the new general secretary, To Lam, remains uncertain. Previously unknown, his ascendancy to the top position and his public security background have led to warnings about Vietnam further following China's hard authoritarianism direction. But there are also reasons sto be cautiously optimistic that Vietnam will not stray from an open economic policy and a balanced approach to foreign policy (Le 2024). The new leader has also promised reforms, including an ambitious plan to streamline the government's organisation structure to reduce red tape and improve government efficiency. Vietnam will continue to accord the highest priority to its relations with China and welcome trade and investment from China, as demonstrated by To Lam's visit to China in August 2024 (*Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper* 2024). But it also looks at extra-regional partners such as the United States to resist China's pressures in the South China Sea and the Mekong subregion.

Notes

1 The 'Sixteen Word Guideline' (Vietnamese: '*Phương châm 16 chữ*') refers to a set of diplomatic principles between China and Vietnam to improve bilateral relations. It includes 'Friendly neighbourliness, comprehensive cooperation, long-term stability, and future-oriented thinking' (Vietnamese: '*Láng giềng hữu nghị, hợp tác toàn diện, ổn định lâu dài, hướng tới tương lai*'). Similarly, the 'Four Good Guiding Spirits' (Vietnamese: '*Tinh thần 4 tốt*') is another set of diplomatic principles for China-Vietnam relations. It means 'Good neighbours, good friends, good comrades, and good partners' (Vietnamese: '*Láng giềng tốt, bạn bè tốt, đồng chí tốt, đối tác tốt*'). See Do, TT 2016, 'Firm in principles, flexible in strategy and tactics', *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 24–39.

2 During his term, Le Kha Phieu was seen as deferring to China's interests in critical issues, thus upsetting Vietnam's careful diplomatic balance among major powers. He delayed the approval of Vietnam's first-ever bilateral trade agreement with the United States due to his concerns about China's response. He was also seen as caving in to China's pressure during the negotiation over the demarcation of the Gulf Tonkin, acceding to the Chinese demarcation plan. See Abuza (2002, pp. 139–141).

3 For example, Li Cheng addressed two main factions within China's domestic politics: the Jiang-Xi camp and the Hu-Li camp. However, Bo Zhiyue counted at least four factional groups: Shanghai Gang, Youth League Group, Princelings, and Qinghua Clique (Bo 2007). See Li (2016) and Bo (2007).

4 A minor exception is Hu Jintao's awkward two-year wait for Jiang Zemin to transfer the position of chairman of the Central Military Commission.

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9 Confronting China's realpolitik approach in the South China Sea dispute

The Philippines' changing grand strategies

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Introduction

The major security conundrum that has confronted the Philippines since the second decade of the 21st century is China's expansion into the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea. In March 2010, China declared the South China Sea as one of its 'core interests', indicating its determination to assert its sovereign claims over the disputed waters. Simultaneously, key Chinese officials have moved away from their moderate public posture on the maritime dispute, and instead, have become forceful and nationalistic. They have constantly harped on China's emergent status, the decline of the United States, and their unwavering claim of sovereignty over the East China and South China Seas. China's realpolitik approach in its territorial claim over the South China Sea has increased in tandem with the expansion of its navy and maritime services such as the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) and the Maritime Militia. China's actions concretize its goal to resolve this maritime dispute on its terms. It pursues this goal by flaunting its growing naval capabilities and impressing upon the other claimant states its *de facto* ownership of the South China Sea unilaterally and militarily. Recently, China has consolidated its jurisdictional claims in the South China Sea by expanding its military reach and pursuing coercive diplomacy against the other claimant states.

For over 65 years, the Philippines focused its security attention and efforts on containing social unrest generated by economic inequality and the lack of national cohesion. However, this pervasive preoccupation with internal security was disturbed in 2011 when the late President Benigno Aquino III implemented a strategy of hard balancing or challenging China's expansive maritime claim in the South China Sea. In late 2016, however, former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte reversed his predecessor's process of balancing China's broad claim in the South China Sea by adopting a policy of appeasement. In his appeasement policy, he extended two critical concessions to China—downgrading the Philippine-US alliance and putting aside the 12 July 2016 arbitral ruling on the South China Sea dispute.

Unfortunately, President Duterte's efforts to appease this emergent power did not prevented China from pursuing its goal of maritime expansion and, in the process, employing coercive actions against the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) units stationed in some of the Philippine-occupied land features in the West

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Philippine Sea/South China Sea. After more than five years of pursuing a policy of appeasement, the Philippine defense, military, and foreign affairs establishments questioned President Duterte's policy as they pushed for a grand strategy aimed at constraining China's revisionist agenda in the South China Sea. Currently, the Marcos administration is pursuing a policy of hard balancing as it strengthens the country's alliance with the United States, fosters security partnerships with Japan and Australia, and finances the Philippine military's modernization program. These changes in the Philippine grand strategy reflect this middle power's dilemma as it responds to China's realpolitik approach in the South China Sea dispute.

This chapter examines the Philippines' changing grand strategy in reaction to China's realpolitik approach in the South China Sea. It raises this central question: What is the current Philippine grand strategy in the face of China's expansion and realpolitik approach in the South China Sea? It also addresses the following corollary questions: How is China pursuing its expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea? What is the role of China's realpolitik approach in the formulation of the Philippine grand strategy? And what is the future of the Philippine grand strategy in the face of a rapidly changing Indo-Pacific region?

China's realpolitik approach in the South China Sea

The maritime Southeast Asian countries are located at an important crossroads between the Indian and Pacific Oceans near the center of a newly configured region called the Indo-Pacific. These littoral states form a subregion strategically linking significant sea lanes of trade, commerce, and communication such as the South China Sea and the Malacca Straits. Maritime Southeast Asia is also a vital junction of sea lanes of communication linking Northeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. China regards this subregion as a geopolitically vital region. For this reason, the subregion serves as a social laboratory for testing China's grand strategy termed the 'Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation'. This is exemplified by China's efforts to create Sinocentric regional order through the application of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and expansion into the South China Sea (Shoji 2019).

In November 2012, President Xi Jinping declared that China's long-term goal is the realization of the Chinese Dream through the grand strategy called 'Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation' (Iida 2019; also see Loh, this volume, Chapter 5). He explained the two underlying principles of this grand strategy included, first, creating an international environment favorable to China's development through cooperative relations with other countries, and second, protecting China's core interests, even if it means worsened relations with other countries (Iida 2019). Expectedly, China's foreign policy is aligned with these two principles, and no major changes are expected as long as President Xi is in power (Iida 2019).

The following year, China announced its pursuit of periphery diplomacy with its neighbors to ensure China's peaceful development. Its objectives included attempts to drive a wedge between countries that view the United States and China as affecting their respective core interests, as well as attempts to curb military alliances and

existing international systems, while creating new frameworks that do not include the United States (National Institute for Defense Studies 2015). In its conduct of peripheral diplomacy, China seeks to deepen its economic ties with Southeast Asian countries through trade, currency circulation, and, more importantly, massive outlays for infrastructure development and construction (National Institute for Defense Studies 2015). China also applies a realpolitik approach in forcing the littoral countries to accept its de facto control of the South China Sea.

Territorial disputes have been recurring phenomena in international relations and have been a constant cause of armed inter-state conflicts. Territorial disputes, however, do not automatically lead to war. Rather, they provide the necessary, not sufficient, conditions for armed conflict to occur among states. As one study notes, 'territory and borders (disputes) do not cause wars, they at least create the structure of risks and opportunities in which conflict behavior is more likely to occur' (Hensel 2000, p. 58). A sufficient condition that can generate militarized conflicts is if the disputing states apply realpolitik or power politics tactics in resolving their contention.

Realpolitik or the power politic approach is defined as foreign policy actions based on the image of the world as insecure and anarchic, which consequently leads to distrust; power struggles; national interest taking precedence over norms, rules, and collective interests; the use of Machiavellian stratagems; coercion; attempts at balancing power; reliance on self-help; and the use of force and war as the ultima ratio of international relations (Vasquez 1993). Power politics becomes a guide that directs policymakers (and their societies) to the appropriate behavior given the situation—a territorial dispute—given the realities of international relations (Vasquez 1993). This approach to territorial dispute involves the reliance on the test of power—through conquest, and forcible submission, or deterrence of the other parties. It is also deemed a form of particularistic policy based on unilateral actions that cause confrontations among disputing states and armed conflict (Vasquez 1993).

China's realpolitik approach in the South China Sea stems from its geographic proximity, historical baggage, and the implications of the constantly changing dynamics of Chinese comprehensive power and presence in maritime Southeast Asia (Rhodes 2018). China claims almost 80 percent of the South China Sea along with the Paracels and Spratly Islands, which are also claimed by four littoral countries: the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, and Vietnam. In the short term, it seeks de facto control of the South China Sea via a situation that is not in accordance with official law. In the long run, China seeks to attain *de jure* control, or official/legal recognition of Chinese sovereign rights over its expansive claims in the South China Sea (Verblaauw 2021).

China's realpolitik approach in pushing its expansive maritime claims in both the South China and the East China Seas has resulted in an expansion of its navy and maritime services (Huang 2015). China conducts numerous naval exercises to support its maritime claim, employing more modern surface combatants and submarines (Iida 2019). These simulated war games are staged to show China's determination to unilaterally and militarily resolve the dispute, flaunt its naval

preponderance, and impress upon the other claimant states its de facto ownership of these contested maritime territories. In the process, the Chinese navy backs the official claim of Beijing that the South China Sea is its territorial waters. China enhances its territorial integrity and ensures its national security by staking its expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea (Scott 2007). By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, China's myopic nationalism, growing naval prowess, and unilateral actions were overtly directed against a militarily-weak Southeast Asian country—the Philippines. The other claimant states, however, consider this as an ominous sign of Chinese maritime expansionism in an area of key strategic location and potential resources.

China's overt actions in the South China Sea include the harassment and detainment of Vietnamese and Philippine vessels, with some vessels even being fired upon by Chinese patrol crafts. These bullying tactics seek to pressure claimant states to withdraw from the disputed area eventually resulting in Chinese control of the South China Sea, which would provide Beijing with maritime trade security, in-depth defense of the mainland, and greater hydrocarbon production (Shoji 2019; Verblaauw 2021). Hence, China's actions pursue one specific objective in the South China Sea, that is, 'to change the [territorial] status quo by force based on its own assertion, which is incompatible with the existing order of international law' (National Institute for Defence Studies 2014, p. 2).

A middle power confronted by an emergent power pursuing a realpolitik foreign policy can adopt three grand strategies to manage this systemic threat, namely: hard balancing, appeasement, and limited complex balancing. Hard balancing aims to strengthen the state's ability to defend its vital interest in a perceived threat through internal mobilization for arms build-up and alliance formation, which typically sees leaders attach greater weight to one strategy (Trubowitz 2011). Hard balancing involves both internal and external balancing directed against a specific threat, but it can also consist of more general treaties of mutual support regardless of the precise identity of the threat (Walt 2009). Appeasement involves extending concessions to an emergent power in the hope that its aggression will be moderated or terminated, sparing the appeasing state a costly war and possibly peaceful and cooperative relations with the emergent power. A state can also pursue limited hard balancing, which relies on limited arms build-up and semiformal alliances such as strategic partnerships that allow joint efforts and sharing of strategic resources but not offensive warfare or operational coordination (Paul 2018). Since 2011, the Philippines has adopted these three types of grand strategies—hard balancing, appeasement, limited complex balancing, and a return to hard balancing—in the face of China's maritime expansion in the South China Sea.

The shift from internal to external defense

After the Philippines became an independent republic in 1946, it had never formulated and publicly released a grand strategy until 16 May 2018, when then President Rodrigo Roa Duterte signed the country's first National Security Strategy (NSS). This was because, for over 65 years, the Philippines focused its security

attention and efforts on containing social unrest generated by economic inequality and the lack of national cohesion. However, this pervasive preoccupation with internal security was disturbed in 2011 when the late President Benigno Aquino III implemented a strategy of balancing or challenging China's expansive maritime claim in the South China Sea.

The late President Benigno Aquino pursued a hard balancing strategy, although it could never come out with a formal NSS. This was because President Aquino showed little interest in foreign relations and strategic matters during his early months in office. Unfortunately for him, he was overtaken by unexpected developments, forcing him to pay more attention to foreign policy and defense matters than he initially anticipated in mid-2010. On 2 March 2011, two Chinese patrol boats harassed a survey ship commissioned by the Philippine Department of Energy to conduct natural gas exploration in the Reed Bank (also called Recto Bank). The Reed Bank lies 150 kilometers east of the Spratly Islands and 250 kilometers west of the Philippine Islands of Palawan. Stunned by this maritime encounter within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the Aquino Administration filed a protest before the Chinese embassy in Manila. Brushing aside the Philippine complaint, a Chinese embassy official insisted that China has indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha (Spratly) Islands and their adjacent territory. Beijing demanded that Manila first seek Chinese permission before it could conduct oil exploration activities even within the Philippines' EEZ.

With these incidents, the Aquino Administration hastened to develop the AFP's territorial defense capabilities. The Philippines' territorial defense goal has been to establish a modest but 'comprehensive border protection program'. This task is anchored on the surveillance, deterrence, and border patrol capabilities of the Philippine Air Force (PAF), the Philippine Navy (PN), and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) that extend from the country's territorial waters to its contiguous and EEZ (National Security Council 2011). This objective required enhancing the AFP's capabilities, prioritizing its needs, and gradually restructuring its forces for territorial defense. The Philippines' territorial defense goal is very modest—to develop a credible posture for territorial defense and maritime security through building a competent force capable of defending the country's interests and the land features it occupies in the South China Sea (Secretary of National Defense 2011). Cognizant of its limited military capabilities, the Philippines enhanced its security ties with the United States—the country's long-time strategic ally—to foster a security partnership with Japan.

In 2012, the Philippines became the US exemplar of the Obama Administration's rebalancing strategy. The late President Aquino linked the Philippines' military modernization program and external defense requirements with the rebalancing policy (Simon 2013). The strategy necessitated the stationing of American military assets on a rotational basis in countries willing to host them in Southeast Asia. Consequently, the Philippines became the center of Washington's efforts aimed at enhancing the American strategic footprint in Southeast Asia. The Aquino Administration aligned its territorial defense build-up with the US rebalancing strategy. As support, the United States increased its military assistance to the Philippines

from US$30 to US$50 million in 2013. Washington provided Manila with two refurbished Hamilton-class coast guard cutters for the PN. The provision of these surplus US Coast Guard (USCG) vessels was aimed to assist the AFP in transiting from an inward focus on internal security to an outward one directed at territorial defense. This required enabling the PN to maintain a credible naval presence in the West Philippine Sea.

The two allies negotiated an agreement to authorize the positioning of US equipment and the rotation of more American military personnel for a longer period of deployment in Philippine military bases under the 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) (Simon 2013). In 2014, the two countries signed the 2014 Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). Under this arrangement, the United States could preposition aircraft used during exercises with the Philippines to save on turnaround time and fuel. Normally, these American planes return to their bases in Hawaii, Guam, or Okinawa. President Aquino also offered the United States and Japan access to Subic Bay, the former US naval facility facing the South China Sea.

In January 2013, the Philippines, using lawfare, confronted the expansive Chinese claim in the South China Sea by filing a statement of claim against China in the Arbitral Tribunal of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Former Philippine Foreign Secretary Del Rosario presented before the five-member tribunal hearing Manila's case filed against China's expansive maritime claim in the disputed waters. He also argued that the 1982 UNCLOS does not recognize or permit the exercise of so-called 'historic rights' in areas beyond the limits of maritime zones recognized or established by UNCLOS (Callar 2015, no pagination). China did not participate in the proceedings, citing its policy of resolving disputes on territorial and maritime rights only through direct consultation and negotiation with the countries directly involved ('China not to Accept Third Party Decision over Sea', *BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific*, 14 July 2015).

The Duterte administration's appeasement policy and strategic conundrum

President Duterte's unexpected victory as the Philippines' 16th president in May 2016 was considered an adverse consequence of the Philippines' long and often troubled experience with liberal democratic governance and an example of the widespread disillusion toward the political and economic elite that has become a global trend (Timberman 2019). He took many of his fellow citizens by surprise when he downgraded the Philippines' long-standing alliance with the United States, alienated Australia and the European Union, and announced his plan to move closer to China and Russia (Hernandez 2017).

He announced that he was seeking to improve relations with China. He was open about his intention to change Manila's confrontational policy toward Beijing; this was manifested when he reacted with sobriety and extreme caution when the UNCLOS Arbitral Tribunal came out with the 12 July 2016 awards to the Philippines that ruled that China's extensive maritime claim and expansionary moves in the South China Sea have no legal basis. A few months later, he opportunistically

announced that he was ready to set aside the arbitral ruling as he sought trade, economic, and diplomatic concessions from China. Indeed, his open contempt for the Philippines' alliance with the United States, his optimistic pronouncements on China, and his willingness to accept Beijing's preferred means of managing the South China Sea dispute, such as direct bilateral negotiations and joint development, were diametrically at odds with the conventional design and trajectory of 21st-century Philippine foreign policy on these critical issues (Bautista 2016).

On 16 May 2018, former President Duterte signed the aforementioned NSS. It painted a pessimistic picture of the country's external environment (National Security Council 2018). It admitted that the Philippines has not been confronted by any direct threat of foreign aggression since the end of the Second World War. However, it warily observed that the current regional security environment had become increasingly uncertain and dangerous for the country. The 2018 NSS made no mention of any specific country that threatened the Philippines. Instead, it raised three systemic concerns regarding the country's external security environment (National Security Council 2018). They included

1) The perils of traditional geostrategic threats as competing interests of the great powers and other countries converge, requiring the Philippines to chart its role in an increasingly multipolar system.
2) The need for the Philippines to be fully equipped not only to deter potential aggressors but also to protect the archipelago from international terrorists, pandemics, transnational crimes, and natural disasters.
3) The Philippines must develop a credible defense capability and strengthen its broad strategic alliances or cooperation with its friends and security partners in the international community.

The 2018 NSS's release as a public document coincided with a shift in Philippine policy toward China from appeasement to limited hard balancing. This shift can be partly attributed to the Philippine military's stance via-a-vis China's expansion into the South China Sea. The distrust of China runs deep in Philippine society, especially in the military circles, where Beijing's motives are often seen in the context of the two countries' chronic long-running dispute over territory in the South China Sea (Venzon 2019). This strategy of limited hard balancing toward China stemmed from the administration's realization that a policy of appeasement required the weaker party (the Philippines) to put its strategic stakes in the hands of a more powerful state (China), which was harboring hostile intention of maritime expansion in the West Philippine Sea and appeared bent on exploiting the country's military weakness.

This administration's adoption of this strategy was also partly triggered by Chinese coercive actions against AFP units deployed in the West Philippine Sea. Public sentiment against the administration's appeasement policy forced the government not to bandwagon toward China. Instead, it adopted a two-pronged approach toward China. Since 2016, the Philippines has actively promoted bilateral economic cooperation with China and sought to find a peaceful resolution to

the South China Sea dispute. At the same time, it has pursued efforts to counter Chinese maritime expansion by effectively applying the rule of law in the international framework (National Institute for Defense Studies 2021).

The Duterte administration's 12 July 2020 decision acknowledging the 2016 UNCLOS ruling on the South China Sea dispute indicated a limit to the Philippines' appeasement policy toward China. On the fourth anniversary of the UNCLOS arbitral ruling, then Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin declared that the arbitration case initiated and won by the Philippines versus China 'is a contribution of great significance and consequence to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea and to the peace and stability of the region at large' (Locsin 2020, no pagination). He cited that the large-scale reclamation and construction of artificial islands and the large-scale harvesting of endangered marine species aggravated the South China Sea disputes. More significantly, this administration also pursued the following measures to boost its limited hard balancing policy toward China.

At that point, two developments emerged in Philippine-China rapprochement: a) China's failure to deliver the promised loans and direct investments to finance the Philippine government's Build, Build, Build program; and b) increasing Chinese naval presence near the artificial islands in the South China Sea. This spurred the Philippines to advance the goal of this policy, which was to develop the Philippines' external defense capabilities on account of the dangerous great powers' competition in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Duterte administration's diplomatic and military efforts were directed against a specific Chinese policy related to maritime expansion rather than China's emergence as a great power in the Indo-Pacific region. Limited hard balancing involved the Philippines' effective coordination of military and diplomatic efforts to obtain outcomes contrary to China's preference for controlling a large portion of the West Philippine Sea and the waters of the first island chain.[1] It sought to constrain China's ability to unilaterally impose its preferences on the littoral states of the first island chain through limited arms build-up and reliance on a diplomatic coalition of conditions that will defend their interests.

The Duterte administration's pursuit of a policy of limited balancing toward China was best manifested by its decision to proceed with the long-term AFP modernization program. Earlier, in June 2019, President Duterte agreed to bankroll the second phase of the AFP's 15-year modernization program. The program's first phase, which began in 2013 and ended in 2017, entailed the acquisition of military equipment mainly for internal defense. The second phase or horizon, from 2018 to 2022, was an ambitious and expensive transition period where the Philippine military concentrated on arms purchases for territorial defense. Under the updated Horizon 2 of the AFP modernization program, the Philippine military identified essential items that had to be acquired from 2018 to 2022, including multirole fighters, helicopters, and long-range patrol aircraft for the PAF; frigates, corvettes, and submarines for the PN; and multiple launch rocket systems, weaponry, and night-fighting equipment for the PA.[2]

President Duterte also kept the Philippine-US alliance intact and instructed the AFP to implement the 2014 EDCA. He saw that the management of the

US-Philippine alliance depended on two critical security issues—the South China Sea dispute and the growing Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) threat in Mindanao. The Philippines also sought from the United States a clarification on the scope of Washington's security obligations under the 1951 Mutual Defence Treaty (MDT) (National Institute for Defence Studies 2021). He also bolstered the Philippine-Japan security partnership and stabilized Philippine-Australia bilateral relations. This suggested that, despite his efforts to improve Philippine-China economic relations, he saw the need to equibalance among the two middle powers—Australia and Japan. The Duterte administration deliberated on a grand strategy of 'limited hard balancing' to constrain the hegemon's revisionist agenda (Paul 2018, pp. 21–22; see also Ping, this volume, Chapter 2). This policy resulted from the defense, military, and foreign affairs establishments questioning President Duterte's appeasement policy and his administration's belated realization that it needed an impromptu strategy to constrain China's revisionist agenda in the South China Sea despite the Philippine-China rapprochement.

Efforts for a balanced policy

In 2022, Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was propelled into the presidency by an overwhelming majority of the Filipino electorate. Upon his assumption to the highest office of the country, he opted for a 'balanced foreign policy' to promote economic cooperation with China and revitalize the country's alliance with the United States. He planned to earn practical gains from his country's interactions with both the United States and China (*The Yomiuri Shimbun* 2023). In his first State of the Nation Address in July 2022, President Marcos said he favored close economic cooperation with China (RTVMalacanang 2022). He added that this also included an approach balanced by the Philippines' security relations with the United States. He envisioned a division of labor in which Beijing would provide the market for Philippine exports and the public investments for the government's infrastructure projects. A revitalized security alliance with Washington would balance these close economic relations with China.

Despite the Marcos administration's gambit to engage both major powers in a balanced relationship, it also announced its principled position to uphold the Philippines' legal victory over China on the West Philippines Sea/South China Sea dispute. A week after his presidential inauguration, on 12 July 2022, Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo announced that the Philippines acknowledged the 12 July 2016 arbitral ruling as one of the twin anchors of the country's policy and actions on the West Philippine Sea. He added that the awards affirmed to the community of nations that the rule of law prevails, and that stability, peace, and progress can only be attained when founded on a rules-based legal order on the oceans, as it should be everywhere else. In a 12 July 2022 statement issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs, commemorating the 6th anniversary of the arbitral award and the 40th anniversary of UNCLOS, Secretary Manalo declared that compliance with UNCLOS in its entirety was key to ensuring global and regional peace and the fair and sustainable use of the oceans. A few days later, President Marcos'

newly appointed Solicitor-General Menardo Guevarra issued a statement announcing that the Philippine government stands firmly behind the DFA's statement on the 2016 arbitral award that favors the country's position in the South China Sea dispute (Putla 2022).

In early July 2022, the Marcos administration laid down the red carpet for then former Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi when he visited the Philippines as his third stop on his five-nation tour of Southeast Asia. On 6 July 2022, after meeting with the newly installed Secretary Manalo, Wang paid a courtesy call to the new Philippine president. Before meeting China's top diplomat, President Marcos said that the Philippines should not only be discussing the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea dispute. He said that the Philippines and China should do other things to normalize their bilateral relations. He added that the Philippines is offering initiatives to increase the scope of Philippine-China relations with the possible expansion of cultural, education, and even military exchanges if necessary (Gomez 2022).

During his meeting with Foreign Minister Yi, President Marcos was quoted as saying 'that China "is the strongest partner of the Philippines" and that he hopes to fortify the relationship' (cited in Elemia & Rinoza 2022). This was based on his awareness that the Covid-19 government-mandated lockdown had caused a drastic drop in the economic growth of the Philippines' consumer-driven economy. To jump-start the economy, President Marcos held talks with China on reviving three rail projects under the Belt and Road Initiative that had lapsed during the Duterte administration because of a lack of funding (Dalpino 2023a).

During his first meeting with President Xi Jinping on the sides of the Asia-Pacific Economic Community (APEC) Summit in Bangkok, Thailand, President Marcos discussed the need for extensive economic contact between the Philippines and China and agreed with his Chinese counterpart that the maritime dispute between the two countries should not define the Philippine-China bilateral relationship (Sutter & Huang 2023a). Keenly aware of the dire state of the Philippine economy, China tried to strengthen bilateral ties with the Marcos administration by offering economic assistance—but without compromising on the territorial dispute with the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea (Sutter & Huang 2021).

President Marcos deemed the revival of the Philippine-US alliance as a matter of strategic necessity because, based on the previous Duterte administration's experience, there is no guarantee that closer Philippine-China economic relations would constrain the Chinese realpolitik approach in the South China Sea dispute. During the Duterte administration, despite friendly and cooperative rhetoric about closer Philippine-China bilateral relations, over 200 alleged Chinese Maritime Militia fishing boats impressed upon the Philippines their overwhelming power to effectively occupy the disputed territory of Whitsun Reef, which is 175 miles from the westernmost Philippine Island of Palawan, and within the country's 200-nautical EEZ (Sutter & Huang 2021). Philippine defense officials also observed that China constructed structures in other parts of the Union Banks, a collection of reefs that includes Whitsun Reef despite the Philippine-China rapprochement (Sutter & Huang 2021).

The return to hard balancing

In pursuing its realpolitik approach in the South China Sea, China must assert its sovereignty claims if it does not possess the means to control a maritime feature, and it cannot control it if it cannot maintain a persistent naval presence in its maritime vicinity (Verblaauw 2021). China's maritime strategy requires the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), the China Coast Guard (CCG), and the Maritime Militia to put pressure on foreign vessels in disputed waters and have the initiative to escalate movers to force littoral countries to abide by its jurisdiction and privileges in the South China Sea (Shinji et al. 2023). This strategy enables China to identify alleged interlopers, undertake drastic and mass intimidation actions, and exercise escalatory options against those who challenge its maritime claims (Verblaauw 2021).

China applied this strategy against the newly elected Philippine president as CCG patrols in the South China Sea became more frequent in 2022. This resulted in two maritime incidents during the early part of the Marcos administration, namely: a) a big CCG ship blocking and harassing a small PN supply ship on its way to resupply a small AFP garrison on Ayungin Shoal; and 2) swarming by fishing boats manned by suspected Chinese Maritime Militia to establish control over disputed South China Sea features (Sutter & Huang 2023b). The following year, in February 2023, a CCG vessel directed 'a military-grade laser' at a PCG ship, which was escorting a resupply mission to the small Philippine garrison onboard the *BRP Sierra Madre* on Ayungin Shoal. China's zero-sum game against the Philippines pushed Manila to file several *note verbales* against what it perceives as Beijing's provocation in the South China Sea. This also led President Marcos to reiterate his call on the AFP to shift its mission from internal security to external defense in the face of Chinese coercive behavior against the PN and ordinary Filipino fishing folks (Gomez 2023b).

The Marcos administration took over from the Duterte administration the responsibility to finance and implement the revised AFP modernization program, which had entered its third horizon from 2023–2028. Once he assumed office on 30 June 2022, President Marcos was confronted with a guns-versus-butter dilemma as he would decide on whether his administration would fund the program, estimated to cost the Philippine government US$103.38 billion, with the lion-share of the US$56 billion modernization budget going to the PN and the PAF.

On 1 July 2022, President Marcos, during the 75th founding anniversary of the PAF, announced that he would continue the ongoing defense initiatives as it would complement his administration's vision for 'a stronger, bigger, and effective air force capable of defending and maintaining our sovereign state and of assisting our people in times of dire consequences and today's reality' (Nepomuceno 2022b, no pagination). On 13 July 2022, Department of National Defense Senior Undersecretary and Officer-in-Charge Jose Faustino announced that the Marcos administration pledged to continue the implementation of the Philippine military's modernization program as the president, through a directive, mentioned his top priorities such as defending the nation's territorial integrity, protecting the

Filipino people, and ensuring state sovereignty (Nepomuceno 2022a). Then on 21 December 2022, President Marcos assured the AFP of his administration's commitment to its modernization program aimed at acquiring more equipment for external defense. He declared; 'We will be partners towards your vision of a strong, credible, world-class armed force that is a source of national pride or a source of national security' (Parrocha 2022, no pagination).

The Philippines also found it necessary to foster closer security partnerships with Japan and South Korea. In early October 2022, the Philippines hosted a 10-day live-fire training exercise involving not only Filipino and American marines but also South Korean marines and Japanese Ground Self-Defence Forces (JSDF). About 3,000 ground troops from Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and the United States participated in the live-fire exercises north of the Philippine capital and showed to the world that the United States and its allies are prepared to rapidly respond to crises throughout the Indo-Pacific (Heydarian 2022). Philippines-based political scientist Heydarian (2022, pp. 1–2) noted the implication of this four-nation military drill, stating,

> The Southeast Asian nation is hosting the large-scale two-week Kamandag exercises, which involve around 3,500 troops from the US, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. The drills are focused on coastal defense and include an amphibious operation near a disputed feature in the South China Sea.
>
> . . . the Philippines has been enhancing its defense cooperation with fellow US allies, especially Japan and South Korea, which have provided increasingly sophisticated training and weapons to the Philippines. The upshot is a more robust network of US-led military alliances across the Indo-Pacific.

Finally, President Marcos prioritized the maintenance of healthy and vibrant security ties with the United States. This marked a dramatic break from his predecessor, former President Duterte, who initially tried to systematically dismantle the Philippine-US alliance, lessen Manila's dependence on Washington, and diversify the country's security relations to include revisionist states such as China and Russia (Grossman 2023). President Marcos's efforts to enhance Philippine-China economic relations did not prevent his administration from repairing the Philippine-US alliance after President Duterte's early efforts to wean Manila away from Washington. On 29 September 2022, Faustino and US Secretary of Department of Defense Lloyd J. Austin formally announced their countries' commitment to the 1951 MDT (US Department of Defense 2022). Accordingly, this will be accomplished by enhancing maritime cooperation and improving their respective armed forces' interoperability and information sharing. Both defense secretaries also admitted the necessity of improving and modernizing their alliances to help secure the Philippines' future, address regional security challenges, and promote peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

This goal requires the two allies to accelerate the implementation of the 2014 EDCA by concluding infrastructure enhancements and repair projects at existing

EDCA-agreed locations inside five Philippine Air Force (PAF) bases all over the country (US Department of Defense 2022). And finally, the two defense secretaries revealed the signing of the US-Philippine Maritime Framework that will jump-start the two countries' maritime cooperative activities in the South China Sea, which might include the resumption of joint naval patrols by the United States and Philippine navies. Interestingly, the revitalization of the Philippine-US alliance is taking place amid mounting tension between China on the one hand, and Taiwan and the United States and its Asian allies on the other hand. As the closest country to Taiwan and a US treaty ally, the Philippines is expected to play a significant strategic role in providing its territory as a staging ground for US forces responding against any Chinese invasion of the island republic (Sepe & Liwanag 2022).

On 2 February 2023, Philippine and US defense officials announced that the US military will be given more access to four AFP bases nationwide. This move effectively cemented the two allies' efforts to expand the American strategic footprint in Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region in the face of an aggressive and expansionist China. Negotiated by the two countries during US Defense Secretary Austin's second visit to the Philippines, this new access agreement adds four more sites to the original five AFP bases used for training, prepositioning of equipment, use of runways, and other facilities constructed as joint locations under the 2014 Philippine-US EDCA (Young & Tan 2023).

Under the agreement, the Philippines allowed a sizeable number of American troops to stay in the country on a rotational basis within AFP military camps. Inside those camps, American forces planned the construction of warehouses, living quarters, joint facilities, and stored combat material, except for nuclear weapons. However, only limited constructions of EDCA sites were made during the six-year term of President Rodrigo Duterte. Nevertheless, the United States has allocated over US$82 million for infrastructure investment at the original five EDCA sites (Acosta 2023). These investments supported economic growth and job creation in local government communities. The decision to increase the number of joint locations from five to nine happened in October 2022, when the United States sought access to a more significant number of forces and weapons to an additional five Philippines military camps, most in the central northern Luzon region, which the 160-mile Luzon Strait separates from the self-governed island of Taiwan (Gomez 2023a).

This development coincided with US forces intensifying and broadening joint training with their Filipino counterparts for combat readiness and disaster response in the Philippines' western coast, which faces the South China Sea, and in its northern Luzon region across the sea from the Taiwan Straits (Gomez 2023a). In 2022, the newly formed 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) deployed several combat concepts with the Philippine Marine Corps Coastal Defense Regiment in provinces on the Luzon Straits (Lariosa 2023). In a Taiwan Contingency, access to the Philippines for the Marines would be crucial to their MLR operations. Joint locations in northeastern Luzon could be used to preposition MLR equipment and other assets and would allow for faster response times for armed contingencies in the region. From these EDCA sites, the US military could secure the Luzon Strait or project

power in the South China Sea (Lariosa 2023). As the US military seeks to distribute (through access arrangements and joint military drills with their Southeast Asian counterparts) its forward-deployed forces along the first island chain stretching from Japan to maritime Southeast Asia, the Philippines' geopolitical significance to Washington increases (Nalamura & Shiga 2022).

The Philippines adopts a rigid and legalistic One-China policy regarding Taiwan's diplomatic status as a self-rule island. However, the Marcos administration found it necessary to improve the country's security relations with the United States as it openly expressed the need to cooperate with Washington in a possible strategic exigency in Taiwan, the country's closest neighbor. Manila is keenly aware that if an armed conflict between Beijing and Taipei erupts and spreads from the Taiwan Straits to the Luzon Straits, there is little chance the country will not escape its adverse consequences in terms of massive refugee flows, the rapid return of Filipino overseas workers based on the island republic, and even the actual spread of the conflict to the Luzon Straits and even northern Luzon (Dalpino 2023b). Philippine Ambassador to Washington, Jose Babes Romualdez, claimed that the Philippines would cooperate with the United States militarily to deter any escalation of tension between China and Taiwan—not only because of the treaty alliance but to help prevent a major conflict (Gomez 2022). He added that 'the Philippines would let US forces use the Southeast Asian nation's military bases in the event of a Taiwan conflict only "if it is important for us, for our security"' (cited in Nalamura & Shiga 2022).

President Marcos has not explicitly declared that the Philippines would assist the United States in any armed contingency in Taiwan. This stems from his concern that an armed conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan will likely drag the Philippines into a major armed conflict. He said in an interview: 'I learned an African saying. When elephants fight, the only one that losses are the grass. We are the grass in this situation; we do not want to get trampled' (Ip & Murray 2023). Nevertheless, his decision to speed up the implementation of EDCA, expand the number of joint locations from five to nine sites, and resume joint PN-US Navy joint patrols in the South China Sea reflect his changing thinking on this matter. Implying that his country would assist any US effort to defend Taiwan against Chinese aggression, he said in a more recent interview:

> When we look at the situation in the area, especially the tensions in the Taiwan Strait, we can see that just by our geographical location, should there in fact be conflict in that area . . . it's very hard to imagine a scenario where the Philippines will not somehow get involved.
>
> (Ferdinand Marcos Jr cited in Chen 2023)

In April 2023, the Philippines and the United States revived the 2+2 Bilateral Dialogue in Washington DC as the two allies discussed how they can further enhance their security relations under the expanded EDCA and further boost their economic ties within the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. The two sides released a joint statement that provides for advanced plans for US-Philippines joint naval patrols

in the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea; expressed Manila's commitment to consultations about the AUKUS trilateral security partnership; indicated the Philippines' possible participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) activities; and Manila's pledge to seek expanded operational military coordination with other US allies like Australia and Japan, including the Japan-US-Philippines Trilateral Defence Dialogue (Sutter & Huang 2023b). From 11–28 April, the AFP and the US armed services held their largest nationwide lived-fire *Balikatan* exercise with a combined total of 17,000 US, Filipino, and Australian service personnel (Dalpino 2023c). Throughout their recent efforts to revive their alliance, Washington and Manila have labeled their endeavors as the modernization of the US-Philippine alliance with the redefinition of the 1951 MDT as central to their discussion on how the two allies will eventually confront China's realpolitik approach in its maritime expansion in the South China Sea.

Conclusion

China has pursued its maritime expansion in the South China Sea since the second decade of the 21st century. It has deployed its navy, coast guard, and civilian militia to assert its expansive claims in the disputed waters. China has also built artificial islands and militarized these land features by building air and naval bases. It also applies coercive measures against PCG, PN ships, and even against ordinary Filipino fisher folks. These actions stemmed from China's calculation that it must defend its sovereignty claims if it does not possess the means to control the South China Sea. This means it must maintain a constant naval presence in the disputed waters. This strategy entails the PLAN, the CCG, and the Maritime Militia to exert maximum pressure on Filipino and Vietnamese public and civilian vessels in the South China Sea. It also requires China to develop the strategic initiative to escalate coercive actions to force littoral countries to abide by its maritime jurisdiction and privileges in the South China Sea. This empowers China to identify alleged intruders, prepare for undertaking decisive and mass intimidation actions, and to develop capabilities to exercise escalatory options against those states that are challenging its expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea.

From 2010 to 2016, the Aquino Administration adopted a strategy of hard balancing to challenge China in the disputed waters. In 2016, the Duterte administration pursued a policy of appeasement toward China. However, in 2018, the Philippines shifted from appeasement to a limited hard-balancing policy because of a) China's slow infusion of public capital to the Philippine government's ambitious infrastructure building-program; and b) continuing coercive actions against the units of the AFP in the South China Sea.

This strategy was a result of the previous Duterte administration's realization that a policy of appeasement requires the weaker party (the Philippines) to put its strategic stakes in the hands of a more powerful state (China), which is harboring hostile intention of maritime expansion in the disputed waters and is bent on exploiting the country's limited naval capabilities. The goal was to build up the country's territorial defense capabilities in the face of continuing Chinese

expansion in the South China Sea and the growing danger of great powers' competition in the Indo-Pacific region. The Duterte administration pursued this strategy by continuing some of its predecessor's efforts, such as a) building up the AFP's territorial defense capabilities, b) maintaining its alliance with the United States, and c) fostering security partnerships with Japan and Australia.

At the start of his six-year term, President Marcos Jr implemented a middle-of-the-road approach in his foreign policy. He fostered closer economic ties with China while reviving the country's alliance with the United States. Unfortunately, internal and external factors complicated his plan in seeking equilibrium as he balanced the Philippines' relations between China and the United States. The Philippine government's concern over growing Chinese coercive actions against units of the AFP and Filipino fishermen in the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea, along with the public expectations for a more robust government response, make such balancing policy challenging for the Marcos administration to implement. Unsettled by China's coercive and aggressive behavior in the South China Sea and around Taiwan, the Marcos administration strengthened its security ties with Washington.

In the first four months of 2023, Washington and Manila raised the level of their diplomatic activities leading to a) the formal announcement of four EDCA sites; b) the revival of the 2+2 Bilateral Security Dialogue; c) the holding of the largest *Balikatan* joint military exercise; and d) the public release of the May 2023 Defence Security Guidelines that clarified under what conditions the 1951 MDT could be invoked by each party and the enhancement of interoperability between the two allies through additional equipment transfers, training, and joint naval patrols. These efforts are an indication of the Marcos administration's decision to return to a hard balancing policy as it strengthens the Philippines' overall security capability to defend the country's interests against a very specific threat—China's realpolitik approach in advancing its expansive claim in the South China Sea and irredentist agenda against Taiwan.

Notes

1 For a discussion of island chain strategy see: Rhodes, Andrew 2018, 'The second island cloud; A deeper and broader concept for American presence in the Pacific Islands', *Joint Force Quarterly*, vol. 95, 4th Quarter, pp. 47–48.
2 Interview with a ranking senior Philippine army officer, National Defence College of the Philippines (NDCP), 9 August 2021.

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10 Beijing's public diplomacy

From soft power to sharp power and the Australian experience

Anna Hayes

Introduction

Sharp power has become a critical feature of Chinese international relations (CIR). Australia was one of the first states to experience and respond to Beijing's sharp power, resulting in a reset of the Australia-China bilateral relationship. While Australia sought to protect itself from espionage and foreign interference by passing new legislation and banning questionable technology companies such as Huawei and ZTE from bidding on Australia's 5G network, Beijing was planning its response. From 2018, Beijing used its 'wolf warrior diplomats', then economic coercion and sanctions to try to coerce Australia to abandon such safeguards for its sovereignty and independence.[1] These efforts ultimately failed with Australian resolve hardened by such events (Wilson 2021).

This chapter comprises two parts. The first part details how Chinese soft power is enacted, and in doing so, identifies the overlap between Chinese soft power and sharp power. In part two, the chapter examines Australian experiences of Chinese sharp power and Beijing's coercive diplomacy against Australia. It identifies critical examples of Chinese sharp power in Australia, responses by Canberra, and Beijing's attempts to make Canberra cede to its demands. Finally, it identifies important historical events and critical elements within Australian political culture that shape Australia's foreign policies and outlooks. This chapter argues that sharp power is a central feature of CIR, and Australian responses provide a model for other states in identifying and responding to acts of sharp power penetration by aggressor states like China.

Contrasting soft power and sharp power

Joseph Nye defined soft power as the power of attraction, whereby states are attracted to another state's desired policy outcomes because they 'want to follow it, admire its values, emulate its example, and/or aspire to its level of prosperity and openness' (1990, 2008, p. 94). He warned that soft power is a long-game strategy, and while a state can, over time, attract other states to its goals and ambitions, this attraction can be lost due to subsequent negative events. Underscoring the fragility of soft power he later stated it 'is often hard to use, easy to lose, and costly to reestablish [sic]'

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(Nye 2011b, p. 83). Moreover, if credibility is lacking, or the state is considered to operate outside the bounds of established international norms, its probability for successful deployment of soft power is also likely to be low (Nye 2012).

While Nye (2011a, p. 19) identified 'hard power as push, soft power as pull', sharp power can be defined as penetration. It seeks to penetrate states through manipulation, foreign interference and coercive diplomacy, piercing at the foundations of democratic values and penetrating the institutions upon which they are built. Nye (2018) identified it as a 'type of hard power [that] manipulates information'. It also includes censorship and disinformation, as well as a deepening of authoritarianism (Walker 2016, 2018). Institutions targeted for sharp power penetration include the cultural sector, academia, media, and publishing (CAMP sectors) (Walker 2018). However, given the Australian experience detailed later in this chapter, I argue the 'P' should be doubled to include the political sector. Through pressure tactics, bullying, and subversion, sharp power seeks to silence, isolate, induce self-censorship, or drown-out those engaged in the CAMPP sectors who may otherwise voice critical views of state actors (*Economist* 2017). China and Russia are global leaders in sharp power, and through technological advancements and greater connectivity than ever before, they seek to reshape world politics into forms more conducive to their desires and goals (Walker 2018). Moreover, the blurring of the lines between soft power and sharp power means that the latter is often disguised as the former (Walker 2022).

Soft power with Chinese characteristics

Beijing's interest in soft power began in the early 1990s, buoyed by the Chinese translation of Nye's book in 1992 (Economy 2018; see also Panda & Pankaj, this volume, Chapter 11). Following the Asian Financial Crisis, an early Chinese soft power strategy emerged, projecting an image of Chinese economic power and defiance in the wake of the financial chaos (Kurlantzick 2006; Ding 2010). By 2007, a more encompassing soft power strategy had emerged, linking the 'national rejuvenation' narrative with China's desires for its economic, military, political, and cultural accomplishments to be recognised externally (Economy 2018). At the same time, Hu Jintao identified that soft power had become a stated domestic and international goal for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and it became a feature of CIR.[2] Hu stated that China's soft power strategy sought to make socialist ideology more desirable and coherent, and he described the Chinese as a 'peace-loving people', earmarking China as a defender of world peace that avoided arms races and would not pose a military threat to other countries (*Xinhua* 2007; Ding 2010; Edney 2012). Hu also claimed that 'China opposes all forms of hegemonism and power politics and will never seek hegemony or engage in expansion' (cited in *Xinhua* 2007).

Hence, Beijing's evolving soft power strategy sought to counter the 'China threat' thesis via Hu Jintao's 'peaceful rise' thesis (Edney 2012; Li 2008). It included foreign aid and investment; peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance; exchange programs based around language and culture, including the global proliferation of Confucius Institutes; public diplomacy, including 'hosting diplomacy';[3]

expansion of China's global media reach; as well as involving itself in multilateral fora (Kalathil 2011; Pecheritsa & Boyarkina 2017). Nonetheless, this list contains elements of both soft power and emerging sharp power instruments, demonstrating Beijing's blurring of the lines between the two.

However, due to poor power conversion outcomes, Chinese strategists came to regard Chinese soft power as 'a weak link' in their strategic planning (Li 2008). This poor power conversion resulted from Beijing's continued deployment of propaganda, economic coercion, and interference, all of which constitute sharp power instruments. After fine-tuning its domestic propaganda efforts, Beijing expanded their propaganda efforts internationally, making propaganda an integral feature of China's sharp power, public diplomacy, and CIR (Brady & Wang 2009, p. 773; Edney 2012). Beijing's sharp power strategy also involved Chinese entities disguising their links to the CCP so they appeared independent of the Party, engaging in civil society activities and commercial ventures outside of China (Hamilton 2018; Hamilton & Ohlberg 2020; Walker 2018). Hence, Beijing's command over the control of ideas at home, combined with expertise in digital technologies necessary for internet censorship, as well as foreign interference via bots and other digital tools, saw it extend formerly domestic-bound means of information control and propaganda internationally (Walker 2018). This has also involved penetration of the open information channels of democratic states to strike the very foundations of their democratic systems (Walker 2018).

Beijing is adept at advancing their political goals via disinformation, paid trolls, and cyber-attacks (Walker 2016, 2018, 2022). Moreover, highly nationalistic internet users in China (netizens) are assertive in challenging 'Western liberal ideology' online (Economy 2018; Hillman 2021). As a result, cyberspace has moved further away from a space promising active democracy and the free exchange of ideas to become a site of 'sectarian wars' full of tension, subterfuge, and the policing of ideas (Kang 2012, p. 917). In China, the first Chinese netizens grasped the promised democratic environment of the internet with both hands, voicing their concerns and opinions openly online, which for the CCP, amplified the threat the internet posed to Beijing (Lei 2011).[4] This partly explains why Beijing became fixated on policing the internet, later launching its Golden Shield project and the Great Firewall of internet censorship. These developments were assisted by Western technology companies such as Cisco and Juniper Networks, with companies such as Yahoo, Google, and Microsoft later complying with CCP desires to restrict searchable content and to shut down sites deemed unfavourable by the CCP (Economy 2018; McMahon & Bennett 2011). Beijing also recruited the so-called 'fifty-cent army'—agents paid by the state—to post favourable commentary on China and alert authorities to problematic posts (Han 2015). Deepening nationalism inside of China has seen the 'fifty-cent army' joined by the 'voluntary fifty-cent army'. This group of nationalist netizens engage in the same kind of pro-China online commentary—but unpaid and in their own time—and they appear to be more effective than the paid state agents (Han 2015). The nationalistic fervour of the voluntary fifty-cent army reflects that the post-Tiananmen curriculum changes, which re-wrote China's historical and political narratives, are now bearing fruit.[5]

There is a popular saying in China that highlights the CCP's attempts to externalise blame for their failures:

> In the first 30 years China under Mao rid itself of the military threat; in the second 30 years China under Deng rid itself of poverty; now in the third 30 years, China will have to rid itself of all blame!
>
> (Kang 2012, p. 920)

Beijing now uses sharp power strategies to nurture anti-Western nationalism for both domestic and foreign policy gains (Gill & Huang 2006; Wang 2012). For instance, in its economic engagements with African states, China frequently identifies itself alongside such states, emphasising their past shared suffering under 'Western colonialism', while ignoring Imperial China's own territorial adventurism during the same period and the People's Republic of China's (PRC) annexation of Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia (Ding 2010, p. 269; Huang & Ding 2006, p. 38). These depictions draw sympathy from African media outlets, which posit that due to this shared past, Chinese investment in African states will be altruistic, not exploitative.[6] Hence, while extolling the Chinese state as a desirable and positive global actor, the sharp edge of Chinese 'soft' power seeks to engender anti-Western, anti-Japanese, and anti-American sentiments both at home and abroad, meaning it is sharp power not soft power (Callahan 2015).

Therefore, CIR adopts a dualist approach to soft power. As William Callahan explains, Beijing's 'soft power [strategy] is to fight against those who see the PRC as a threat and cultivate those who see it as an opportunity', and in doing so, Beijing attempts 'to build the positive Chinese self through the negative exclusion of Otherness' (2015, pp. 217–218). Kingsley Edney linked this strategy to the CCP's cultural reform program, stating that for the CCP, 'enhancing soft power is not simply a matter of more effectively using existing soft power resources at an international level through better public diplomacy, but also about building and strengthening these resources at home' (2012, p. 909). Hence, Chinese soft power has frequently involved portrayals of China as a responsible, benevolent, and pacifist state, at the same time as it denounces other states with messages intended for both foreign *and* domestic audiences.

Kernels of truth in mostly ahistorical narratives

CIR sees Beijing deliberately engaging with countries perceived to have 'faltering' relationships with the United States and the deployment of wedge politics, seeking to promote China as an alternative to the United States (Chai 2020; Kurlantzick 2006). Beijing's narrative includes negative portrayals of the United States, while at the same time portraying China as a peaceful, benevolent state, focused on 'win-win' gains and being highly respectful of state sovereignty (Kurlantzick 2006, p. 2). This narrative has resulted in China being widely viewed as an inherently peaceful state despite post-1949 China being anything but peaceful with countless examples of both domestic and internationally applied violence (Huang &

Ding 2006, p. 32).[7] For instance, 2 million Chinese people died during just the first two years of CCP rule as the Party sought to cement its victory by laying siege to cities such as Changchun, blockading food supplies and starving out nationalist garrisons and civilians alike (Dikotter 2013). Moreover, tens of millions of Chinese citizens were killed in various political campaigns following 'liberation', all of which were centred around establishing, maintaining, and securing the power of the Party across China (Dillon 2010). Hence, China has been a violent, bloody place under the CCP.

China has also demonstrated it is neither peaceful nor benevolent internationally. Beijing has engaged in foreign military adventurism, including, but not limited to the Battle of Chamdo in October of 1950, which annexed Tibet into China, ending its de facto independent status and causing Beijing a perpetual problem in both domestic and international affairs; the Sino-Indian border war (1962), whereby China gained control over a desired contested territory but lost much international standing and was viewed as a threat to regional states, compounded by subsequent periodic encroachments into contested territory with India, including the 2020 incident in Ladakh; war with Vietnam in 1979, which again saw China invade the territory of one of its neighbours, this time an act of aggression to secure Beijing's desired border security, and its direct involvement in regional power politics via their support of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, as well as numerous subsequent clashes with Vietnam since that time; and finally, the multiple occasions whereby Beijing has threatened Taiwan's status quo via actions in the Taiwan Strait (Dillon 2010; Economy 2018; Roberts 2011). Moreover, if previous military and imperial adventurism is included, such as the Qianlong emperor's annexation of Tibet, Mongolia, and Turkestan (Xinjiang) during the 1700s, not only is the contemporary historical narrative from Beijing counterfactual, but it is also hypocritical, ignoring China's own imperial endeavours and colonising efforts which occurred at the same time the Europeans were expanding their territory globally (Dillon 2010). Moreover, these colonial territories were not relinquished during the de-colonisation efforts globally, and they remain part of the Chinese state, making China an imperial state despite Beijing's claims of such territories being 'inseparable' parts of China since 'ancient times' (Hayes 2016; Roberts 2020).

This history is important because Beijing uses biological determinist arguments—identifying certain characteristics as genetically inherited—in its international relations. While China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi claimed that 'aggression and expansionism have never been in the Chinese nation's "genes"', factually-based historical accounts debunks such a claim (cited in Chellaney 2020). Biological determinism has also become a frequent component of Beijing's sharp power disguised as soft power tactics, its public diplomacy, and its understandings of the world (Chellaney 2020; Yu 2014, p. 82; also see Hao et al., this volume, Chapter 6). This biological deterministic approach identifies characteristics such as 'non-offense and good-neighborliness', being peaceful, and 'non-interference' as being Chinese *genetic* traits, further arguing that such traits constitute 'the "gene" in [the Chinese] mind after thousands of years of accretion' (Wang Yi cited in State Council Information Office of the PRC 2014, p. 19; Zhang 2014, p. 10, 36, 15;

Yu 2014, p. 82). In contrast, the European (and Japanese) *genetic* traits are positioned as being offensive, 'brutal and barbarous', interfering in other states, causing 'humiliation', and engaging in colonialism and imperialism (Liu et al. 2014, p. 151). Hence, Beijing's ahistorical version of Chinese history is one of Beijing's sharp power strategies which it exports via its foreign ministry, media, Confucius Institutes, academics, and nationalists, and it is frequently uncritically accepted by academics, governments, and business communities outside of China (Economy 2018; Hamilton 2018; Hamilton & Ohlberg 2020).[8] This is largely due to CIR being undergirded by the work of the United Front Work Department (UFWD).

'Soft power' as sharp power

According to Brady (2017), projecting China's image abroad via 'soft power' is a euphemism for expanding and revising the CCP's united front work and the reach of the UFWD. The UFWD strategies are to denounce, divide, and contain groups inside and outside of China, as well as to champion advocates and allies of Beijing to serve as the Party mouthpiece in international settings (Economy 2018; Joske 2020; Wang & Groot 2018). It seeks to neutralise opposition to the Party, bringing diverse groups, including overseas Chinese, under its leadership so they serve its interests, acting for the Party and not in opposition to it (Ha 2019). While achieving this outcome can take many forms, including co-option of influential individuals (elite capture), it also takes the form of manipulation, coercion, and violence (Joske 2020). Therefore, Chinese 'soft power' is often sharp power in disguise. However, other states have become more aware of the sharp edge of their interactions with China.

Prior to Covid-19, the University of Southern California's Center on Public Diplomacy Soft Power 30 index rankings for China showed it rising and falling in the rankings. China was ranked in 30th place in 2015, moving to 28th in 2016, 25th in 2017, slipping back to 27th place in 2018, where it remained for 2019 (USC Centre on Public Diplomacy 2019).[9] By way of comparison, during the same period, Australia hovered between 8th–10th position, the United Kingdom between 1st–2nd place (even during Brexit), while the United States hovered between 3rd–5th position (USC Centre on Public Diplomacy 2019). Issues such as human rights violations, hardline foreign policy, and the removal of the two-term limit on the presidency were all identified in the 2018 Overview as having negative impacts on Chinese soft power. In addition, China's 'aggressive military expansion' in the South China Sea further reduced its soft power ranking (USC Centre on Public Diplomacy 2018). The 2019 Overview identified the US-China trade war, concerns over the Uyghurs, the crackdown in Hong Kong, continuing tensions in the South China Sea, and problems with Huawei as negatively affecting China's ranking and concluded a top 20 ranking 'looks out of reach' for China (USC Centre on Public Diplomacy 2019).

Given the global impact of Covid-19, it is probable that China's soft power ranking has slipped even further. In his summation of recent events and Chinese soft power, Nye (2022, no pagination) concluded 'China has a smart-power problem. After all, it's difficult to practice vaccine diplomacy and "wolf-warrior

diplomacy" . . . at the same time'. Again, problematic events can result in soft power losses for states, and once lost, soft power becomes even more difficult to regain (Huang & Ding 2006, p. 40). Another identified limitation of Chinese soft power is that it rules itself out as 'a global hub for business' due to its 'low scores in competitiveness, ease of doing business, and rule of law', which is likely to have become even worse since the crackdown in Hong Kong, long seen as a safe gateway for conducting business in China due to its former legal and human rights protections (USC Centre on Public Diplomacy 2018). Beijing fails to understand that it is not enough for Chinese businesses to enter foreign markets, foreign businesses expect to be permitted to enter the Chinese market, and they also expect their business interests to be protected by a rule of law and to be free from forced technology transfer or commercial and intellectual property theft (Economy 2018). Without these guarantees, the 'pull' to conduct business in China will remain limited and, over time, is likely to diminish. This chapter now moves to part two where it examines Chinese sharp power in Australia and Canberra's response.

The Australian awakening to Beijing's sharp power

Identifying the 'magic weapons'

In 2017, Brady identified the workings of Chinese sharp power in New Zealand, and her research influenced understandings of Chinese sharp power within the Australian context, including how Canberra could respond. She identified Xi-era sharp power initiatives, or the CCP's 'magic weapons', as having expanded Beijing's previous soft power strategies so they now included

> [a] strengthening of efforts to manage and guide overseas Chinese communities and ultilise them as agents of Chinese foreign policy; [a] re-emphasis of people-to-people bonds, party-to-party, plus PRC enterprise-foreign enterprise relations with the aim of coopting foreigners to support and promote CCP's foreign policy goals; [t]he roll-out of a global, multi-platform, strategic communication strategy; and [t]he formation of a China-centred economic and strategic bloc.
>
> (Brady 2017, p. 7)

With greater attention on foreign interference efforts, it was soon realised that Beijing's sharp power in Australia included direct attempts at political influence through elite capture—highlighting that the political sector must be considered in examinations of sharp power—alongside of attempts at political interference, intimidation, cyber and human espionage, and the mobilisation of pro-Beijing groups inside of Australia (Brady 2022; Medcalf 2017). Rory Medcalf identified that Beijing's four main objectives in its sharp power tactics against Australia included attempts to weaken the US-Australian alliance through wedge politics; seeking out intelligence on Australia's military capabilities, technologies, and secrets; countering Australian outspokenness and independence in the Indo-Pacific region; and influencing the attitudes of 1.2 million Chinese Australians to adopt

pro-Beijing positions or to silence any voices of dissent within Chinese Australian communities and broader Australian CAMPP sectors (2018, p. 2).

In particular, the Dastyari affair identified Australian vulnerabilities to sharp power in the political sector, elevating concerns in Canberra. This incident involved elected senator Sam Dastyari—a member of the Australian Labor Party and believed by many to be a future Labor leader and, if successful, the future Australian prime minister—breaking ranks with his own party and the official stance of the Australian government to offer pro-Beijing views on China's creeping annexation and militarisation of the South China Sea. After further revelations revealed he had also provided counter-intelligence information to a Chinese billionaire donor, Dastyari's position became untenable, and he was forced to resign from parliament in December 2017 (Medcalf 2018). Medcalf identified the Dastyari affair as 'the moment when the expensive tapestry of China's "soft power" influence in Australia . . .[began] to unravel' because it highlighted that Beijing's public diplomacy strategy was sharp power disguised as soft power (cited in Hamilton 2018, p. 86). The Dastyari affair also highlighted Beijing's hypocritical approach to the principle of non-interference in the domestic politics of other states due to its overt attempts to interfere in Australian politics.[10]

Growing awareness of the penetration of Beijing's sharp power in Australia led to a reset of Australia-China relations over the period of 2016 to 2018, during which Canberra attempted to outline the ground rules for all states engaging with Australia. This led to political and economic rebuke from Beijing and attempts to force compliance from Canberra via coercive diplomacy. Beijing's weapons of choice included 'tariff duties, inspections, quarantine, and port go-slows to target Australian agriculture, coal, copper, wine, university education, and tourism' (Dobell 2021, p. 138). However, through its actions Beijing was exposed as an 'unreliable' and 'vindictive' trading partner, and Australian businesses sought out other trade partners ((Dobell 2021). This process was then greatly aided by Covid-19 due to global disruptions to markets, supply chains, foreign students, the tourism industry, and business opportunities, which meant Australia was not alone in experiencing significant trade disruption (Baldino 2020; Fraioli 2020; Wilson 2021). Moreover, Beijing's economic coercion against Australia was a bullhorn internationally, garnering attention to Beijing's tactics and generating sympathy and support for Australia (Ye 2021).

Hamilton (2018) has argued that 'the erosion of Australian sovereignty by Beijing is recognised by a handful of Sinologists, political journalists, strategic analysts and intelligence officers' (2018, p. 3). His research exposed the workings of the UFWD in Australia, and there have been numerous investigative reports by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation into CCP interference in Australia and ongoing human rights abuses in China.[11] These reports have increased focus on Beijing's sharp power tactics resulting in lowered trust of China among the Australian electorate. In 2018, 52 percent of Australians surveyed in a Lowy Institute poll indicated they had either a 'great deal of trust, or somewhat trusted' China to act responsibly in the world. By 2023 it had dropped to just 15 percent (Lowy Institute Poll 2023). Moreover, while in 2018, only 12 percent of Australians polled

believed China was now 'more a security threat than an economic partner to Australia', by 2023 that figure had grown to 52 percent of polled Australians (Lowy Institute Poll 2023). This data alone demonstrates the significant negative impact Beijing's sharp power tactics have had on Australia-China relations.

Beijing's sharp power tactics in Australia also included intimidation and attempts to censor Chinese Australian community media outlets, attempts by consular officials to deny speaking opportunities to speakers critical of the CCP, threats against private firms that advertised in media outlets deemed unfavourable to Beijing, and attempts at driving wedge politics in Australia (Garnaut 2018; Chai 2020). Wedge politics is a particularly divisive strategy that seeks to 'undermine legitimate public debate on Chinese government policy and conduct within Australia' (Fitzgerald 2019, p. 4). The issues of choice for wedge politics in Australia include the weaponisation of race and questioning the reliability of the Australia-US alliance (ANZUS).

Weaponising race

Beijing's defenders have been quick to label concerns over CCP interference in Australian politics as xenophobia, racism, or panic. Accusations of racism are a weak spot for Australian CAMPP sectors due to Australia's former Immigration Restriction Act (1901), as well as the invasion, dispossession, and past treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the Australian state (Broome 2010). In reference to the Immigration Restriction Act, the power afforded to this relic of Australian history is routinely used in debates concerning feared CCP interference in Australian affairs, as witnessed in the Gladys Liu affair (Lee 2019). While a Liberal member of Parliament (MP), Gladys Liu came under intense scrutiny due to her undeclared former membership of CCP-linked organisations in Australia. As a result, while a sitting MP (18 May 2019–21 May 2022), questions were raised over her eligibility to continue sitting in the parliament. It is important to note that this scrutiny stemmed from her undeclared connections to CCP-linked organisations, not her Chinese ancestry, despite attempts to use the 'xenophobia/racism' accusation to silence her critics.[12]

Hamilton identified the acute fear felt by Australians of being labelled racist or xenophobic—due to past racist policies—as 'xenophobia-phobia' (2018, p. 5). Australian xenophobia-phobia has long silenced or softened critiques of Beijing, in part aided by accusations of racism by various Chinese Foreign Affairs spokespersons.[13] However, since Hamilton defined and named xenophobia-phobia, it has increasingly been identified as a tactic of wedge politics within public debates and has attracted increasing pushback from within Australia, resulting in more open discussions. Other states are increasingly recognising this strategy of sharp power, including the United States, where race has also become weaponised (Economy 2018).

Rather than being xenophobic or racist, academic—and most political—discourse over Beijing's sharp power in Australia is undergirded by the realisation that such discourse needs to avoid conflating critiques of the CCP and Beijing's

policies with *the Chinese people*. Hence, Beijing or the CCP are frequently used to signal this important distinction between the government of China and the people of China. In addition, care is taken to avoid viewing Chinese Australian communities as a singular, monolithic entity that shares the same views, values, and attitudes (Fitzgerald 2019, 2022; Garnaut 2018; Hamilton 2018, p. 279). It is important that in responding to Beijing's sharp power, concern over Beijing's policies or interference does not embolden anti-Chinese sentiment within Australia.

Moreover, given Chinese sharp power seeks to manipulate, intimidate, and harass Chinese Australians, there is also recognition that Chinese Australians should be reassured that the legislation provides beneficial safeguards for them (Medcalf 2018, p. 8). The vulnerability of Chinese Australian communities is multifaceted, and despite representing a divided diasporic community within Australia, when it comes to people with Chinese ancestry, no matter their citizenship status, the CCP 'assumes it owns [them]' (Hamilton 2018, p. 178; Brady 2022; Wong 2021). To elucidate this point in another context, a Chinese academic at the East Asia Security Symposium and Conference in Beijing in 2016 made such a claim about Americans with Chinese ancestry. He stated

> You Americans regard these people as Chinese *American*, right? We regard them as American *Chinese*. When it comes to American Chinese we ask, "Which country do you serve?" To be Chinese American, this is quite peculiar to the view of an ethnic Chinese.

This statement was made without entertaining the idea that Chinese Americans may themselves prioritise their American identity, citizenship, and patriotism over their Chinese ancestry. To do so was peculiar to the interlocuter's thinking, exposing the acute vulnerability of people with Chinese ancestry who face this kind of race-based thinking by the CCP regime. Therefore, critics of those who raise concerns over the influence of Beijing in Australia, arguing it could inflame racial vilification of Chinese Australians, are either overlooking, ignoring, or downplaying the significant threat to Chinese Australians posed by the reach of Beijing's transnational repression, as well as their ability to target family and friends back home in China (Walker 2022).

ANZUS and assorted accusations

Beijing's other favoured wedge politics issue is ANZUS. In September 2019, Beijing sent a group of Chinese academics to Australia for a speaking tour. The group's talking points included the Australia-China relationship, the unreliability of the United States as an ally, and a warning that Australia could be 'the first sacrifice' should a US-China war break out (Wang Yiwei cited in Greenback 2019; Shoebridge 2019). The visiting scholars sought to open a public debate in Australia over the relevance of ANZUS and to question if it was in Australia's national interests to remain in the alliance. Given one of the original motivations for the ANZUS treaty included Australian fears over potential threats posed by an

ascendant, non-democratic, and nuclear weaponised China, drawing attention to a potential future conflict between China and the United States underscores the *necessity* of ANZUS, rather than questions it. Moreover, Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy white paper identified ANZUS as being 'central to Australia's approach to the Indo-Pacific' and that 'Australia's national interests' are best served by supporting the United States (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2017, p. 4, 80). The official rhetoric presented by the visiting scholars was also contradictory to Beijing's claims that it does not interfere in the domestic affairs of other states due to the attention given to the ANZUS alliance, which is a domestic matter for Australia. As a result, the visiting scholars failed in their attempt at power conversion because Beijing's propaganda simply did not cut through. Instead, their commentary while in Australia amplified the stark differences between Australian democracy and Chinese authoritarianism both in Canberra and to the wider Australian public.

The visiting scholars also accused Australia of pioneering 'a global anti-China campaign'; they castigated the Scott Morrison government for 'adopting' Trump's policies towards China; and they claimed Australian concerns over foreign interference by Beijing were 'groundless allegations' (Chen Hong cited in Bagshaw & Harris 2019). However, the visit was highly significant because Beijing had been unsettled, and it sent a group of scholars to Australia to try to convince Australians that 'China is the[ir] future'. Nonetheless, the messaging by the selected hawkish scholars lacked credibility because their threats and rebukes meant they were viewed as Party mouthpieces, not credible brokers, sent to deliver Beijing's propaganda and threats. This event also reflected Beijing's gross misunderstanding of Canberra and the Australian public. While Beijing may have believed it could menace Australia into compliance, this visit, and the economic coercion that followed it, empowered Australia to finally re-evaluate both its political *and* economic relationship with China.

Canberra's 'clear eyed and realistic stance on the CCP's interference activities' have since been justified by Beijing's reactive foreign relations (Brady 2022). Other states have also felt Beijing's freeze. Lithuania has experienced economic coercion from Beijing due to its support for Taiwan. The foreign ministers of both Australia and Lithuania met in Canberra, and during his visit the Lithuanian foreign minister stated, 'For quite a while, Australia was one of the main examples when China was using economy and trade as a political instrument, or one might say even as a political weapon. Now Lithuania joins this exclusive club' (cited in Dziedzic & Doran 2022). A *Global Times* article, responding to the meeting, ridiculed Lithuania for seeking support from Australia and castigated both Australia and Lithuania as 'hav[ing] already sacrificed their countries' ties with China to serve as "pawns or barking dogs" to offend the country with the biggest, most dynamic and irreplaceable market in the world' (Yang & Xu 2022). The *Global Times* interviewed Chen Hong, the director of the Australian Studies Centre at the East China Normal University, for the article. When referring to the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad), a source of immense anxiety for Beijing, Chen stated, 'Australia is the most radical and ignorant one in the Quad, so it wants to draw others into its pointless

and hopeless fight with China, to make every one act as stupidly as it does' (Chen Hong cited in Yang & Xu 2022).[14] Statements like these do nothing to repair relations, and they reflect a reactive approach to foreign relations that is illuminating, self-limiting, and counter-productive to CIR.

Responding to sharp power: The Australian experience

Responses to sharp power require commitment to democracy, and democratic states must avoid the temptation to use foreign interference as an excuse for authoritarian-style power to enter their democratic system. This has become more acute due to Covid-19 and the authoritarian creep witnessed in many democratic states globally, who imported the Chinese pandemic control methods of lockdowns, mandates, and tracing applications that significantly curtailed freedom of movement, assembly, privacy, and personal health decisions and negatively affected education, employment, business, and economic security (Baldino 2020; Munro 2020). Democratic declines render strategies to counter sharp power ineffective, weakening both the state and its democratic ideals; hence states must ensure they are advocates for democracy both inside and outside of their own state. They also need to support the continuation of a free and independent media, electoral integrity, the important role of regulatory bodies, and free speech and association (Brady 2017). Hence, to be successful against sharp power, democratic states must renew and bolster their commitment to democracy domestically and promote democracy abroad (Walker 2016).

The Australian response to CCP interference demonstrated the strengths of the democratic system and how democracies can counter sharp power. With increasing evidence of China's sharp power in Australia, in June 2018 the Turnbull government oversaw the successful passage through parliament of the National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act.[15] This resulted in an amendment of The Criminal Code Act (1995), and when combined, the new legislation covered the range of espionage offences possible in the 21st century and introduced new foreign interference laws and tighter protocols for security clearances (Department of Defence 2018). Partly modelled on the US Foreign Agents Registration Act, one component, The Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme, has meant greater openness and transparency in registering the identities and activities of those acting on behalf of foreign states and actors (Munro 2018). These legislative developments were soon followed by the banning of Huawei and ZTE from Australia's 5G network. In a speech identifying the vitally important characteristics undergirding Australian political culture, Australia's then prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, identified Australia's 'rejection of covert, coercive or corrupting behaviour'. He went on to state that Australia's counter-foreign-interference strategy 'is built upon the four pillars of sunlight, enforcement, deterrence and capability' (cited in Medcalf 2018). Australia was setting the ground rules for engagement with other states, particularly those with whom it had asymmetrical power differences, like China.

Prime Minister Turnbull's decision was taken in lock-step with the Gillard Labor government's 2012 decision to ban Huawei from participating in Australia's national broadband network (NBN). Prime Minister Julia Gillard made the decision

to ban Huawei from the NBN because it was a 'high risk vendor' (Cave 2019). This decision highlighted concerns over trust, transparency, and risk, identifying 'backdoors' in Huawei's technology that could lead to access points affecting Australian data integrity and the confidentiality of information. These issues remain critical concerns for the Australian government, and there is continued bipartisanship on this issue. They also meant that not only was banning Huawei from Australia's critical infrastructure projects the right decision, but it also 'was the only possible decision' for the Australian government (Cave 2019).

In its annual overview of China's foreign relations across 2017, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded 'the Australian side made some erroneous remarks and moves related to China' (Department of Policy Planning 2018, p. 84). One year later, the annual review again claimed Australia was in the wrong:

> In 2018, China and Australia continued to engage in communication and cooperation . . . to Australia's wrong remarks and actions concerning China, China responded resolutely and lodged strong representations.
>
> (Department of Policy Planning 2019, pp. 82–83)

Later, in November 2020, the Chinese Embassy in Canberra presented the Australian government with a dossier of complaints against Australia, known as 'the 14 grievances' (see also Ping, this volume, Chapter 2). Most of the grievances were protests by Beijing over Canberra's efforts to limit foreign interference inside of Australia. Hence, they were domestic matters for Australia and were centred upon Australian sovereignty and national interests. This whole episode was puzzling to Australia's former ambassador to Beijing, Frances Adamson, who stated,

> No Australian government, no democratically elected government anywhere in the world, could say that those things weren't important . . . I couldn't understand why they did it. And I don't know that they really understood themselves exactly what they were doing with that list, I think it's played very negatively for them.
>
> (cited in Hurst 2021)

To make matters worse for Beijing, the Chinese embassy spokesperson, in a highly emotional and reactive manner, declared, 'China is angry. If you make China the enemy, China will be the enemy' (Jennings 2022, p. v). Hence, Beijing's characterisation of Australia's defence of its national interests as 'wrong remarks and actions', and its attempts at domestic interference highlighted a lack of self-reflection by Beijing. Due to the rise of sharp power globally, Australia has increased its defences against foreign interference from *all* states, not just China. Canberra has also indicated that attempts at influencing the CAMPP sectors in Australia will not be ignored; instead they will be 'acknowledged and confronted' regardless of which state is attempting interference (Fitzgerald 2019, p. 7).

Beijing's actions towards Australia led to accelerated progress on the Quad, forging closer links between India, Japan, Australia, and the United States, thereby

increasing middle power diplomacy within the region (Varano 2021). The Quad foreign ministers have reinforced their support for 'ASEAN unity and centrality, and the ASEAN-led architecture' within the region and expressed their continued commitment and participation in multilateral regional organisations to temper any fears over their grouping (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2022). They reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based international order and in countering regional threats, furthering clean energy, and promoting responsible state behaviour (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2022).

Beijing's coercive diplomacy against Australia also drove Canberra to pursue nuclear-powered submarines. Significantly, in 2016, Australia declined nuclear-powered submarines when negotiating its submarine deal with France. It changed this decision just four years later in response to Beijing's growing regional aggression, militarisation of the South China Sea, its increasing threats towards Taiwan, and its efforts at coercive diplomacy. Canberra's desire for nuclear-powered submarines saw Australia walk away from its deal with Paris to forge the AUKUS partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which will provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines and greater defence security and deterrence strategy (see also Ping, this volume, Chapter 2). According to Michael Shoebridge, the central goal of AUKUS is 'shifting the military balance in the Indo-Pacific away from China to raise the cost to Beijing of using military power and intimidation to achieve its ends' (2021, p. 2). Moreover, AUKUS sits alongside the growing Quad grouping, seeking to further strengthen deterrence efforts across the region. If Beijing expected massive things from its economic coercion, it received them, but they were perhaps quite different from what Beijing had anticipated. Considering these events, Beijing should be reflecting on how CIR—undergirded by more assertive and aggressive public diplomacy—are perceived by other states. Interference, economic coercion and threats by visiting scholars are not conducive to friendly bilateral relations, nor are they likely to entice sovereign states like Australia to Beijing's 'side'.

Conclusion

The political developments of 2018 in the Australia-China relationship reflected Australia's awakening to the problems of sharp power and the need to be vigilant in defending Australian democracy and sovereignty. They also provided salient examples of the penetrative dynamics of sharp power disguised as soft power. However, this is an ongoing process. In 2019, Turnbull reflected on his actions as prime minister and the government's decision to ban Huawei and ZTE. He identified that his decision was based on Australian hedging against future threats. He stated, '[c]apability takes a long time to put in place. Intent can change in a heartbeat, so, you have got to hedge and take into account the risk that intent can change in the years ahead' (cited in Choudhury 2019). Rather than being an attack on China, Canberra's actions were intended to signal to Beijing, and other states, 'the terms of healthy and sustainable engagement' with Australia so that the bilateral relationship could be grounded in mutual respect and trust (Medcalf 2018, p. 9).

Most significantly, Turnbull's stand demonstrated that democracies are not powerless in the face of sharp power penetration. In short, Turnbull, Morrison, and Gillard before them, have all deployed the 'magic weapons' democracies possess. These achievements are powerful legacies for those prime ministers.

Sharp power is a threat to democratic states and institutions. It also threatens the stability of the global order and is deployed by authoritarian states seeking to undermine and de-legitimise democracies globally. States must recognise and acknowledge sharp power penetration and take steps to protect their sovereignty, national interests, and democratic ideals. Moreover, Beijing's public diplomacy demonstrates that Beijing still does not understand that what may work inside of China does not necessarily work outside of China. This difference will become more pronounced as more states identify and respond to Beijing's sharp power. Following Covid-19, and the emergence of 'wolf warrior' diplomacy, CIR have attracted more scrutiny. The dragon may have awoken, but breathing fire repels, rather than entices.

Notes

1 Wolf warrior diplomacy refers to highly nationalistic and aggressive posturing by Chinese diplomats, pitting China against other states, ridiculing or demeaning other states, and often levelling false accusations or threats against other states. See: Brandt, J & Shafer, B 2020, 'How China's "wolf warrior" diplomats use and abuse Twitter', *Tech Stream*, 28 October, viewed 16 February 2022, (https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/how-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomats-use-and-abuse-twitter/).
2 See: *Xinhua* 2007, 'Full text of Hu Jintao's Report at 17th Party Congress', *China Daily*, 24 October, viewed 11 September 2019, (http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007–10/24/content_6204564.htm).
3 Hosting diplomacy refers to the hosting of regional and international fora.
4 See: Hayes, Anna forthcoming, 'Dealing with dissent', in B Hillman & Ji Fengyuan (eds), *The communist party of China: The resilience of one-party rule in post-communist China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
5 Following the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989, China's school curriculum embraced the 'national humiliation' discourse, which levelled the blame for China's limited power in a global sense on foreign states, mostly Western, but also Japan. This strategy sought to distract younger generations away from the excesses of the CCP toward foreign aggressors (Mark 2012; McGregor 2012). For a detailed discussion of the century of humiliation, see Wang, Zheng 2012, *Never forget national humiliation: Historical memory in Chinese politics and foreign relations*, Columbia University Press, New York.
6 Chinese investment in African states has led to both positive and negative outcomes, see: Alves, Ana Cristina 2013, 'China's "win-win" cooperation: Unpacking the impact of infrastructure-for-resources deals in Africa', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 207–226, DOI:10.1080/10220461.2013.811337 and Gill, Bates & Huang, Yanzhong 2006, 'Sources and limits of Chinese "soft power"', *Survival*, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 17–36, DOI:10.1080/0039633060076537
7 See: Johnston, Alastair Iain 1995, *Cultural realism: Strategic culture and grand strategy in Chinese history*, Princeton University Press, Princeton. It should also be noted that during the Cultural Revolution Beijing failed to uphold accepted international diplomatic protocols and began to engage in hostage diplomacy. One key example of this was when Beijing's 'proletarian diplomacy' led to angry mobs attacking the Indian, Indonesian, and Burmese embassies (Three Smashes) and setting fire to the Office of the British Chargé d'Affaires (One Burn) in June 1967. China's practice of hostage

diplomacy began shortly thereafter when 23 hostages (diplomats and their wives) were taken from the British office. The hostages were charged with espionage in defiance of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. According to Mark, the detention of the hostages was deliberate CCP strategy because they were later used by 'Communist authorities as bargaining chips for the release of HK left-wing prisoners relating to the 1967 riots' (2012, p. 68). Chinese hostage diplomacy has re-emerged under Beijing's sharp power approach to public diplomacy. The arbitrary detention of Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor and Australians Yang Hengjun and Cheng Lei are recent examples of the PRC's hostage diplomacy. Kovrig and Spavor have since been released and repatriated to Canada, after spending 1019 days in detention. Their release came after charges were dropped against Meng Wanzhou, strong evidence that they were taken hostage as bargaining chips in that episode. Cheng Lei was released and returned to Australia after 1155 days in detention. However, Yang Hengjun remains a hostage of the Chinese state, with friends and family of Yang raising serious concerns over his failing health. See: Medcalf, Rory 2019, 'Arrest of Yang Hengjun drags Australia into the PRC's hostage diplomacy', *Australian Financial Review*, 24 January, viewed 12 September 2019, (https://www.afr.com/opinion/arrest-of-yang-hengjun-drags-australia-into-chinas-hostage-diplomacy-20190124-h1af6x) and Kuo, Lily 2019, '"Hostage" diplomacy: Canadian's death sentence in China sets worrying tone, experts say', *The Guardian*, 15 January, viewed 12 September 2019, (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/15/hostage-diplomacy-canadians-death-sentence-in-china-sets-worrying-tone-experts-say); Aiello, Rachel 2021, 'China releases detained Canadians Kovrig, Spavor after extradition against Meng Wanzhou dropped', *CTV News*, 24 September, viewed 24 January 2022, (https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/china-releases-detained-canadians-kovrig-spavor-after-extradition-against-meng-wanzhou-dropped−1.5598969); Roberts, Georgia 2023, 'Australian journalists Cheng Lei released from Chinese prison, arrives in Melbourne', *ABC News*, 11 October, viewed 12 October 2023, (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-11/australian-journalist-cheng-lei-released-china-arrives-melbourne/102964772); and Greene, Andrew 2022, 'Fears Australian writer Yang Hengjun could die in Chinese prison as medical condition worsens', *ABC News*, 17 January, viewed 24 January 2022, (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-01-18/yang-hengjun-could-die-in-chinese-prison-supporters-fear/100762112).

8 See: *Xinhua* 2021, 'Full text: Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on the major achievements and historical experience of the party over the past century', *State Council of the People's Republic of China*, 16 November, viewed 14 February 2022, (https://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latestreleases/202111/16/content_WS6193a935c6d0df57f98e50b0.html).

9 At time of publication, 2019 was the last year for rankings in the Soft Power 30 index.

10 For analyses of Beijing's attempts to interfere in Australian domestic affairs see: Hamilton, Clive 2018, *Silent invasion: China's influence in Australia*, Hardie Grant Books, Richmond; and Medcalf, Rory 2018, 'Australia and China: Understanding the reality check', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, pp. 1–10, DOI:10.1080/10357718.2018.1538315

11 See for example: McKenzie, Nick 2017, 'Power and influence: The hard edge of China's soft power', *ABC Four Corners*, 5 June, viewed 13 September 2019, (https://www.abc.net.au/4corners/power-and-influence-promo/8579844) and McNeill, Sophie 2019, 'Tell the world', *ABC Four Corners*, 26 August, viewed 13 September 2019, (https://www.abc.net.au/4corners/xinjiang-tell-the-world/11350450) and numerous other reports on the ABC Online news site: https://www.abc.net.au/news/.

12 See: Grattan, M 2019, 'Asking questions about Gladys Liu and her past is not racist', *ABC News*, 13 September, viewed 14 September 2019, (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-13/asking-questions-about-gladys-liu-is-not-racist/11508036) and Manuel, Ryan 2019, 'The United Front Work Department and how it plays a part in the Gladys Liu

controversy', *ABC News*, 15 September, viewed 16 September 2019, (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-15/gladys-lui-united-front-work-department/11511028).

13 See: Birtles, Bill, Viney, Steven & Mo, Xiaoning 2017, 'China slams Malcolm Turnbull's "hysterical, racist paranoia"; anniversary unlikely to mend relations', *ABC News*, 12 December, viewed 30 October 2019, (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-12/china-slams-australia-hysterical-racist-paranoia/9248950; Greene, Andrew 2017, 'China blasts Australia over Turnbull Government's foreign interference laws', *ABC News,* 6 December, viewed 30 October 2019, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-06/china-blasts-australia-over-foreign-interference-laws/9232916; Sheridan, Greg 2019, 'It's hardly racist of us to hold China to account', *The Australian,* 29 August, viewed 30 October 2019, https://www.theaustralian.com.au/commentary/its-hardly-racist-of-us-to-hold-china-to-account/news-story/0e3583b3927d7b3392979b4303541057; and Tillett, Andrew 2019, 'China trying to portray criticism of government as racism, says report', *Australian Financial Review,* 2 October, viewed 30 October 2019, https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/china-trying-to-portray-criticism-of-government-as-racism-says-report-20191001-p52wgb).

14 The Quad is an example of mini-lateralism within the Indo-Pacific region that seeks the continuation of a free and open Indo-Pacific and the fostering of cooperation and support among member states and with wider regional states, particularly in times of crisis. See: Hayes, Anna 2020, 'The quad: A perennial element in Australia's strategic outlook', *East Asia Security Centre*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–10.

15 See: Parliament of Australia 2018, 'National security legislation amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) bill 2018', viewed 13 September 2019, (https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bId=r6022).

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11 China's international relations theory and India

Jagannath Panda and Eerishika Pankaj

Introduction

China—amongst other Asian powers—has over the years sought to build a new variation of international relations theory with nationalist characteristics. Chinese academics have claimed that conventional international relations theory (IRT) needs to include traditional Chinese concepts (Ho 2019). This sentiment has been echoed by other Asian states who also seek to identify ways of combating 'ethnocentrism' in a West-led IR study framework.[1] It is this 'Chinese way' of IRT, rooted in Marxism–Leninism, that shapes Beijing's approach towards the world and specifically India.

China's strategic interests, historical context, economic considerations, and geostrategic competition all contribute to its policies and interactions with India. Understanding these factors is crucial for comprehending China's approach towards India and its implications for the broader region. Furthermore, for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), domestic stability in the Western regions has also determined Beijing's outreach to South Asia, and the same has evolved from leader to leader while largely maintaining a consistent central tone. The fact that South Asian countries share borders with China's western regions has always shaped their strategic relevance to Beijing's neighbourhood policy. Regions like Tibet and Xinjiang have large minority populations and have until recently witnessed separatist and terrorist incidents. The anti-government movements in these regions have threatened Beijing's control over them, and the fact that India houses the exiled Tibetan Government and the Dalai Lama as political asylees remains a major security concern. Furthermore, the conception of Afghanistan and Pakistan along with Central Asia as regions contributing to the instability of China's western regions has expanded the security focus of China's foreign policy.

China's foreign policy approach is also driven by IRT-led balance of power considerations. Chinese analysts have regarded South Asia policy as one dimensional (Kumar 2019). China-Pakistan relations were developed quickly after 1955 and were hastened by the 1962 war with India (Khalid 2021). At this time China's South Asia policy was mainly driven by its all-weather friendship with Pakistan, which was aimed at tilting the balance of power in its favour. Moreover, Pakistan was a frontline state against the Soviets in Afghanistan and a mediator in Kissinger's visit

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to China. China's South Asia policy continues to retain this approach to counter India's influence in the region while developing its own influence and interests. Herein, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has greatly expanded China's engagement with South Asia and signalled Beijing's intention to channel trade and investment into the region for its foreign policy objectives (Miller 2022). However, the BRI has faced numerous challenges in the region, and growing unpopularity of the initiative threatens its long-term future (Clark 2023).

China's approach towards India and the wider region has been a complex interplay of geopolitical, historical, and ideological factors, all shaped by the evolution of Chinese IRT (CIRT) which in turn was driven by internal debates and focuses. Intricately understanding CIRT, the theoretical basis of its approach, and the evolution of its policies towards India and South Asia requires an analysis of different Chinese leaders' perspectives, including Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping, alongside theories that have long-defined Chinese characteristics, like Marxism–Leninism and mercantilism. This chapter will look at the evolution of China's relationship with IRT, assess how various leadership styles have implemented such theories in their dealings with India, and analyze the ideological approaches shaping theoretical discourse in China on India.

Evolution of China's relationship with IRT

In 1956, Mao Zedong—founder of the People's Republic of China—wrote, 'In our international relations, we Chinese people should get rid of great-power chauvinism resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely' (1967, pp. 330–331). There are few beliefs in China that have remained as resolute across political generations and factions, from Mao then to Xi Jinping now, as this proclamation. Theoretically, the concept of IRT saw growth in China post and during the opening-up period, spearheaded by Deng Xiaoping. Hence, in two distinct senses, China's estrangement from global society since 1949 is a major factor that created a completely new discursive environment for IR in the country. Prior to the late 1970s, there was no formal interaction between Chinese and Western IR researchers (Zhang 2000). Before then, members of the two groups did not exchange the 'production' or 'consumption' of theories, ideas, concepts, techniques, or data. Second, it was after the mid-1970s, when 'Revolutionary China' was attempting to reconcile with the Chinese revolution, that IR as an academic field in China became established (Zhang 2019).

In this regard, as per leading Chinese political scientist Qin Yaqing, certain specific topics have shaped the growth of IRT in China. For instance, it was in the late 1970s that the topic of China's external openness was debated upon. The debate between orthodox and reformist professors began with the question of whether the globe was marked by 'peace and development' or 'war and revolution', and it then shifted to concerns by traditional researchers about China and the ascent of Chinese realists (Qin 2011). It led to a broad acceptance of the realist thesis that China was a typical nation-state with legitimate national interests, as well as the reformist claim that peace and progress defined the time.

Another CIRT trend—as per both Qin Yaqing and Li Shaojun, a Chinese expert focusing on international politics—was the introduction of liberal IR classics to China in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Li 2020). Chinese People's Public Security University Press first published the Series of International Politics Masterworks in Chinese in the early 1990s. Books like Hans J Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Kenneth N Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* and Robert O Keohane's and Joseph S Nye's *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* are just a few of the titles in this collection. Then, several liberal books, like James N Rosenau's *Governance without Government*, were translated and published in China between 2001 and 2002 (Qin 2011).

Such publications were followed by a sharp rise in research outputs from Chinese IR academics.[2] During this period, China's peaceful rise became the focal point of discussion, wherein assessing it within the realms of evolutionary or revolutionary revisionism and questions of its expansionist tendencies began being raised frequently in scholarly discourse on China in the West (Fravel 2010; Jalil 2019). Concurrently, it was during this same period, at the turn of the century, when China was more exposed to the three main American ideologies of constructivism, liberalism, and realism (Feng et al. 2019). As a result, the discussion became more of a tripartite argument but remained rooted in Western concepts, with China not building its own IRT until much later (Kim 2016; Win 2007). However, calls for rethinking of IRT in the West itself was in many ways influenced and accentuated by the rise and re-emergence of China as a major power, showing once again the interconnected dichotomy of relations between the East and the West (Pan & Kavalski 2022; Wang 2022).

Furthermore, in the early 1990s, focus on how China could better achieve its national interests also considerably grew. Chinese liberals and realists faced off when the latter suggested using international institutions as an alternative to the former, which placed more emphasis on national authority. Taiwan and Tibet were two unresolved security challenges China faced, and they were perceived in part as attempts by a hegemonic United States to keep China from becoming a significant player in the area and eventually in global affairs (Ringmar 2019). This period marked a time when the equation of India-China relations, especially with regards to the border and Tibet, was drastically changing. Post the 1962 war, India and China ties had to find a new stride, and implementation of realism, liberalism, and constructivism in better understanding the relationship was used (Chong 2016).

After these facets of evolution, CIRT, it can be argued, has greatly shaped the state and its people's approach to India and South Asia. China's foreign policy approach to South Asia and India is driven by several converging interests and conceptions of the 'region'. Some Chinese scholars define and classify the 'regions' in China's periphery in geographic terms, which has given way to the contemporary conception of China's neighbourhood. Scholars like Wang Yiwei and Zhang Yunling have maintained that immediate regions around China's borders are significant, arguing that China suffered historically when its neighbouring regions were unstable (Zhang 2010). This historical conception of the neighbourhood as significant for domestic stability and prosperity has been emphasized in the era of

China's rise. Scholars like Hailin (2008) argue that South Asia has mainly been important to China for security reasons. The balance of power in the region, its political volatility, presence of nuclear-weapon states, and regional hegemons have driven its foreign policy approach to the region.

Over the last two decades, research in China and outside on India-China has merged CIRT, Western IRT (WIRT), and current affairs to gain a deeper insight about the black-box of Chinese politics and perceptions. For instance, studies show that most Chinese individuals feel superior to and confident in themselves when compared to Indians (Mu 2023). Hence, even as the notion of 'Chindia' once gained prominence in the early 2010s, the present Chinese approach to India, if not all South Asia, has been largely about gaining influence at Delhi's expense (Shen 2011).

Chinese leadership, IRT, and India

Beijing's approach towards South Asia is influenced by its adherence to Marxism–Leninism, a guiding ideology that emphasizes class struggle, international proletarian solidarity, and anti-imperialism. Most clearly, this ideological framework shaped China's perception of India as a former colony and encourages it to support anti-imperialist movements in the region. Additionally, China's emphasis on state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs further impacts the leadership perceptions of state-relations with India. The basis of China's policies towards the region has evolved over time under different Chinese leaders, with each bringing their own perspectives and priorities (Ma 2021; Marquis 2022).

De-politicization of CIRT only began in post-Mao China (Mena 2023). During Mao's era, China's policies towards India were characterized by a mix of ideological solidarity and strategic competition (Liu 2015). While supporting communist movements in India, China also sought to assert its dominance in the region and establish itself as a global leader of the revolutionary cause. Mao Zedong's policies towards India and South Asia were influenced by his adherence to Marxism–Leninism and his revolutionary ideology, which saw fruition in the form of the Maoist insurgency in India (Ministry of Home Affairs, India n.d.). Mao saw India as a fellow colonized nation and believed in supporting anti-imperialist movements in the region. However, Mao's policies also reflected strategic competition with India for regional influence. The Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962 exemplifies the tensions during this period.[3]

Theoretically, it was during the late Deng period during the reform and opening-up, as analyzed in the previous section, that two significant phases in CIRT equation emerged. The first phase was marked by the introduction of WIRT into China, beginning in 1978. The second phase occurred in the 1990s, characterized by increasing calls for a distinct CIRT. Notably, the 1987 'Shanghai Seminar on the Theory of International Relations' (上海全国国关理论研讨会 *Shànghǎi quánguó guó guān lǐlùn yántǎo huì*) was China's first conference dedicated to IR theory. In 1991 an 'International Studies in China' conference was organized by the School of International Studies, Peking University; in 1993 a conference entitled 'Discussing Guidelines of International Issues' was held in Yantai, Shandong; in 1994 an

international conference on 'Building an IR Theory with Chinese Characteristics' was held in Beijing wherein the goal of building such a theory was described as complementing Deng Xiaoping's 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' theory; and in 1995 a 'Contemporary IR Theory and Practice' conference took place in Shanghai (Deng 1998; Song 2001; Wang 2013). Deng Xiaoping's leadership also marked a significant shift in China's policies towards India. Under Deng's pragmatism, China prioritized economic development, opening-up to the world, and resolving border disputes through peaceful means. This period witnessed the signing of the 1988 India-China Peace and Tranquility Treaty, which aimed to maintain peace along the disputed border alongside a 'package deal' to settle the border, which never saw fruition (Gokhale 2022). Essentially, the policy of 'reform and opening-up' brought about economic reforms, attracting foreign investment and promoting trade while Deng prioritized resolving border disputes through peaceful means emphasizing economic cooperation over ideological considerations.

Post-Deng foreign politics of China appeared to be shaped by two recognitions; a stronger base of IRT in China (both Western and a developing indigenous one) and a belief that the era of paramount leaders was largely over (Roy 1997). Owing to similarities in governance, the leadership of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao can be studied together. Jiang's and Hu's leadership continued Deng's pragmatic approach, focusing on economic growth, regional stability, and enhancing China's international standing. Bilateral trade between China and India expanded significantly during this period, leading to increased economic interdependence. The emphasis was on enhancing regional stability and developing cooperative frameworks, such as the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001, also marking China's first major South (and Central) Asia focused multilateral institution creation (Ministry of External Affairs, India 2022). Economic considerations and maintaining harmonious relations were central to China's policies towards India and South Asia. Innovation mercantilism was in play during these leadership eras of China, wherein it also marked the start of Chinese companies moving outside of China and becoming multinational (Atkinson 2021). This was accompanied with Chinese foreign policy becoming more aggressive, as 'hide and bide' was slowly discontinued (Doshi 2019).[4]

Presently, Xi Jinping's leadership has propounded a more assertive and confident China, with a focus on achieving the 'Chinese Dream' of national rejuvenation (Rudd 2022). Xi's policies emphasize a strong central leadership, assertive diplomacy, and the pursuit of strategic interests. Xi's foreign policy approach is characterized by a combination of economic engagement, strategic competition, and efforts to shape the regional and global order. While economic factors remain important, Xi Jinping's policies also emphasize China's security interests and the pursuit of its strategic objectives. Two examples of Xi Jinping's commitment to a 'revolutionary' concept of international relations are seen in his use of the concept of a Chinese 'civilization' and the BRI (Pettman 2019). For the former, he deftly uses 'civilization' without fully identifying what traditional values he is referencing, as civilization is a unit of analysis above and beyond that of the state. Regarding the BRI, the Chinese concept of 'neo-tributary' relationships comes in since

it suggests that more might be involved here than meets the (Euro-American) eye as seen via debt-trap conclusions over the BRI that have surfaced in recent years. Furthermore, under Xi, China has adopted a more assertive posture in South Asia and increased its influence in the region, which has implications for its approach towards India especially along the border (Kumar 2019; Smith 2018). The Doklam clash of 2017 and Galwan conflict of 2022 are the two most significant armed engagements between the two bordering Asian powers along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since the time of Mao. Galwan, more specifically and recently, has greatly downgraded trust and confidence between the two countries, with relations being at an all-time low.

Importantly, under Xi, the role of the CCP and CIRT has become somewhat clearer. An understanding of China's current thought on foreign relations and international relations may be gained through the Xi Jinping Doctrine, which is seen as the body of thought reflected in Xi's speeches, writings, and commands. This doctrine's overarching frame of reference is 'the mission of the Chinese Communist Party'. Xi and the party use three deeper cognitive frameworks to further this aim (Zhang 2019). The goal of the first of them, 'national rejuvenation', is to increase China's income and influence (Stevens 2021). By seeking to return China's international standing to an as-yet-undefined proper place, the 'national rejuvenation' frame of reference challenges the West's long-standing supremacy that dates to the beginning of the modern period. The 'global community' and 'Chinese contribution' are deeper frames of reference, which are the second and third, respectively, and seek to promote shared interests and advance global governance. Thus, the difficulties China has in its foreign policy in the twenty-first century are brought into stark focus by the Xi Jinping Doctrine. The 'Chinese contribution' frame of reference, while encouraging in its emphasis on international peace and development, is unsettling, especially for Western elites, because of its potential to morph into the promotion of a Chinese model of international relations. The 'global community' frame of reference, by promoting mutually beneficial cooperation, will help smooth China's international engagement.

Ideological approaches to India: Between mercantilism and Marxism–Leninism

While economic factors play a significant role in China's approach towards India, it is important to note that China's approach cannot be solely attributed to mercantilism (Verma 2016). China's economic policies towards India are driven by a combination of factors, including its quest for resources, market access, and strategic influence. China's BRI, for instance, aims to enhance connectivity and economic cooperation with countries in the region, including India, while also serving China's strategic and geopolitical interests.

It would be remiss not to note that when the BRI was originally ideated it had India's participation in the form of the now discarded Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor (Aneja 2019). The project, and any semblance of India's approval of BRI, was quickly disavowed post the release without consultation with Delhi of

the plans for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK). Such a change in approach by Xi Jinping made it clear to India that the then newly signed Developmental Partnership between India-China in 2014 was never to see its true potential as threats to national security and sovereignty immediately reclaimed themselves as core tenets of Beijing-Delhi ties (Ministry of External Affairs, India 2014).

Marxism–Leninism and mercantilism have both influenced China's approach to India and South Asia, albeit to different extents (Cheng 2018; Misra 1998). While Marxism–Leninism provides a theoretical framework and historical perspective, mercantilism drives China's economic interests and strategic considerations in the region. Marxism–Leninism has historically played a significant role in shaping China's foreign policy, including its approach to India and South Asia. The core principles of Marxism–Leninism, such as anti-imperialism, class struggle, and international proletarian solidarity, have influenced China's perception of India as a former colony and its support for anti-imperialist movements in the region.

This ideological framework fosters a sense of solidarity with post-colonial nations and encourages China to align itself with causes that challenge Western imperialism. For instance, China, under the influence of Marxism–Leninism, has historically supported various anti-imperialist movements in South Asia, including in India. Mao Zedong's support for Naxalite movements in India during the 1960s and 1970s, for example, can be seen as a reflection of China's adherence to Marxist–Leninist principles and its desire to foster revolutionary movements in post-colonial countries. Articles can be found in Chinese newspapers that celebrate rebellions in India, like the peasant uprising in Darjeeling during 1967 with such excerpts often providing militants leadership in leading Naxalbari movements (Marxists Internet Archive 2006).

Meanwhile, mercantilism—an economic doctrine that emphasizes national wealth and protectionist policies—plays a significant role in China's approach towards India and South Asia. China's economic interests and its quest for resources, market access, and strategic influence in the region are the driving forces behind its mercantilist policies (Subramanian 2011a). China has been pursuing a mercantilist growth plan for over 10 years, which involves keeping the value of the currency deliberately low to encourage exports and economic expansion (Subramanian 2011b). China's decision to keep the economy relatively closed to international financial flows has been crucial to this approach. If it had not done so, international money seeking China's strong returns would have pushed the country's currency rate higher and hurt its capacity to export.

China's economic engagement with India is driven by these mercantilist interests. China seeks access to regional markets and resources, and South Asia represents an important market for its goods and services. As seen with the BRI, China's mercantilist approach also has strategic dimensions, which India is wary of (Yuan 2019). Economic engagement enables China to increase its regional influence and secure access to strategic resources and sea lanes. China's investments in ports, infrastructure, and energy projects in South Asia are not only economically motivated but also serve its long-term strategic interests by extending its reach and

influence in the region, as seen with CPEC in Pakistan, the Trans-Himalayan Economic Corridor (THEC) in Nepal, and the broader Maritime Silk Road (MSR), among others (Anwar 2020). China has also been accused of using its economic power to pressure other countries into making favourable trade deals. For example, China has been accused of dumping cheap goods in India, which has hurt Indian businesses.

Chinese scholars attempting to define CIRT have frequently argued that China's approach to foreign policy is shaped by its Marxist–Leninist ideology (Ch'o-Hsüan & Ts'ao 1970). For instance, they point to the fact that China has supported communist and socialist movements in South Asia and that it has promoted economic cooperation and trade with the aim of achieving economic independence. They also argue that China's approach to India and South Asia is based on the belief that the region is a strategic area for China's rise as a global power. Similarly, scholarship in China has frequently emphasized that China's mercantilist approach is a pragmatic response to economic opportunities in India (Liang 2007). They argue that economic cooperation between China and India can contribute to both countries' development, foster stability, and reduce potential conflicts (Zhou 2014). They highlight the potential for win-win outcomes in trade, investment, and infrastructure development.

Nonetheless, in terms of specific ideologies, China's policies towards India and South Asia cannot be solely attributed to Marxism–Leninism or mercantilism. While Marxist–Leninist principles, such as anti-imperialism and solidarity with fellow former colonies, have influenced China's approach in the past, economic factors and geopolitical considerations also play significant roles. China's policies are driven by a combination of strategic interests, historical factors, economic considerations, and the pursuit of national rejuvenation under Xi Jinping's leadership. It is important to note that China's foreign policy approach is dynamic, and while certain ideological underpinnings and historical factors persist, policies are also influenced by contemporary circumstances and the changing priorities of Chinese leaders.

Rising powers paradox in 'Xi Jinping Thought' on India

China and India, as rising powers, face a paradox in their relationship. On the one hand, they compete for regional influence and resources, leading to occasional tensions and conflicts. On the other hand, they recognize the need for cooperation on global issues such as climate change, terrorism, and trade. This paradox creates a complex dynamic in their relationship, characterized by a mix of competition and cooperation. 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a new era', enshrined in the CCP's constitution, emphasizes the 'China Dream' and the pursuit of national rejuvenation.[5] To achieve this, Xi's approach towards India is multifaceted, combining economic engagement, strategic competition, and efforts to shape the regional and global order in China's favor. Xi's policies, such as the assertive stance in the LAC and the strengthening of China's military capabilities, have implications for India's security and the overall bilateral relationship.

Further building on earlier arguments presented on the same, it is important to note that Xi Jinping Thought, as enshrined in the CCP's constitution, represents the guiding principles of China's current leadership (Garrick & Bennett 2018). In the context of China's approach towards India, Xi Jinping Thought embodies a paradox that arises from the simultaneous cooperation and competition between rising powers. This paradox reflects the complexities of China's engagement with India, as both countries strive for regional and global influence, presenting both opportunities and challenges. The cooperative aspects offer avenues for economic collaboration and regional stability, enabling both countries to achieve shared prosperity. However, the competitive aspects, driven by strategic and geopolitical considerations, introduce complexities and potential areas of friction.

To navigate this paradox, it is crucial for China and India to engage in constructive dialogue and manage their differences through peaceful means. The concept of 'partnership in the new era' highlighted in Xi Jinping Thought calls for mutual respect, understanding, and accommodation of each other's concerns (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2022). Balancing cooperation and competition require both countries to foster trust, enhance people-to-people exchanges, and find common ground on regional and global issues of mutual interest. Ultimately, China's approach towards India and South Asia is shaped by a combination of strategic, historical, and ideological factors. Marxism–Leninism provides a theoretical basis for China's approach, emphasizing anti-imperialism, sovereignty, and non-interference. While economic considerations play a significant role, China's approach cannot be solely attributed to mercantilism. Understanding the nuances of China's policies towards India requires an examination of the perspectives of different Chinese leaders, including Mao, Deng, Jiang, Hu, and Xi Jinping.

Conclusion

The rising powers paradox adds complexity to China-India relations, while Xi Jinping Thought reflects a comprehensive approach that combines economic engagement, strategic competition, and efforts to shape the regional and global order. Xi Jinping's approach to India encompasses the rising powers paradox, reflecting the cooperative and competitive aspects of China's approach. The cooperative elements emphasize economic and regional cooperation, while the competitive aspects revolve around strategic and geopolitical considerations. Successfully managing this paradox requires China and India to strike a delicate balance, seeking mutually beneficial cooperation while managing areas of competition. By doing so, both countries can contribute to regional stability, economic growth, and the advancement of their respective national interests within the changing dynamics of the global order.

Moreover, the ideological and historical dimensions of China's approach towards India cannot be overlooked. Marxism–Leninism and the pursuit of national rejuvenation play crucial roles in shaping China's foreign policy. Xi Jinping's leadership emphasizes a return to China's perceived rightful place in the

global order, challenging Western dominance and promoting a multipolar world. This ideological drive is intertwined with pragmatic economic and strategic considerations, making China's approach multifaceted and dynamic. Understanding the nuances of China's policies towards India requires an examination of these diverse influences, including the perspectives of different Chinese leaders and the evolving geopolitical landscape.

CIRT provides a lens through which China's foreign policy towards India can be understood. It reflects China's strategic calculations, historical experiences, and ideological underpinnings. In conclusion, the intersection of CIRT and China-India relations offers a rich field of study that highlights the complexities and nuances of bilateral interactions. By engaging with CIRT, scholars and policymakers can gain deeper insights into China's strategic intentions and the underlying principles guiding its foreign policy. This understanding is crucial for navigating the challenges and opportunities in China-India relations, fostering a more informed and strategic approach to bilateral and regional dynamics. As both states continue to rise on the global stage, their ability to manage competition and enhance cooperation will be pivotal in shaping the future of Asia and beyond.

Notes

1 See: Acharya, Amitav 2000, 'Ethnocentrism and emancipatory IR theory', in S Arnold & J Marshall Bier (eds), *Displacing security*, Centre for International and Security Studies, York University, Toronto, pp. 1–18 and Jouenne, E 2020, 'Security for whom? The case for a decolonial IR', *Georgetown Security Review*, 1 August, viewed 4 June 2024, (https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2020/08/01/security-for-whom-the-case-for-a-decolonial-ir/).

2 See: Qin, Yaqing 2009, 'Development of international relations theory in China: Progress through debates', *International Studies*, vol. 46, nos. 1–2, pp. 185–201; Hwang, Yih-Jye 2021, 'Reappraising the Chinese school of international relations: A postcolonial perspective', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 47, no. 3, pp. 311–330; Lynch, Daniel 2009, 'Chinese thinking on the future of international relations: Realism as the *Ti*, rationalism as the *Yong*?', *The China Quarterly*, vol. 197, pp. 87–107; and Wang, Huang-jen 2013, *The rise of China and Chinese international relations scholarship*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland.

3 See: Panda, Jagannath 2012, 'The 1962 war: Will China speak about it?', *Manohar Parrikar Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses*, 16 October, viewed 4 June 2024, (https://idsa.in/idsacomments/The1962WarWillChinaspeakaboutit_jppanda_161012) and Ward, Jonathan 2016, 'China-India rivalry and the border war of 1962: PRC perspectives on the collapse of China-India relations, 1958–62', PhD thesis, University of Oxford, viewed 4 June 2024, (https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:ab5688bf-99d3–4ed6-a6e6-dbfcca71c350/download_file?file_format=application%2Fpdf&safe_filename=JWard%2BComplete%2Bthesis.pdf&type_of_work=Thesis).

4 The strategy of 'hide its capabilities and bide its time'—韬光养晦 *tāoguāng yǎnghuì*—was articulated by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1990s. It advocated for China to keep a low profile internationally while focusing on domestic development and strengthening its economic and military capabilities. The gradual abandonment of this strategy reflects a shift towards a more assertive and confident posture in international affairs, as China seeks to play a more prominent role on the global stage.

5 Hereafter referred to as Xi Jinping Thought.

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12 International relations theory in a post-great power world

Brett McCormick, Anna Hayes and Jonathan Ping

Introduction

The present Chinese community of international relations (IR) scholars and practitioners may be as well-versed in the full range of IR theory (IRT) as others. Certain theories and schools of thought have historically emerged from within the intellectual and practical milieu of one society or another, reflecting and responding to the particularities of that time and place. Such theories are generally not assigned nationalities, yet China has assumed a form with *Chinese characteristics*. In the PRC, the education system and *correct thought* directed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) radically restrict the general population's access to alternative systems of thought and access to information from elsewhere on the planet. One of the hallmarks of modern times is the globalization of knowledge, but not in China. While a mid-Qing Dynasty official may have been more confined by regionally limited systems of international affairs, contemporary Chinese officials are bound by the constraints they imagine and impose. Those outside of China are also constrained in their attempts to understand Chinese approaches by what is guessed or imagined to be the distinct Chinese-ness of stated or observed theory-based perspectives or practices.

There is nonetheless a steadily growing body of Chinese literature exploring and envisioning some dimensions of a distinct 'Chinese' system of IR theory. There is, likewise, a growing body of global literature imagining the same. To a certain degree, this great unanswered question—what is Chinese international relations theory (CIRT)?—potentially creates a wide-ranging and malleable intellectual space for Chinese scholars and practitioners to apply their craft and adapt to their rapidly changing circumstances. However, the overbearing Party restricts discussion and access. By contrast, strategy and policy debates in places like the United States are unrestricted and vibrant and yet often seem stifled and stale, struggling to keep pace with the present, let alone prepare for the future. The word 'sclerotic' appears with increasing frequency in critiques of Western IR literature.

However, the chapters of this volume expose this imagined fruitful intellectual space of nascent CIRT. Where well-established global actors like the United States retain a comfortable margin for error, the acuteness of China's daily struggles to expand into more broadly and deeply engaged networks of regional and global

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relations keep the immediate and near-term needs of practice and policy cemented at the center of any evolving IRT. Practice is being undertaken by a small elite communist leadership, and policy debates are either absent from the public or banned. It is by observing this emergence of CIRT from current practices and policies that this volume hopes to illuminate a more functional sense of a 'Chinese' model. Sadly, it seems that neither Chinese nor 'Western' IRT has much space for the imagination necessary to bridge the gap between near-term needs and predictable (but neglected) long-term challenges and planning. If anything, both are increasingly supporting strategies and policies that appear increasingly incongruent with long-term success. This is an enormous challenge for scholars and practitioners, who are responsible for guiding humanity in maintaining stable and peaceful international relations.

Long-term strategic planning for a confluence of profound changes

The modern system of nation-states, and its accompanying concepts and models of IR, was based on conditions of seemingly perpetually expanding populations, markets, and resources. Underlying the nature and organization of economic, political, and social systems are fundamentals like demographics, geography, and location-based identities/communities. In the remainder of the 21st century, a confluence of profound changes will occur in nearly every fundamental. With 'the old architecture buckling', the 'gradual evolution of human institutions' (and their guiding theories) may be insufficient to balance near-term priorities with long-term strategic planning (Ping 2024; Obama 2009; Kennedy 1963).

The United States remains committed to reinforcing a liberal world order. Without overtly challenging the general status quo, the PRC advocates revisionist models of great power relations. Neither are likely by the late-21st century. Contrary to this false 'Thucydides Trap,' the real rising power may be the 'global rest' who may demand an order beyond that of great power politics, much like how modern political theory arose from the industry and ambitions of the 18th century's middle classes transcending feudal aristocracies and their affiliated institutions.

Like generals preparing to fight the last war, what comparable mistakes are IR theorists making when envisioning the institutions of the future? Incessant jockeying for near-term advantageous position vis-à-vis one another (US/PRC), according to the old rules of the game, is blinding today's great powers to opportunities for long-term policies that will be congruent with a post 'great power' world order. Key factors constraining American and Chinese leadership's ability to account for long-term strategic needs in the context of near-term policy decisions, such as popular/populist consent, only grow more acute in the face of near-inevitable *relative* decline. The emergence of novel CIRT faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities in discovering means for reconciling the increasing incongruence between near-term and long-term strategic needs.

As each chapter of this volume has examined different aspects of CIRT emerging from practice and policy, a few common underlying questions have informed their study, but other questions are unable to be addressed. For China, are the near-term

practices and policies congruent with long-term strategic interests? The timeframe of our collective analysis is the long generation, from the time of current leaderships' parents to the time of their children. Despite their best efforts, everyone is deeply vulnerable to imagining too many dimensions of the future being essentially the same as the past. However, the future comes quickly. The 160 or so years of this long generation really is not that long, and we owe it to our grandchildren to be thinking in such durations.

Presidents often seem to be more focused on the next quarterly report—or, where applicable, the next election cycle. When the current American leadership came of age, the US GDP was 50% of the world's total, and its military was equal in size to all others combined. It is easy to understand the complacency of a perspective that the United States will always be on top, so why not just get the best deal today? The extraordinary rise of China over the lifespan of China's current and recent top leadership could just as easily generate a perspective of an inevitable and boundless trajectory to greatness. But as scholars, we have the intellectual space to truly imagine the change we know always comes. The changes we see coming—or at least possible—are so fundamental that long-term success may only come through strategic long-term planning. The 20–30-year forecasting of the American Pentagon's Net Assessment office, for example, is not sufficient to navigate the coming 80-year changes.

There are certain 'fundamentals' of how our world works—or at least how it *has* worked across the preceding generations and eras—fundamentals that underlie the nature and organization of all our systems—economic systems, social systems, political systems, and so forth. The 21st century may see profound changes to many or even all of these fundamentals—all within this single long generation. We foresee a confluence of game changers within each fundamental that can profoundly change the nature of the game across all the systems. Thus, the seemingly best short-term policies may be increasingly incongruent with—or even contrary to—good long-term policy. Just when leadership should be most cognizant of this big picture, we fear the Chinese, Americans, and others are so incessantly jockeying for position vis-à-vis each other that they are blinding themselves to opportunities for good long-term policies vis-à-vis the future world. When you are playing chess, the position of your pieces on the board will not do you any good when your grandchildren are going to live in a world playing virtual checkers with artificial intelligence.

The greatest advantage the Chinese or key rivals like the Americans have now is not to influence the conditions of the other—but rather the potential to influence the nature of the world their children's countries will have to live in. Many of our systems are founded on the literal fundamental significance of geography and the related significance of speed. In geography, we have relative locations—I am here, my neighbor is there; or there is something in between. We have distance—across the narrow Taiwan Strait or the broad Pacific Ocean. We have terrain—open maritime commons or impassible deserts, mountains, or jungles. The magnitude of the digital domain, hypersonic technologies, and the true opening of outer space are—in combination—game changers to both the geometry and calculations of all systems of international relations.

Fundamentals and coming changes: Geography and speed

Geography has been the most basic fundamental of international relations until now. Whether for exchanging butter or bullets, geostrategic calculations are based on one party being *here*, the other *there*, either adjacent or with some space of some particular nature in between. These geographic fundamentals of relative location, distances, and terrain shaped international relations' nature, literally and conceptually. China's management of 14 land borders, for example, requires a distinctly different system than the US's management of two. A container ship or aircraft carrier crossing the Taiwan Strait or East China Sea differs profoundly from crossing the Atlantic or Pacific oceans. Extending a belt of rail lines and roads across the Eurasian steppes is an entirely different matter than traversing the Himalayas.

Inherent to navigating the geographic challenges of space is the fundamental issue of speed. A system of international relations founded on interaction at the speed of a horse or sailboat is inadequate to manage commerce or war conducted at the speed of trains and steamships. Communication by courier is more functionally constrained than by telegraph, radio, or satellite. Just as different modes of communication can transcend temporal *and* spatial barriers, so too can advanced modes of physical transport. An ocean, a mountain range, or a third-party state in between is a barrier to courier, caravan, or tank, but not necessarily to radio, airfreight, or missiles. Finally, although the raw speed of shipping across the oceans has not changed much in a century (nor as a matter of physics and fuel economy is it likely to in the next), the effective rate has skyrocketed with the volume of the container ships revolution.

All modern theories, models, and institutions of international relations have been inherently and fundamentally based on political, economic, military, and diplomatic systems determined in part by such fundamentals of geography and speed. The 21st-century's revolutionary modes and means of interaction between states (and non-state stakeholders) may confound these systems beyond the capacity of gradual adaptation. In terms of raw speed, the advent of precision hypersonic weapon systems portends to be a game changer for both regional and global strategic calculations. The all-but-inevitable expansion of the outer space frontier will open a new form of global commons that transcends the confines of relative locations and distance. Decentralized and delocalized digital finance communities (for example, cryptocurrencies) and common interests (for example, via global social media) will demand novel systems for governance and legislation. Sustainable local micro-networks of power generation and 3D-printing manufacturing can negate many transcontinental or transoceanic transport needs. Not a single core system of the current international relations order will be immune from a radical and revolutionary reconfiguring of the fundamentals associated with geography and speed.

Fundamentals and coming changes: Location-based communities as the primary actors in international relations

The US's 'America First' policy (under the Trump administration) and PRC President Xi's promotion of 'New Models of Great Power Relations' remain centered

on sovereign states' primacy as the core actors in international relations. The most overt American articulation of this to date was in then-President Trump's 19 September 2017 speech before the United Nations. After acknowledging the 70+ years old origins of the UN in the immediate post-WWII era, he projected the system's relevancy broadly into the future: 'To overcome the perils of the present, and to achieve the promise of the future, we must begin with the wisdom of the past. Our success depends on a coalition of strong and independent nations that embrace their sovereignty' (Trump 2017). At the 13th National People's Congress, President Xi re-articulated his vision of the 'Chinese Dream' within a new model of great power relations as, again, a neo-Westphalian order that grants sovereign states the prominent role; his proposed future world order is both state-centered and state-controlled (Xi 2018). It is entirely possible that nation-states will struggle to retain such fundamental roles in managing late 21st-century global affairs.

The Westphalian model that underlies every element of modern international relations theory rests on location-based communities. The parameters of this concept of a nation-state begin with the perimeters of sovereign borders. Pre-modern borders often correlated with physical barriers like coastlines, rivers, and mountains. Occasionally, and perhaps more so under the recent American vision, they are delineated by walls. Nearly all the systems for managing human affairs that have subsequently been divided accordingly—currencies, legal codes, weights and measures, and so forth, all extend only as far as the map's lines. Within borders, the primary levers of power are exercised from the capital. Whether envisioned in zero-sum or win-win terms, trade surpluses/deficits and tariffs are all measured in national units.

Citizenship and other location-based group identities constitute another set of parameters for conceptualizing nation-states and international relations. When managing transit across the afore-identified borders, the single most carefully regulated entity is people. The traditional concept of citizenship emerges from the word itself—one with a locus of identity *within* the city's walls. For the actors of international relations, be they statesmen or soldiers, it is not the abstract territories on the map that are allies or enemies; it is 'us' and 'them'. Or, in the beautifully literal Mandarin, 外国人 (*wàiguó rén* or 'outside country person'). Location-based identities are occasionally even further demarcated within state borders, such as in the case of the Chinese *hukou* system.

The European Union model of the last few decades has offered a remarkable alternative to its ancestral Westphalian concepts of citizenship but is waning in the face of short-term constraints on forward-thinking long-term planning. The refugee crisis underlying this current retreat to hardened borders is a tragically negative foreshadowing of what one would hope will be a generally positive global trend of increased mobility. Life in extreme poverty is immediate and local; what is earned is immediately spent on local goods and services. There is little opportunity or reason for one's interests to extend beyond that small circle of time and space. Where the last half of the 20th century saw hundreds of millions transcend extreme poverty (due largely to China's prosperity), the remainder of the 21st century may well see the same for an additional few billion. This may utterly confound international relations theories based on inherently local location-based identities and interests.

The citizens of the late 21st-century world will be increasingly characterized by individual empowerment, a geographically (and conceptually) broad lifespan footprint, and operating in communities of intersecting and shared common interests that trump the centrality of capitals and borders as the defining components of international relations.

Fundamentals and coming changes: Demographics

Perhaps the most profound fundamental changes affecting international relations theory will occur in demographics. First, the overall context for international relations in modern times has been an environment of both continuous and accelerating global population growth. The current presidents of the United States and China came of age in a world of fewer than three billion, educated by parents who came of age in a world of fewer than two billion. In the long generation, from the birth of their parents through the possible lifespan of their youngest children, the world's population will likely have increased tenfold. The American and Chinese presidents' corresponding perspectives thus likely mirror the concepts underlying the modern models of international relations theory that emerged within this three-century-long context of population boom. It is nearly impossible to imagine a world with an enduring stable population as is likely by century's end, but we must (Lee 2003).

Next, on the level of individual states, modern experience and context have generally been of continual domestic population growth. Accordingly, that most fundamental concern of international relations—'the national interests'—was envisioned as ever-expanding. Corresponding with that was an ever-expanding national wherewithal to pursue those interests (be it more factory workers or soldiers for the field). From the perspective of the individual state, this was nearly always occurring in an environment of ever-expanding access to resources and markets. Some of the most developed states today are already beginning to grapple with not merely slowing but declining populations. Most are also beginning to face the prospects of aging populations. The challenges inherent to transitions from global *and* national populations compound one another. This trend saw China fall behind India as the world's most populous country in 2023, and in 2024, Russia is proposing to fine people who choose not to have children (Seidel 2024; World Population Review 2024).

The standard measurements for success in international relations have similarly been tied to not simply net changes in population growth but, more precisely, individual national *rates* of population growth. Furthermore, national prosperity was more precisely linked with the *relationship between* the changes in fertility rate and lifespan that underlay the overall growth rate. For individual nations, regions, and the world as a whole, changes to the average societal age distribution may have even more significance and impact than the overall stabilization of population size. The magnitudes of such demographic transitions are unprecedented. How might such fundamentally different national societies, in turn, lead to fundamentally different models for international relations? Different countries (for example, the United States and China) will experience significantly different stages of transition, with correspondingly different challenges in dependency burden ratios and rates of

overall aging populations. This may result in divergent or incompatible adaptation models across the near-term, medium-term, and long-term policies and practices.

Long-term considerations: Military capacity

The one set of enduring national assets and expenses most frequently considered in the prior chapters and most overtly determined by (and determining) international relations is military capacity. For example, on the front line where the American and Chinese militaries abut, the Flagship of the US 7th Fleet in 2021 is the USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19). This command ship is expected to remain in service until 2039. Its keel was laid down in 1967. The numbers are revealing. A ship in service for 72 years (1967–2039) would be exceptional. However, the latest guidelines for fleet development are based on pushing all ships toward a 50-year model, paralleling the current modeling for exceptionally expensive carriers. The US Congressional Budget Office only runs numbers looking 30 years out, but even those are staggering. Recent US Navy force structure assessment called for 355 ships (achievable at the earliest around 2035). The Congressional Budget Office estimates that 'construction plus operating costs would average US$102 billion annually over those 30 years—that is US$3.06 *trillion*' (2017). If a state will spend trillions for a single category of critical (largely unmalleable) assets that will need to serve its interests through the end of the century, it is worth considering if the late-21st-century seas will have a place for them.

In the air, whether the seemingly indefatigable B-52 or U-2 (each likely to see a 90-year+ service life) or the shiny new F-35s scheduled to fly through 2070 (likely well beyond any meaningful role for such manned fighters), multi-hundreds of billions of dollars in aircraft investments are similarly subject to the need for careful long-term planning. Making all this possible on a global scale is the enduring investment in approximately 750 overseas bases in 80 countries (Bledsoe & Bartell, 2023). Whether maintaining the 120-year-old Naval Station Guantanamo Bay or building the newest drone base in central Niger, the construction, maintenance, and operation of overseas bases must be planned with a multi-decades-long calculus.

On China's side of the Pacific, the PLAN is steaming ahead at a record-setting pace to invest billions into the game-changing fleet design reflective of the 1920s. Domestically constructed aircraft carriers may be critical to the short-term balance of power in the Western Pacific. Extending beyond that will require a broader and longer-term investment in overseas bases. Such commitment to an 80-year-old concept at a time when the fundamentals of international relations are changing at an ever-accelerating rate must give pause to those whose purview overlaps theory, policy, and practice.

Long-term considerations: Cities and physical infrastructure

Another set of enduring national assets and expenses frequently considered in the prior chapters involve infrastructure elements—from general urban development to capital-intensive systems such as highways and power plants—the Belt Road Initiative. Over the coming century, urbanization alone will radically transform the

entire global standard for population distribution. When China's or America's current leadership's parents were young (around 1900), the world's urban population accounted for only around 13%. By 2030, roughly 60% of the world's population will live in cities. By the end of the 21st century, that number may climb to 80%, marking a complete reversal of urban/rural population distribution in just this single long generation. Like the vast capital investments in long-lived military systems, urban and urban-support infrastructure consumes tremendous resources that may be tragically short-lived in their actual utility (Ritchie & Rodés-Guirao, 2024).

What of the enduring structures and systems that manage international relations? The UN is already more than 75 years old. Its most important body, the Security Council, and its permanent membership is outdated, as is often pointed out by China's neighbors Japan and India; but the UN is seemingly distracted with lofty goals such as the Pact for the Future (United Nations 2024). The more than 70-year-old North Atlantic Treaty Organization is presently struggling with the obvious threat of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but many Americans question the amount of support the United States is providing (Politifact 2023). Hence, we may legitimately ask if *any* of the major global institutions managing international relations will be up to the task of handling a late 21st-century world that may well be attempting to transcend the primacy of nation-states. The unique geography of what some call 'fortress America' seems to ensure that the Americans may be the *last* to fully embrace genuinely new concepts of a post-great power world of rival nation-states. China's desperation to prove itself a benign 'status-quo power' in a context of a new model for 'great power relations' is similarly paralyzing.

Conclusion

This book has examined many of the critical issues facing international relations in the present era, concentrated by the question 'What is Chinese international relations theory?' A significant research opportunity is the study of longer-term issues, as previously noted, and may well ask, 'What is the international relations theory of the "global rest"?'. The authors of this book have sought to illuminate CIRT and to question if and how CIRT differs from Western international relations theory. As China is in its ascendancy, appropriate for the utility of policymakers of our day, we find that CIRT, above all, is tasked to ensure the survival and omnipotent power of the Marxist–Leninist vanguard party and to maintain its exclusive power over all outcomes. CIRT employs differing historical accounts of world history to justify the Party and its practices. It emphasizes traditional Chinese philosophy to be utilized in a similar manner by scholars but less by the Party. The idea of China and the Chinese nation as the gravitational center of world politics, along with the struggle for socialism, is a central theme in the Party's rallying against a hundred years of humiliation. It is also a remaking of the international rules and norms to better reflect Chinese experiences and preferences being pursued, impinging upon other people's development models.

The specific topics of each chapter have identified that there are points of both continuity and contrast and, in doing so, have identified the need to better

understand CIRT in both practice and policy. The confluence of game changers discussed within this chapter may well fundamentally change the nature of the game across all the systems, and while strategy and policy debates in places like the United States often seem stifled and stale, as the chapters in this book have demonstrated, there is a steadily growing body of literature exploring and envisioning some dimensions of a distinct 'Chinese' system of international relations theory. Through the various explanations and explorations in this book, we have contributed our own understandings in response to the question of 'what is Chinese international relations theory?', and we encourage others to build upon this humble contribution by studying the central task of international relations being the prevention of global conflict and to better understand the causes of conflict and war.

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