

## INTRODUCTION

China has attracted much attention in the last decades with its perceived rise as a potential successor to the United States as the global hegemon. As history shows us, seldom has there been a great power that rose without going to a major systemic war, like the rise of France and the Napoleonic Wars, or the rise of Germany and World Wars I and II. Because of this, China's rise is perceived to potentially endanger international peace, too. Since the prevailing perspective is based particularly on Western-centric assumptions, International Relations Theories (IRTs) in these societies also assume that, in its process of ascendancy, China will inevitably clash against its immediate regional neighbors, as well as with other extra-regional great powers<sup>1</sup>. Besides, China can be said to have an 'implanted gene'<sup>2</sup> as a regional hegemon which comes from its long-ranging history as the central authority in Asia. This memory of past greatness, combined with a deep-seated trauma, which many refer to as the 'Century of Humiliation'<sup>3</sup>, could justify a revengeful China, trying to climb back where it 'rightfully' belongs.

These beliefs are compounded by mixed signals coming out of China over the last decade (namely from the 2008 global financial crisis onwards), that is, 'incoherence', or 'contradiction'<sup>4</sup> of its grand strategy: Even though, official pronouncements indicate a peaceful China, committed to its 'Peaceful Development'<sup>5</sup> (PD) grand strategy, yet, often deeds signal its desire to assert its leadership in its periphery and beyond. This contradiction has prompted a number of world politics experts to question whether this is a purposive, strategic ploy on the part of China in order to confuse other international actors<sup>6</sup>. Another contradiction discussed by international experts concern the abandonment of the 'Keeping a Low Profile' strategy<sup>7</sup> (KLP), during Deng Xiaoping's era, and the shift to the recent 'Striving For Achievement' (SFA) one – which led many of them

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Mearsheimer, John, University of Chicago, 'Why China Cannot Rise Peacefully', *CIPS-University of Ottawa*, October 17, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXov7MkgPB4> accessed on May 4, 2019; or Allison, Graham, 'The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?', *The Atlantic*, Sep 24, 2015 <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/> accessed May 4, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Danner, Lucas K., *CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGY, Contradictory Foreign Policy?* Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p.16

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Wang, Zheng, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Danner, 2018; Roy, Denny, *China's Grand Strategy in not Absent, Just Contradictory*, *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 292, Washington, DC: East-West Center, December 3, 2014 <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/china%E2%80%99s-grand-strategy-not-absent-just-contradictory> accessed on May 4, 2019; Buzan, Burry, *The Logic and Contradictions of 'Peaceful Rise/Development' as China's Grand Strategy*, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Volume 7, Issue 4, June 3, 2014, pp 381–420 <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pou032>, accessed on May 4, 2019

<sup>5</sup> China, State Council of the People's Republic of, China's Peaceful Development, *Information Office of the State Council of the PRC*, Sep 6, 2011 [http://english.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2014/09/09/content\\_281474986284646.htm](http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284646.htm) accessed on May 4, 2019

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Pillsbury, Michael, *The Hundred Year Marathon, China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Yan, Xuotong, *From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement*, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, No. 2, April 22, 2014, pp 153-184 [doi: 10.1093/cjip/pou027](https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pou027)

to believe that the former was merely a ‘calculative strategy’<sup>8</sup> during a period of weakness, intended to be followed by an ‘assertive’ strategy in the future.

However, a main argument of this paper is that any conclusion about China’s inevitable violent or possible peaceful rise should be drawn from the fact that it is a civilization quite distinct from the mind-sets originating and shaping up on the basis of the Western Judeo-Christian tradition. Thucydides’ driving force of ‘honor’ – which, in China’s case, was seriously dramatized during a Century of Humiliation – has been the fundamental motive in Chinese tradition. This motive is an important factor in trying to explain the ambivalence in China’s behavior ranging from peaceful to assertive.

The basic question here is what kind of great power China wants to be: one that claims its place in the international system mainly by assertive means or mainly by consensual, peaceful ones? The paper will examine, whether or not China is still committed to its Peaceful Development and how its recent assertiveness can be explained. Does China intend to behave like the past rising powers and verify what history or prevailing International Relations Theories predict? Or, should its priorities and interests be examined through its own system of values, socio-cultural drivers and history, instead of western-centric assumptions? Is China using its rising power to look backward, seeking revenge for the ‘Century of Humiliation’ and restoration of a Sino-centric system in Asia? Or, look forward, helping create a more pluralistic, just, and harmonious international society as it has promised? The notion of Grand Strategy is at the core of argumentation.

Thus, Part I of this paper will present in three chapters, the three main arguments that support a Chinese assertiveness: *Chapter 1* will present a summary of Chinese ancient and modern history in order to provide the background to China’s understanding of honor and its historical memory with a special focus on, the so-called, ‘Century of Humiliation’ (1839-1945). *Chapter 2* argues that historical record can give an important insight into the future of the international system. As it suggests: rising powers, inevitably, turn out to be assertive in a way that often leads to war. *Chapter 3* will discuss the recent debate among international relations theorists about China’s rise, with an emphasis on the Realist School of Thought, which suggests that assertiveness could arise as a result of the ‘normal competition’ in world politics and, thus, ‘China cannot rise peacefully’.

Part II will focus on China’s Grand Strategy, in an effort to identify and analyze its intentions. *Chapter 4* will introduce China’s specific Peaceful Development Grand Strategy, which will be explained, tracing how it came into existence and what it entails (which are China’s core interests and relevant threats to those interests?). *Chapter 5* will go into further analysis on how this strategy has been evolved from a ‘Keeping a Low Profile’ to a more proactive, ‘Striving for Achievement’ one. It will also discuss how this shift was interpreted by the ‘other’ side: as a move based on strategic calculations. In *Chapter 6 & 7*, the most salient policies (economic-diplomatic-military) of China’s Grand Strategy in the last decade, will be used for analysis: each of these policy-cases

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<sup>8</sup> Swain, Michael D. & Tellis, Ashley J., *Interpreting China’s Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future*, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2000

will be described in depth, using historical evidence, and they will also be analyzed for convergence with or divergence from PD grand strategy in *Chapter 8*. The final *Conclusions* will summarize the findings of the research, presenting additionally some possible alternatives of China's future behavior.

## PART I – WHY CHINA CAN BECOME ASSERTIVE

### CHAPTER 1: A HISTORY OF CHINA

Table 1: Chronology of Chinese History

Xia Dynasty	2070 BCE	1600 BCE
Shang Dynasty	1600 BCE	1046 BCE
Zhou Dynasty	1046 BCE	256 BCE
Western Zhou	1046 BCE	771 BCE
Eastern Zhou	770 BCE	256 BCE
Spring and Autumn Period	770 BCE	476 BCE
Warring States Period	475 BCE	221 BCE
Qin Dynasty	221 BCE	206 BCE
Han Dynasty	206 BCE	220
Western Han	206 BCE	24
Eastern Han	25	220
Three Kingdoms era	220	280
Wei Dynasty	220	265
Shu Han Dynasty	221	263
Wu Dynasty	222	280
Western Jin Dynasty	265	316
Eastern Jin Dynasty	317	420
Era of North-South Division	316	589
Sui Dynasty	581	618
Tang Dynasty	618	907
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms era	907	960
Song Dynasty	960	1127
Northern Song	960	1127
Southern Song	1127	1279
Liao Dynasty	916	1125
Jin Dynasty	1115	1234
Yuan Dynasty (Mongols)	1271	1368
Ming Dynasty	1368	1644
Qing Dynasty (Manchus)	1644	1911
Republic of China	1912	1949
People's Republic of China	1949	to present

(Source: Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.xix-xx)

## 1.1 Ancient China

The first Chinese community with a centralized government was the prehistoric *Xia Dynasty* during which the hereditary system of succession -and thus, the concept or dynasty- was established<sup>9</sup>. ‘The Mandate of Heaven’ – the right of a dynasty to rule based on ethical justification – is mentioned, for the first time, in relation to the establishment of the *Zhou Dynasty*<sup>10</sup>. According to the Book of Documents, one of the earliest Chinese historical resources, the fall of the *Shang Dynasty* came about because of shortcomings of its last ruler. As a result, the protection of the Mandate of Heaven was taken from him and awarded to the rulers of Zhou who were “*paragons of virtue*” and “*outstanding warriors*”<sup>11</sup>.

This was a period of rapid development which was reflected in its intellectual activity. *Confucius* lived during this period (551-479 BC)<sup>12</sup>. His teachings were influenced by the fact that he lived in troubled times (one calculation suggests that throughout the Spring and Autumn Period only 38 years were peaceful<sup>13</sup>) and his belief that, in the early Zhou period, China had experienced a golden age. He believed that its rulers were example of appropriate behavior and they had followed ‘The Way’ of running a state, so that good order and harmony can prevail among men<sup>14</sup>. In order to achieve this, the ruler should select good officials, set a moral example and treat his people with benevolence. In addition, he distinguished between the gentleman, who is superior, - not because of breeding but due to superior moral accomplishments - and the small man. In ‘The Analects’, (a compilation of his recorded sayings made by his followers after his death) he said “*The gentleman understands what is moral. The small man understands what is profitable*”<sup>15</sup>. Confucius constantly emphasized the importance of education and of self-cultivation, and thus established a respect for book-learning, which was to last throughout the imperial period. He also believed strongly in the importance of ritual and ceremony. The correct performance of ritual was an essential part of the government of a state<sup>16</sup>.

Confucius teaching was restated by *Mencius* (372-289 BC) who had also much to say on the subject of good government. He stressed that the economic welfare of the people was the basis of political stability and advocated a return to ‘well-field’ system, the system of equal landholding which existed early in the Zhou period. He added that if a ruler failed to rule benevolently then his people had the right to rebel<sup>17</sup>.

In this period military specialists also appeared, the most famous being *Sun Tzu*, the author of ‘The Art of War’. In it, he advises “*All warfare is based on deception*” and “*when able to attack, we*

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<sup>9</sup> Mark, Emily, Xia Dynasty, *ANCIENT HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA*, Jan 10, 2016  
[https://www.ancient.eu/Xia\\_Dynasty/](https://www.ancient.eu/Xia_Dynasty/) accessed on May 5, 2019

<sup>10</sup> Roberts, J.A.G., *A History of China*, second edition, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p.8

<sup>11</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.9

<sup>12</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.14

<sup>13</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.12

<sup>14</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.15

<sup>15</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.15

<sup>16</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.16

<sup>17</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.18

*must seem unable...*”<sup>18</sup>. Numerous military and political leaders such as the Chinese communist revolutionary Mao Zedong, have drawn inspiration from the book.

## 1.2 Imperial China

During the Warring States period, the most dynamic of the seven principle states, was *the state of Qin*. In 230 BC, Qin started a series of campaigns which led to the first unification of China<sup>19</sup>. Despite its short 15-year duration, the Qin dynasty was immensely influential on China and the structure of future Chinese dynasties. During this period, the ideas and practices of *Legalism*<sup>20</sup> were developed. In contrast with Confucianism, where the importance of moral and ethical primacy was stressed, Legalism argued that the interests of the state came first and that the state should be organized rationally to maximize its power against that of its rivals. To achieve this, the use of war was supported. The doctrine of Legalism that guided the Qin emphasized strict adherence to a legal code and the absolute power of the emperor. This philosophy, while effective for expanding the empire in a military fashion, proved unworkable for governing it in peacetime. The Qin Emperor was known for the brutal silencing of political opposition, including the event known as ‘The Burning of Books and Burying of Scholars’<sup>21</sup> (the event caused the loss of many philosophical treatises and Confucian scholars whereby, Legalism survived as the official government philosophy). Marxist historians have emphasized the role of poor peasants in the fall of the dynasty, describing their rebellion as the first great popular revolt in Chinese history<sup>22</sup>.

During the *Han Dynasty*, ‘The New Analects’ were compiled; a collection of essays which identified the shortcomings of the Qin Dynasty and recommended that the new emperor’s government should observe ethical standards. This may have marked the beginning of the adoption of Confucian values as the basis of imperial government, a process which was advanced further through regulating the recruitment of able men – men of merit – to the administration<sup>23</sup>. This institution is known as the ‘Scholar- Gentlemen’ and “*it was good enough to be praised and imitated in 18th century Europe*”<sup>24</sup>. It lasted from the Han dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty in 1912, China’s last imperial dynasty. It was during the Han Dynasty that an additional doctrine with Confucian roots was developed. The entire geographical earth below the skies was called ‘tianxia’, and in the center of that landmass was the Han Empire and its ruler. The idea of the

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<sup>18</sup> Griffith, Samuel B., *Sun Tzu – The Illustrated Art of War*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p.3

<sup>19</sup> The name ‘China’ comes from the Sanskrit Cina, derived from the name of the Chinese Qin Dynasty, pronounced ‘Chin’, which was translated as ‘Cin’ by the Persians and seems to have become popularized through trade along the Silk Road from China to the rest of the world. Mark Joshua J., Ancient China, *ANCIENT HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA*, Dec 18, 2012 <https://www.ancient.eu/china/> accessed on May 5, 2019

<sup>20</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.20

<sup>21</sup> Fang, Xiangshu, *Burning Books and Burying Scholars: On the Policies of the Short-lived Qin Dynasty in Ancient China*, International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science, Vol. 3 No. 7, Sep, 2015, pp.54-61 <https://ijlass.org/data/frontImages/gallery/Vol.3> accessed on May 5, 2019

<sup>22</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.26

<sup>23</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.28

<sup>24</sup> Moore, Charles A., *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture*, University of Hawaii, 1967, p. 22

‘Middle Kingdom’ or ‘Zhongguo’ (the Chinese word for China), is not only a geographical description, but a mission for civilization. From this center, China is called *by nature* to make the remainder of the ‘tianxia’ a civilized place<sup>25</sup>. During this period, trade with the West began which resulted in the official opening of the Silk Road in 130 BCE. Increase in trade made China so prosperous that it was partner with all the major nations of the day. “*The Romans under Marcus Aurelius, in 166 CE, considered Chinese silk more precious than gold and paid China whatever price was asked*”<sup>26</sup>. The Han dynasty's long period of stability and prosperity consolidated unprecedented advancement in art, culture and science. With the profound and lasting impact of this period of Chinese history, the dynasty name ‘Han’ had been taken as the name of the Chinese people, now the dominant ethnic group in modern China<sup>27</sup>.

*“The record of the Han Dynasty has sometimes been compared with that of the Roman Empire. Both empires extended to the limits of the known world; both recorded remarkable technological achievements; both developed sophisticated administrative and legal systems and both enjoyed a similar span of power until their collapse... Yet the collapse of the two civilizations led to very different outcomes, for the Chinese Empire rose again but the Roman Empire was never to be reconstituted. This has prompted reflection on why the Chinese Empire had the resilience to survive. ... Maybe it was the cultural homogeneity derived from a common Chinese written language and the persistent strength of Confucianism. Maybe it was the durability of the notion of ethical rule through the imperial institution. And maybe it was the strength of its institutions, which according to Hans Bielenstein<sup>28</sup>, formed the most impressive system of government in the world at the time, and for centuries to come”<sup>29</sup>.*

Most Chinese regard the *Tang dynasty* as the highpoint of imperial China, both politically and culturally, and a golden age of Chinese civilization<sup>30</sup>. *Tributary relations* emerged during the Tang dynasty as Chinese rulers started perceiving foreign envoys bearing tribute as a “*token of conformity to the Chinese world order*”<sup>31</sup>. “*In the tributary system, China was at the center of a hierarchy based on Confucian state ideology. This ideology put China internationally first in status and in control of assigning status to everyone else in the system. This was usually done by rewarding those kingdoms in the system which coopted China’s state ideology and civilizational achievements the most... they would come to the emperor and perform rites in recognition of the Chinese empire’s dominance and geopolitical influence*”<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Schneider, Henrique, The BRI – China’s road to hegemony, *GEOPOLITICAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICES*, Sept 1, 2017 <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/opinion-the-bri-chinas-road-to-hegemony,economy,2318.html> accessed on May 5, 2019

<sup>26</sup> Mark, Joshua J., Ancient China, *ANCIENT HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA*, Dec 18, 2012, <https://www.ancient.eu/china/> accessed on May 5, 2019

<sup>27</sup> Violatti, Cristian, Han Dynasty, *ANCIENT HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA*, May 27, 2013, [https://www.ancient.eu/Han\\_Dynasty/](https://www.ancient.eu/Han_Dynasty/) accessed on May 5, 2019

<sup>28</sup> Hans Henrik August Bielenstein (8 April 1920 – 8 March 2015) was a Swedish sinologist and Dean Lung Professor Emeritus from Columbia University specializing in the history of the Han Dynasty

<sup>29</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.39

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Lewis, Mark Ed., *China's Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty*, Belknap Press, 2012

<sup>31</sup> Lee, Ji-Young, *China's Hegemony: Four Hundred Years of East Asian Domination*, Columbia University Press, 2016, p.18

<sup>32</sup> Danner, 2018, p.13

*Song China* has also been described as “*the most develop part of the world economy*”<sup>33</sup> at the time and “*considered the high point of classical Chinese civilization... The Song economy, facilitated by technology advancement, had reached a level of sophistication probably unseen in world history before its time... Although land trading routes to the far west were blocked by nomadic empires, there were extensive maritime trade with neighboring states, which facilitated the use of Song coinage as the de facto currency of exchange. Giant wooden vessels equipped with compasses traveled throughout the China Seas and northern Indian Ocean*”<sup>34</sup>.

*Ming* rule also saw the construction of a vast navy and a standing army of 1,000,000 troops<sup>35</sup>. “*Although private maritime trade and official tribute missions from China had taken place in previous dynasties, the size of the tributary fleet under the Muslim eunuch admiral Zheng He in the 15th century surpassed all others in grandeur*”<sup>36</sup>. However, in 1479, the vice president of the Ministry of War burned the court records documenting voyages; it was one of many events signaling China's shift to an inward foreign policy<sup>37</sup>.

Probably, a strong belief in the superiority of their own culture, along with the foreign threats to their national identity, led the *Ming* emperors to close the country's doors to foreign ideas and people, limiting access to a few port cities in the South. Ironically, this very Chinese attitude is strictly related to the answer that historians give to the question: Why did China fall behind in modern times? How could it be, in a humiliating way, condemned by Western and even Japanese imperialists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century? According to the economic historian Albert Feuerwerker, from 1000 to 1500 AD “*no comparison of agricultural productivity, industrial skill, commercial complexity, urban wealth, or standard of living (not to mention bureaucratic sophistication and cultural achievement) would place Europe on a par with Chinese empire*”<sup>38</sup>. Yet, by closing its doors, China lost the First Industrial Revolution that began about 1750 in England and all the advancement in science and technology that transformed the modern world. No sooner than 1978, China did decide its ‘modernization’ through the ‘Open Door Policy’ of Deng Xiaoping. (“*The very superiority achieved by the Song China would become by 1800 a source of her backwardness, as though all great achievements carry the seeds of their ossification*”<sup>39</sup>).

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<sup>33</sup> Modelski, George. & Thompson, William.R., *LEADING SECTORS AND WORLD POWERS: The Coevolution of Global Economics and Politics*, Columbia, U.S., University of South Carolina Press, 1996, p.142

<sup>34</sup> Shen, Fuwei, *Cultural flow between China and the outside world*, China Books & Periodicals; Beijing edition, 1996, p.159-161

<sup>35</sup> Ebrey, Patricia, Walthall, Anne & Palais, James, *East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006, p.71

<sup>36</sup> China.Site.com, ‘The Yuan and Ming Dynasties’ <https://chinasite.weebly.com/the-yuan-and-ming-dynasties.html> accessed on May 8, 2019

<sup>37</sup> Fairbank, John K. & Goldman, Merle *China: A New History*; Second Enlarged Edition, 2006, Cambridge; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 138

<sup>38</sup> Fairbank & Goldman, 2006, p. 2

<sup>39</sup> Fairbank & Goldman, 2006, p. 3

### 1.3 The Century of Humiliation

Unfortunately for China, Europe's power and interest in Chinese goods, especially tea, were growing beyond China's ability to hold these western 'barbarians'<sup>40</sup> back from its gates. The result would be a 'Century of Humiliation' at the hands of the West and Japan, that took place between 1839 and 1945.

Table 2: Major events cited as part of the Century of Humiliation

1	Defeat in the First Opium War (1839–1842) by Great Britain
2	The Unequal Treaties
3	Defeat in the Second Opium War (1856–1860)
4	Defeat in the Sino-French War (1884–1885)
5	Defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895)
6	The Eight-Nation Alliance suppressing the Boxer Uprising (1899–1901)
7	The Twenty-One Demands (1915)
8	The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945)

#### The First Opium War

Even though Qing court valued foreign trade, it was also mindful of the potential dangers of foreign contacts. Its foreign relations continued to be based on the practices of the tribute system. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by far the most important participant in foreign trade was Great Britain through the East India Company. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the demand for Chinese goods (particularly silk, porcelain, and tea) in Europe created a trade imbalance, which had to be made up with silver, on the part of Great Britain<sup>41</sup>. To counter this imbalance, the British East India Company began to auction opium, grown in India, to independent foreign traders in exchange for silver, and in doing so strengthened its trading influence in Asia. The influx of narcotics reversed the Chinese trade surplus, drained the economy of silver, and increased the numbers of opium addicts inside the country, outcomes that upset Chinese officials. They called the foreign merchants to hand them their stocks of opium and sign a declaration stating that they would either cease trading in opium or suffer death<sup>42</sup>. Great Britain's response to Chinese effort to cease opium trading ended to the First Opium War; China lost almost all of the battles that followed<sup>43</sup> and was compelled to sign the *treaty of Nanjing*<sup>44</sup> (the first of the 'Unequal Treaties'). The treaty provided for (1) the opening of five ports (including Shanghai) to British trade and residence; (2) the cession of Hong Kong to Britain; (3) equality in official correspondence (instead of the use of the tribute system);

<sup>40</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.183

<sup>41</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.161

<sup>42</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.164

<sup>43</sup> Rodney, China at War – From Ancient times to the Modern Day, 'Welcome to China', May 14, 2018, <https://welcometochina.com.au/china-at-war-from-ancient-times-to-the-modern-day-6180.html>, accessed on May 13, 2019

<sup>44</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.165



(4) reparation of \$21 million from China to Britain to cover the cost of the war and the value of the opium which had been confiscated. Treaties containing similar terms were negotiated by the United States and France. *All* treaties had four characteristic features: the opening of treaty ports, extraterritoriality (that is the removal of foreigners from the jurisdiction of Chinese courts), external tariffs fixed by treaty and the ‘most favored nation’ clause, which guaranteed that signatories of unequal treaties would share all benefits granted to other powers.<sup>45</sup>

### **The Second Opium War**

However, Chinese internal opposition to the arrangements of the unequal treaties – translated in lack of demand for foreign goods in the Chinese markets, obstructiveness by Chinese officials and imposition of internal transit duties to foreign goods<sup>46</sup>– soon led to the deterioration of relations and the Second Opium War, involving Britain, France and the United States. In the *treaty of Tianjin*, concluded in 1858, China agreed (1) to open ten more ports; (2) to allow foreigners to travel in the interior of China; (3) to accept changes relating to external tariffs and transit duties; (4) to legalize the opium trade; (5) to accept a resident British minister in Beijing (something that had been denied since 1792 when Great Britain asked permission to accredit a resident minister)<sup>47</sup>. Treaties containing similar terms were signed between China and France, the United States and Russia.

### **The Sino-French War and the First Sino-Japanese War**

The end of the Sino-French War found China abandoning its own claims to suzerainty over Vietnam, recognizing the French protectorate, and offering France economic opportunities in South-West China<sup>48</sup>. In addition, after the end of the First Sino-Japanese War for control over Korea, China was forced to accept the humiliating terms of the *Treaty of Shimonoseki*<sup>49</sup>, under which it recognized the independence of Korea and ceded Taiwan, the Penghu or Pescadores islands, and the Liaodong peninsula in southern Manchuria to Japan. (“*The war delivered a coup de grace to the expiring traditional international order in the Far East; it shattered Chinese hegemony and demonstrated to an astonished West that Japan had become a modern great power*”<sup>50</sup>). Japan also acquired the right to establish industry in the treaty ports, a right which, by the most-favored nation principle, devolved to the other treaty powers<sup>51</sup>. Additionally, the Qing Empire was to pay Japan 200 million taels (8,000,000 kilograms) of silver as war reparations. Russia, Germany and France in a few days made the ‘Triple Intervention’<sup>52</sup>, however, and forced

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<sup>45</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.165

<sup>46</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.166

<sup>47</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.168

<sup>48</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.189

<sup>49</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.190

<sup>50</sup> Paine, Sarah, C.M, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy*, Cambridge University Press 2003, p.3

<sup>51</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.190

<sup>52</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.190

Japan to give up the Liaodong peninsula in exchange for another 30 million taels of silver. As a result, China began to borrow heavily on the international market for the first time.

Photo: Colonial powers divided China through a series of 'Unequal Treaties' in the 19th and 20th centuries.



By 1890s, China had been divided into spheres of influence: “After unification, German economic interests in China had grown steadily, surpassed only by that of Britain. In the 1890s Germany became committed to a drive to world power and in China this was translated into a desire to obtain a naval base and a sphere of influence. The murder in 1897 of two German Catholic missionaries provided justification for the seizure of Qingdao in Shandong province. China was forced to grant Germany a 99-year lease on Jiaozhou bay and concessions for the construction of railways and the extraction of coal. France, not to be outdone, obtained commercial concessions in south-west China and a lease on Guangzhouwan, on the mainland opposite Hainan island. Britain, as the satisfied power, had opposed the division of China into spheres of influence. She now

sought compensation in the form of a lease on Weihaiwei in Shandong, guarantees for her economic interests in the lower Yangzi, and a 99-year lease on what became known as the ‘New Territories’, on the mainland opposite Xianggang.”<sup>53</sup>

### The Unequal Treaties

There is no agreement about the actual number of treaties signed between China and foreign countries that should be counted as ‘unequal’. “Some claim that there were over 1000 treaties, agreements, and conventions that fall into this category. Others put the figure at 745, while others again put it at 500”<sup>54</sup>. The Russians relinquished their treaty rights in the wake of the Russian revolution in 1917, and the Germans were forced to concede their treaty rights following their defeat in World War I (WWI). The three main treaty powers, the British, the Americans, and the French, continued to hold their concessions and extraterritorial jurisdictions until the Second World War. Significant examples did outlast World War II (WWII): The British restored sovereignty for Hong Kong to China in 1997, and the Portuguese did the same in Macau in 1999<sup>55</sup>. In 1969, to improve Sino-Russian relations, China reconfirmed the 1859 *Treaty of Aigun*.

<sup>53</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.191

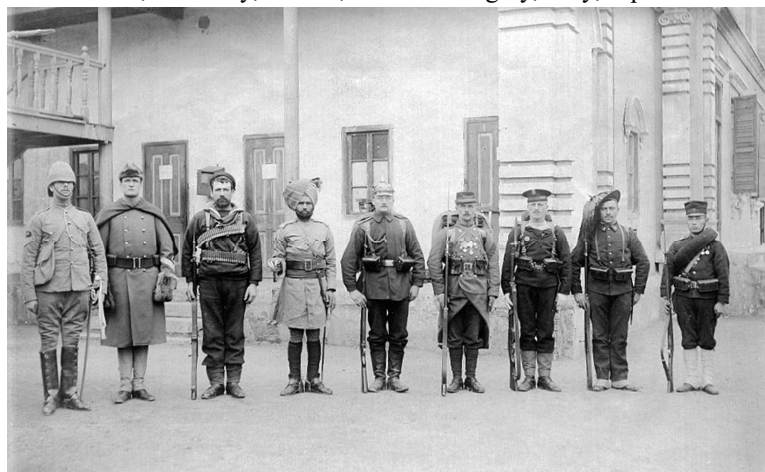
<sup>54</sup> Wang, Dong, *China's Unequal Treaties: Narrating National History*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005, p.2

<sup>55</sup> Pletcher, Kenneth, Unequal Treaty-CHINESE HISTORY, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Apr 17,2015 <https://www.britannica.com/event/Unequal-Treaty> accessed on May 17, 2019

(According to the estimate of the People's Republic of China, Russia annexed more than 600.000 square kilometers of Chinese territory by this treaty<sup>56</sup>).

### The Eight-Nation Alliance

The photograph shows soldiers of the Eight-Nation Alliance in 1900, left-to-right: Britain, United States, Australian, British India, Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Japan<sup>57</sup>.



Western economic imperialism had begun to be perceived as a threat to national extinction. As a result, the development of a nationalist sentiment arose in China. The 'Boxer Rebellion' was an anti-foreign, anti-colonial, and anti-Christian uprising that took place in China between 1899 and 1901, supported by the Qing court<sup>58</sup>. 'The Eight-Nation Alliance' - a multinational military coalition set up in

response to the Boxer Rebellion by Britain, United States, Australian, British India, Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Japan – ended to the *Boxer Protocol* which provided for: the execution of government officials who had supported the Boxers, provisions for foreign troops to be stationed in Beijing, and 450 million taels of silver to be paid as indemnity over the course of the next thirty-nine years to the eight nations involved<sup>59</sup>.

### The Twenty-One Demands

After the First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, Japan had gained a large sphere of interest in northern China and Manchuria. With the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of the new Republic of China, Japan saw an opportunity to further expand its position in China. When the WWI broke out, Japan opportunistically declared war on Germany and seized the German base at Qingdao in Shandong. In January 1915, the Japanese government presented to Yuan Shikai, the first president of the Republic of China, the 'Twenty-one Demands'<sup>60</sup> with warnings of dire consequences if China were to reject them. They were divided into five groups, including: (1) the transfer to Japan of all German interests in Shandong; (2) the extension of Japan's lease on the Liaodong peninsula; (3) the grant of further commercial rights in Manchuria; (4) joint Sino-Japanese control of the Hanyeping Steel Company (the first major heavy

<sup>56</sup> Tzhou, Byron N, *China and international law: the boundary disputes*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1990, p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> Rare Historical Photos.com, <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/troops-eight-nation-alliance-1900/> accessed on May 17, 2019

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.197

<sup>59</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.199

<sup>60</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.212

industrial complex in China); (5) the use of Japanese advisers in China's military, police and financial administration, "thereby turning China into a 'second Korea'"<sup>61</sup>. Great Britain, Japan's closest ally, as well as the United States forced Japan to drop the fifth set of demands that would have given Japan a large measure of control over the entire Chinese economy and ended the 'Open Door Policy' (a system of trade in China open to all countries equally). On 7 May 1915, China acceded to the first four groups of demands. That day was to be commemorated as 'The Day of National Humiliation'<sup>62</sup>.

## The Second Sino-Japanese War



In 1937, the Empire of Japan started a full-scale invasion of China after invading Manchuria in 1931, beginning the Second Sino-Japanese War (often considered a theater of WWII). Their troops occupied Nanjing (the capital of China at the time) in December, and carried out the systematic and brutal Nanking massacre, known as the 'Rape of Nanking'<sup>63</sup>. At the Nanjing trial the death toll was put at over 300,000. The

Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall was built in 1985 to commemorate this event<sup>64</sup> (photo).

Photo: Chiang, Roosevelt, and Churchill at the Cairo Conference, Egypt, November 1943

The second Sino-Japanese war continued throughout the WWII. At the outcome of the Cairo Conference, in 1943, the Allies decided to restrain and punish the aggression of Japan by restoring all the territories that Japan annexed from China, including Manchuria, Taiwan/Formosa, and the Pescadores to China, and to expel Japan from the Korean peninsula<sup>65</sup>. China was recognized as one of the 'Big Four' of the Allies during the war and became one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.



<sup>61</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.213

<sup>62</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.213

<sup>63</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.237

<sup>64</sup> Yan, Alice, Never forget our Nanking massacre dead, *South China Morning Post*, Mar 14, 2015

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1737923/chinese-people-must-never-forget-nanking-massacre-dead-museum-curator> accessed on May 17 2019

<sup>65</sup> Chen, Peter C., World War II Database, Cairo Conference, *Lava Development, LLC.'s website*, May 2006 [https://ww2db.com/battle\\_spec.php?battle\\_id=68](https://ww2db.com/battle_spec.php?battle_id=68) accessed on May 18, 2019

## 1.4 Conclusions

Our experience of international relations is based upon the history of the Judeo-Christian civilization. But China is not a western country. Thus, knowing its culture, history and experience helps us understand its assumptions, understandings of international politics and its subsequent behavior. For example, while western countries would prioritize survival and wealth as the primary goals of their grand strategy, China probably sees honor and restoration of its 'rightful' place in the international scene after a 'Century of Humiliation', as the ultimate motive of its actions<sup>66</sup>. This argument could explain the often called 'contradictory' and ambivalent behavior of China, one out of the context of traditional rationality. This is not to say that the drivers of security and wealth do not play a role at all. But honor may have a disproportionately high importance attached to it in Chinese eyes.

The tributary system, "*which institutionalized China's primacy in East Asia*"<sup>67</sup>, was the main expression of Chinese honor. It helped China advance its Confucian state ideology, assimilate adjacent states therewith, and secure legitimacy by giving and receiving status. And, even though tributary system does not exist anymore since the fall of the last Chinese dynasty, it is still observably part of Chinese politics and international relations. As Henry Kissinger mentioned "*if you look at the ritual protocol when you go to the Great Hall of People today to be received by the President, the arrangement of the chairs, the attempt to create a setting that overwhelms you... it is very similar to historical setting*"<sup>68</sup>.

Throughout most of its long imperial history, China was the predominant political, economic, cultural and military power of East Asia. Such predominance created a deep-rooted belief in the geopolitical centrality of China to the region. Thus, Chinese experience is dominated by its historical memory of past greatness and the desire to restore previous eminence and recreate the traditional Sino-centric order. In addition, 'humiliation' has intensified this desire and led to a strong commitment to the creation of a powerful and respected Chinese state able to redress past wrongs committed by stronger imperialist states. "*In a sense, the humiliating actions of the Western powers and Japan have been utilized by the Chinese leaders – whoever was in power after 1912 and onwards, in order to unite the multitude of ethnicities on China's territory into a nation*"<sup>69</sup>. For example, in the 2011 white paper on China's Peaceful Development, it appears in the fourth paragraph: "*In the mid-19th century, western powers forced open China's door with gunboats. Internal turmoil and foreign aggression gradually turned China into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. The country became poor and weak, and the people suffered from wars*

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<sup>66</sup> Danner, 2018, p.11

<sup>67</sup> Danner, 2018, p.16

<sup>68</sup> Kissinger, Henry and Allison, Graham, on the U.S., China, and the Thucydides 's Trap, July 11, 2017 at the Harvard Club of New York City, *Harvard-Belfer Center*, Aug 2, 2017  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKI6M2UiCGk&t=3177s> accessed on May 18, 2019

<sup>69</sup> Danner, 2018, p.20

*and chaos*”<sup>70</sup>. China was made to forcibly give up its tributary system and open itself to international society and western norms. This also explains the obsessed China with issues regarding sovereignty, national unification and territorial integrity, that we witness today. For example, China does not engage in foreign relations with a country that does not accept Tibet and Taiwan as inherent parts of China’s territory. Also, in its engagement with other nation, it holds the ‘non-interference principle’ into internal affairs very dearly and does not accept others to interfere in its own affairs in turn, either<sup>71</sup>.

To conclude, assertive policies in the case of China may be likely in an effort to restore its geopolitical primacy and the association of that primacy with good order, civilization, virtue, and justice. In addition, this memory of greatness and primacy, combined with the attack on China’s honor and the trauma acquired during a ‘Century of Humiliation’, would explain a more assertive China willing to become strong enough to redress past wrongs and regain what it sees as its rightful place in the world order. Besides, despite the fact that many Chinese scholars and leaders – even today – denigrate the role of violence and stress on their moral Confucian origins, the historical record suggests that “*the use and exploitation of force was by no means exceptional in Chinese history*”<sup>72</sup>.

## CHAPTER 2: A HISTORY OF THE WORLD

An assertive Chinese behavior could arise because of factors directly linked to Chinese experience: its historic memory of past greatness and the desire to restore past eminence; its determination to erase the painful legacy of a ‘Century of Humiliation’; its belief that China’s internal security in the past was the result of a powerful state, able to dominate its strategic periphery. However, International Relations Theories hold that assertive behavior could also arise as a result of the ‘normal competition’ between states in the international system that compels them to constantly seek increase of their relative power (this argument will be further discussed in the following Chapter). In fact, the historical record seems to confirm the theoretical expectations and it suggests that, despite the different reasons in every case, rising powers inevitably turn out to be assertive, in a way that often leads to war. It is useful, therefore, to briefly make a reference to this historical record as it is believed that it gives an important insight into the future of the international system. The paper will do so, by using the ‘Theory of Long-Cycles’, as it was presented by George Modelski in his study ‘*The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation States*’<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> China’s Peaceful Development, *Information Office of the State Council, The People’s Republic of China*, Sep 6, 2011 [http://english.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2014/09/09/content\\_281474986284646.htm](http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284646.htm) accessed on May 18, 2019

<sup>71</sup> Danner, 2018, p.22

<sup>72</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.231

<sup>73</sup> Modelski, George, *The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation – State*, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol 20, No. 2, Cambridge University Press, Varieties of Modernization, Apr, 1978, pp. 214-235, accessed on Oct 26, 2018

## 2.1. The Long Cycle of Global Politics

The study of Long Cycles may be located among historical-structural approaches to world politics and as such it assumes that the system's past must be systematically taken into account in unraveling that system's present and future. Thus, a clear advantage of the Long-Cycle approach is that it offers a coherent story of the global political system whose great fact is *continuity*. This system is a constructed one, with its own beginning and its own path (or trajectory), being formed by the interaction of all its participants, and one that keeps changing in significant ways.

In his theory, Modelski uses the following definitions:

- 1) **Cycle:** It can be defined as “*a recurrent pattern in the life (or functioning) of a system. The concept implies that over a certain period of time the system, in some meaningful sense, returns to its starting point, that it regains a state occupied at an earlier stage. If such behavior is demonstrably regular and if recurrence takes place in a pattern that is potentially predictable, such behavior may appropriately be called cyclical or periodic*”<sup>74</sup>. One cycle comes about once every hundred years<sup>75</sup>, that is why it is called ‘Long Cycle’.
- 2) **Global Political System:** This may be defined as “*the institutions and arrangements for the management of global problems or relations, or alternatively as the structure for the management of global interdependence. This system was ‘born’ (or constructed) about the year 1500, and it is still with us;*”<sup>76</sup>.
- 3) **World powers:** “*Entities uniquely dominant in the global system... More technically, we might define world powers as those units monopolizing (that is, controlling more than one half of) the market for (or the supply of) order-keeping in the global layer of interdependence... in modern times a succession of world powers shaped the global system*”<sup>77</sup>.
- 4) **Global wars:** “*They are conflicts that determine the constitution of the global political system; wide-ranging and far-reaching in their consequences, they may last over a period of a generation, and in the end they give birth to a new world order*”<sup>78</sup>

According to the theory, each Cycle may be said to originate from a period of weak organization that ultimately leads to a global war. One world power emerges from that war in an advantageous position and organizes the world, even as the struggle still goes on, and then formalizes its position in the global layer in a *peace settlement*. For a period of another generation, that power maintains basic order and is the instigator of *world institutions*. But the time comes when the *energy* that built this order begins to run down. The dominant power attracts *competitors* (other world powers) and its previous preeminent authority begins to wear out. The system moves to *multipolarity* while rivalries among the major powers grow fiercer, assuming the form of *oligopolistic competition*.

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<sup>74</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.214

<sup>75</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.219

<sup>76</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.214

<sup>77</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.216

<sup>78</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.217

Gradually, as order dissolves, the system moves toward its original point of departure, that of minimal order.

The theory of Long Cycle is linked with other cyclical theories like Gilpin's '*Hegemonic Stability Theory*' (1981) and Organski's '*Power Transition Theory*' (1958) which describe the cyclical nature of war<sup>79</sup>. In these theories, Long Cycle is perceived as a Hegemonic Cycle: "*the concept is based on the idea that one country rises to the pinnacle of the international system as the result of an hegemonic war and it subsists there until the uneven growth of power creates new challengers who, through political actions aimed at either the existing dominant power or other states, precipitate new global wars that start a new hegemonic cycle*"<sup>80</sup>.

Since 1500, there have been *four* completed cycles, while the fifth is in progress<sup>81</sup>, and four global powers have played a dominant role in the management of global interdependence: Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain (twice) and the United States.

## 2.2 The Four Long Cycles of the Global Political System

The table below as well as the narrative that follows, describe the Four Long-Cycles of the global political system. Their content is a combination of information taken from Modelski's article "*The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State*" (1978) and M.D. Swaine - A.J. Tellis book "*Interpreting China's Grand Strategy-Past, Present and Future*" (2000), Section: *The tyranny of power: an assertive China?*

At the close of the 15th century, the global system was a dispersed one. Without being totally devoid of organization, it lacked provisions for self-maintenance and defense against threats, let alone cooperation of states in a sustained fashion for common interests. It was controlled by Venice which, by the 15th century had established a monopoly on trade with Alexandria. In 1498, the king of Portugal succeeded in breaking into that system and taking over the Venetian's highly profitable monopoly. (In that year, Vasco da Gama, after sailing around the Cape of Good Hope, reached India). By 1515, a new order had been established. Portugal became a global power on the strength of its naval fleet which, incorporating new sailing technologies (such as the galleon and the caravel), allowed it to secure an Eastern Empire, monopolize the spice trade and mount explorations as far as Brazil. The rise of Portuguese hegemony, however, was to be short lived, since it proved unable to sustain this far-flung system; in the second half of the century only half as many ships sailed from Lisbon as had in the first. Portugal succumbed to Spain, which, fresh from its victories in the Italian wars, seized Portugal in 1580. Spain also attacked Portugal's ally, the wealthy Dutch United Provinces, which derived much of their income from trade with Lisbon and had served as the banking and the distribution center of the Portuguese system. This assertive Spanish behavior was opposed by England and France. The resulting Spanish wars that followed led to the demise of Spain and the rise of Dutch hegemony.

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<sup>79</sup> Kohout, Franz, *Cyclical, Hegemonic, and Pluralistic Theories of International Relations: Some comparative reflection on war causation*, International Political Science Review, 2003, Vol 24, No. 1, 51–66

<sup>80</sup> Swain & Tellis, 2000, p.220

<sup>81</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.217



Table 3: The Four Long-Cycles of the global political system

LC	Global war	Hegemon	Outcome	Institutional Innovation	Rising powers
1	<b>Italian wars</b> (1494-1517)	<b>Portugal</b> (1517-1580)	Treaty of Tordesillas (1494)	Exploration and discovery, Carreira da India, Antwerp entrepot	Spain
	<b>Spanish wars</b> (1579-1609)	<b>Netherlands</b> (1609-1713)	Truce of Antwerp (1609)	Mare liberum, free trade, Amsterdam Bank, Bourse, United East India Company	France, Great Britain
3	<b>French wars - Wars of Louis XIV</b> (1688-1713)	<b>Great Britain I</b> (1714-1815)	Treaty of Utrecht (1713)	Command of the sea (Navy), European Balance of Power, Indirect control of world trade, Bank of England, National Debt	France, Great Britain
	<b>French wars - Napoleonic wars</b> (1792-1815)	<b>Great Britain II</b>	Treaty of Vienna (1815)	Free trade: gold standard, Industrial Revolution, 'Opening of China and Japan'	France
5	<b>Germans wars</b>	(1815-1945)			
	<b>WWI</b> (1914-1918)		Treaty of Versailles (1919)		Germany, United States, Russia
	<b>WWII</b> (1939-1945)	<b>United States</b> (1945-....)	Yalta, San Francisco, Potsdam Conferences (1945)	United Nations, Strategic nuclear deterrence, Multinational corporations, Decolonization, Space exploration	Germany, Japan, USSR, United States
	<b>Cold War</b> (1950-1992)		Demise of the Soviet Union (1992)		USSR

SOURCE: Modelski, 1978, pp.225 and Swain & Tellis, 2000, p.219

During the wars, the Dutch sailed to the East and proceeded to capture the spice trade from Portuguese and Spanish control. The founding of the United East India Company in 1602 marked the consolidation of several earlier efforts. The Dutch hegemony began in 1609 and was consolidated by 1660 when the Dutch navy established its superiority over the Spanish fleet, fortified by the 'Grotian doctrine of the freedom of the seas'<sup>82</sup>, and controlled three-quarters of all European merchant shipping. The Bank of Amsterdam and the Bourse, the Marine Assurance Chamber and the Grain Exchange were other central institutions of the Dutch system.

Meanwhile, another rising European power was emerging on the horizon. France, having emerged in strength from the Thirty –Year War and thanks to its new growth in international power under the

<sup>82</sup> In 1609, the Dutch jurist and philosopher Hugo Grotius wrote what is considered the foundation of international legal doctrine regarding the seas and oceans – *Mare Liberum*, a Latin title that translates to 'freedom of the seas'.

Bourbon monarchy, launched another round of assertive behavior through attacks on the Dutch United Provinces, Germany and Spain for mastery in Europe. The French pressure on the Dutch in particular resulted in a new alliance between the Dutch United Provinces and Great Britain - an alliance that consisted the core of European resistance to the aspirations of the Sun King<sup>83</sup>. Although the Dutch managed to hold their own against France, the cost of resistance turned out to be extremely high. As a result, even though French assertiveness was beaten back, Dutch hegemony declined as well, and there occurred an “*effective transfer of global power to what had just become Great Britain*”<sup>84</sup>.

The rise of Great Britain resulted both from internal consolidation occurring within the British Isles and the successful defeat of successive challenges coming from Spain (e.g. the defeat of the Great Armada in 1588) and France over a couple of centuries. (“*The basic institutions of the British global system emerged in the struggle against the French: the dominant Parliament as the focus of the political system; the Navy, now England’s largest growth industry and employer, in firm control of the Narrow Seas, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean (through Gibraltar); and the Bank of England and the National Debt (1694) as instruments of economic mobilization and control*”<sup>85</sup>). Moreover, the first British global system was consolidated through firmly control of world trade. (“*By 1763, France’s role in Canada, in Caribbean, and in India was close to finished and the English East India Company had become a great Asian power*”<sup>86</sup>). In this period, the concept of the ‘Balance of Power’ emerged (treaty of Utrecht, 1713) and Britain’s new weight could be thrown on the side of the opponents of a power aspiring to continental supremacy. In this context, Britain became the secure home base in which the forces of the Industrial Revolution began being shaped; forces that in the next century would sweep Europe and then world.

Yet, the American War of Independence (1776), and the opportunity that offered to France to get even with Britain, threw the system into serious disarray. The French Revolution (1789) and the Napoleonic wars against all of Europe put to the test the European Balance of Power. Another generation of global warfare was required before a global order was reestablished and reaffirmed by the Treaty of Vienna and the ‘Concert of Europe’ (1815). The new world order that emerged saw the development of London into the center of world banking and shipping; newly emerging industrial and technological superiority, making Britain the “*industrial workshop of the world*”<sup>87</sup>; and the significant influence of its political and economic doctrines, most notably ‘free trade’.

The second system began to lose vigor as early as the 1860s. Britain’s industrial monopoly was successfully breached by European and American competition; commercial competition grew fierce after the depression of 1873 while coal and cotton- Britain’s industrial mainstays- ceased to be world growth leaders. In addition, the unification of Germany (1870), fueled by German nationalism, created a powerful state in the center of Europe which would put into question the stability of the European balance. The world was once again moving into a period of great wars to settle the question of world power. These wars, “*which are called the First and Second World Wars confusingly because, as we have seen, the world has known world wars in several earlier cycles, too... were German wars, similar in structure and operation to earlier French and Spanish wars*”<sup>88</sup>. In the WWI, aided by the

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<sup>83</sup> Louis XIV of France

<sup>84</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.221

<sup>85</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.221

<sup>86</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.222

<sup>87</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.223

<sup>88</sup> Modelski, 1978, pp.223-224

United States, Britain beat back the German challenge but was greatly weakened in the process. In the WWII, aided again by the United States, as well as by the recently consolidated Soviet Union, Britain pushed back an even more demanding exercise of assertiveness by German and Japan, but at the cost of its own hegemony which was now transferred to the United States.

During the Cold War, United States spent enormous resources, effort, and energy in neutralizing various assertive behaviors on the part of the Soviet Union. The relatively peaceful systemic transition that occurred in 1992 was the first such example in over 500 years of modern history and has been attributed in part to the possession of nuclear weapons by both powers.

### **2.3 The Long-term Relationship between World Economics and World Politics**

In a later work, G. Modelski and W.R. Thompson<sup>89</sup> tried to explain the long-term relationship between world economic and political structures and processes. They suggest that economic growth is related with global leadership and warfare, using the Long Cycle of Global Politics Theory in combination with the Kondratieff process, or K-wave<sup>90</sup>. K-waves are long-term economic cycles, believed to result from basic innovations that produce a long period of prosperity and represent a regularity of fifty- to sixty-year-long fluctuations in the world capitalist system. These innovations, that bring structural changes in the world economy, may concern new products and methods of production, opening of new markets and sources of raw materials, and the pioneering of new forms of business (or commercial) organization.

The study concludes that the rise and decline of leading sectors in the global economy are coordinated with the rise and decline of world powers in such a fashion that one Long Cycle (one period of ascendancy) is associated with two K-waves. Specifically, the innovations of the first wave shape the developments of the second wave and tend to reinforce them. The first wave also generates the financial and economic resources to put together a winning coalition and a strategy in the ensuing global war. Victory in global war, furthermore, paves the way for the second growth spurt just as participation in the war effort may have significant effect on the creation of new markets, products, and technologies.

The following table demonstrates how global political leadership is closely synchronized with global economic leadership:

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<sup>89</sup> Modelski & Thompson, 1996

<sup>90</sup> Modelski & Thompson, 1996, p.4

Table 4: The Long-term Relationship between World Economics and World Politics

1st K-wave	Long Cycle		2nd K-wave
West African Gold (Portuguese gold imports from Guinea)	1st	Portugal	Spice Trade (Portuguese Asian pepper imports)
(1430-1494)		(1517-1580)	(1494-1540)
Baltic and Atlantic Trade	2nd	Netherlands	Eastern Trade (Dutch East Indies Company Asian imports)
(1540-1580)		(1609-1713)	(1580-1640)
Amerasian Trade (tobacco, sugar, Indian textile)	3rd	Great Britain I	Amerasian Trade (tobacco, sugar, tea, Indian textile)
(1640-1688)		(1714-1815)	(1688-1740)
Cotton Consumption Pig Iron Production	4th	Great Britain II	Railroad, Steam
(1740-1792)		(1815-1945)	(1792-1850)
Steel, Chemicals (Sulphuric Acid Output), Electric Power Production	5th	United States	Motor Vehicles, Aviation, Electronics
(1850-1914)		(1945-.....)	(1914-1973)
Information Industry			
(1973-.....)			

Source: Modelski & Thompson, 1996, p.69,75

## 2.4 Conclusions

Theoretical expectations and historical record confirm the fact that rising powers turn out to be assertive - an assertiveness that led to war in the past. The tendency for such assertiveness, on the part of rising powers, is successfully demonstrated by the theory of Long Cycle which focus on the recurrent pattern in the life of the global political system: Over a certain period of time (approximately about one hundred years), the relative power of the dominant state (hegemon) begins to unravel. Intensive competition among the global powers (both dominant and rising) in an effort to control 'the rules of the game', leads to the dissolution of the system, usually through the outbreak of a global war. This war gives birth to a new global political system and a new dominant power which rearranges the world order, with the establishment of new norms, institutions and relations. A great asset to this preeminence, on the part of the new hegemon, is usually significant innovations which go hand in hand with economic prosperity. This argument is supported by the K-waves theory which explains how economic growth is related with global leadership and warfare.

Based on the fact that history tends to repeat itself (a position assumed by most of the historical-structural approaches to world politics), this section presented what historical record and IRTs suggest about China's future behavior: Given the fact that its power continues to grow, China will,

most probably, exhibit the assertive behavior that its rising predecessors did in the past, either against the existing hegemon (the United States) or other states. This does not necessarily mean that the outcome will be another great war (an optimist sign has been the relatively peaceful end of the Cold War), but, certainly, it will be a new world order.

According to the study of Swain and Tellis (2000), the history of the world politics helps extract the following insights<sup>91</sup>:

- 1) Rapid economic growth due to various reasons (revolutionary technological changes in the case of Portugal, overseas empires in the case of Great Britain, or rapid domestic growth in the case of Germany) led to the emergence of rising challengers throughout history. **During the last decades, China has materialized as a rising power due to its domestic economic transformation. If this growth continues at the same pace, China will probably become a potential challenger at the core of the international system.**
- 2) No rising power thus far has accepted the prevailing international order and peacefully integrated itself into it (which is not surprising since this order reflects the preferences of the dominant power). Every major rising power thus far – Spain, France, Germany, Japan, the United States and the Soviet Union – has mounted challenges in different ways to the established order when they were in their ascending phase. **So, China, as a rising state, it is unlikely to simply accept the prevailing U.S.-dominated international order and peacefully integrate itself into it.**
- 3) Geopolitics conditions the character and targets of a rising state's assertiveness. In general, rising states that had a continental character (such as Spain, France and Germany) appeared to focus on nearby targets, whereas maritime states (such as Portugal, the Netherlands, Great Britain and United States) ranged more widely, dominating territories at a much greater range from the homeland. **China, as a continental state (though with local maritime aspirations), is more likely to display assertiveness closer to home rather than in the distant abroad.**
- 4) All rising states (save the Soviet Union) have been involved in systemic wars at the time of a global power transition. **Chinese exercise of assertiveness could generate a range of political, economic and military conflicts and even a major regional war which involves the existing hegemon.**
- 5) Direct attacks on a hegemon by rising challengers are rare. In fact, most systemic wars occur because (a) some rising states attack other rising states to consolidate their power and the existing hegemon enters the war on the behalf of the weaker side to preempt a future challenge by the stronger side (e.g. the Italian wars); (b) some rising states attack key allies of the existing hegemon in a search for regional gains and the existing hegemon enters the war on behalf of the ally to prevent a shift in the balance of power (e.g. the Spanish wars, the Napoleonic wars and WWI and WWII). **The participation of the United States in a conflict on behalf of some local states, threatened by China, may occur initially as a limited engagement but it could turn into struggle over control of the international system.**
- 6) Systemic power transition often occurs because successes in systemic wars can irreparably weaken existing hegemons. In this content, who wins is as important as by how much. This is particularly true because the strongest surviving state in the winning coalition usually turns out to be the new hegemon after a systemic war (e.g. the Great Britain and the United States). **If United States, in the process of successfully combating Chinese assertiveness, weakened itself dramatically, a third rising power**

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<sup>91</sup> Swain & Tellis, 2000, p.228

would probably assume global leadership simply because the victorious but now exhausted hegemon has no further capacity to prevail.

## CHAPTER 3: THE BASIC STRUCTURE AND LOGIC OF INTERNATIONAL POWER RELATIONS

Power transition within the international system, if the Long-Cycle theorists of international relations are correct, comes about once every one hundred years and involve fundamental shifts in the relative power relations, prevailing among the major states of the system. More importantly, most such shifts have often resulted in global wars. In addition to the insights that the historical record provides, International Relations Theories suggest that Chinese assertiveness could also arise as a result of the ‘normal competition’ in world politics. There is a broad consensus in the Realist school of thought on *why* such assertive behavior occurs. Some of the theories will be further elaborated below:

### 3.1 The Theory of Hegemonic War<sup>92</sup>

Arguing that “*the process of social change is much the same today as it was 2.000 years ago*”<sup>93</sup>, Robert Gilpin uses the classical history of Thucydides to base the Hegemonic War Theory. Thucydides foresaw that, new states, like Sparta (the hegemonic state), and challenging states, like Athens, would rise throughout history and the Hegemonic Cycle would repeat itself<sup>94</sup>. According to his view, the basic mechanism of a great, or hegemonic, war is the human nature itself (which is unchanging and therefore the causes of the Peloponnesian war would be repeated in the future); human beings are driven by three fundamental passions: **fear, honor, interest**<sup>95</sup>. “*Thucydides the realist, in contrast to Plato the idealist, believed that reason would not transform human beings, but would always remain the slave of human passions. Thus, uncontrollable passions would again and again generate great conflicts like the one witnessed in his history*”<sup>96</sup>.

In the Theory of Hegemonic War, Gilpin is based on this idea; his argument suggests that rising powers become assertive because assertion remains the principle means by which they can reconfigure the existing international system, to better reflect their own **interests**. Such assertiveness may in fact become necessary because both the extant dominant power and its allies may decline to surrender their privileges submissively and without resistance. Consequently, rising powers often feel *compelled* to engage in an assertive exercise of power. The propensity for such assertiveness is usually reinforced by the phenomenon of *uncertainty* and the **fear** that it causes, and leads states to seek to *accumulate power* merely as protection against contingencies

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<sup>92</sup> Gilpin, Robert, *The Theory of Hegemonic War*, Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Vol. 18, No. 4, The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars, The MIT Press, Spring 1988, pp. 591-613

<sup>93</sup> Gilpin, Robert, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p.3

<sup>94</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.595

<sup>95</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.593

<sup>96</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.594

arising in the unknowable future. If status (**honor**) considerations are also important to the rising power (and in the case of China, the historical record suggests that they are), the tendency towards assertiveness may be further magnified<sup>97</sup>.

Thucydides also said that, since human beings are driven by these three passions, they will always seek to increase their wealth and power until other humans, driven by the same passions, will try to stop them: Over time, the power of a subordinate state begins to grow disproportionately; the ensuing struggle between the dominant/rising states and their respective allies leads to a bipolarization and the system becomes a ‘zero sum’ situation<sup>98</sup>. As a result, the system becomes increasingly unstable, and a small event can trigger a crisis and precipitate a major conflict<sup>99</sup>. In the Peloponnesian war, it was the increasing power of the second most powerful state in the system, Athens, that precipitated the conflict and brought about *systemic change*: a change in the hierarchy or control of the international political system. Thus, “*Thucydides believed that he had found the true causes of Peloponnesian War, and by implication of systemic change, in the phenomenon of the uneven growth of power among the dominant states in the system... the growth of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta, made war inevitable. In a like fashion and in future ages, he reasoned, the differential growth of power in a state system would undermine the status quo and lead to hegemonic war between declining and rising power*”<sup>100</sup>.

Gilpin stresses on the influence that Thucydides has have to the contemporary social scientists. To make a link with the previous section, he specifically refers that “*the power transition theory of Organski, Modelski’s theory of long cycles and global war, and the present writer’s book on international change are examples of elaborations of Thucydides’ fundamental insights into the dynamics of international relations*”<sup>101</sup>. He stresses even more on the applicability of his theory to modern history and its continuing relevance for the international system. Like the hegemonic wars that were described in the previous section, Thucydides’ Peloponnesian War contained the following similarities<sup>102</sup>: 1) The uneven growth of power was a result of the economic and technological advancement that occurred in Athens. 2) Because of the importance of the issues to be decided (the war was at once a political, economic and ideological struggle) “*there were no constraints on the means employed*” in order for their participants to reach their goals. 3) As a result, “*the war released forces of which the protagonists had previously been unaware*”. 4) Third-party actions became provocation to which the contesting states felt obliged to react to (the Corinth-Corcyra War which began as a dispute between Corinth and her colony Corcyra) 5) A third party was the ultimate victor. (“*Neither rival anticipated that the war would leave both sides exhausted and thereby open the way to Macedonian imperialism*”). 6) Peloponnesian War was a historic turning point in world history. (“*This great war, like other transforming wars, would*

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<sup>97</sup> Swain & Tellis, 2000, p.199

<sup>98</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.596

<sup>99</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.597

<sup>100</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.596

<sup>101</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.600

<sup>102</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.601-603

*embody significant long-term changes in Greece's economy, military affairs, and political organization”).*

However, although the Theory of Hegemonic War is useful in order for the past great wars to be understood, the question is if its relevance becomes limited regarding the contemporary nuclear age. Gilpin suggests that this change in the nature of warfare, as important as it surely is, does not necessarily follow that it has also changed the nature of international relations since international politics continues to be a ‘self-help’ system. *“In the contemporary anarchy of international relations, distrust, uncertainty, and insecurity have caused states to arm themselves and to prepare for war as never before. To be able to say that nuclear weapons have changed the nature of international relations and thus made impossible the outbreak of hegemonic war, a transformation of human consciousness itself would have to take place”*<sup>103</sup>. Even though, no great power would willingly go for a great war, the role of accident in war and the unanticipated forces that are unleashed during it, could lead the situation out of control.



### 3.2 Can United States / China Escape Thucydides Trap?

In 2015, Harvard’s political scientist and professor, Graham Allison coined the phrase ‘Thucydides Trap’ in order to describe the dangerous dynamic caused by ‘fear, honor, interest’: As he put it, the risk associated with Thucydides’ Trap is that “*business as usual*”

—not just an unexpected, extraordinary event—can trigger large-scale conflict. When a rising power is threatening to displace a ruling power, standard crises that would otherwise be contained, can initiate a *cascade of reactions* that, in turn, produce outcomes none of the parties would otherwise have chosen. Example is the assassination of Ferdinand in 1914. When WWI was ended, Europe lay in ruins and every one of the principle actors had lost what he cared about most: Kaiser was tossed out, the Austro-Hungarian Empire dissolved, the Russian tsar overthrown by the Bolsheviks, France never recovered as player in international affairs and England, which had been a creditor for hundred years, was turned into a debtor<sup>104</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.611

<sup>104</sup> Allison, Graham, The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?, *The Atlantic*, Sep 24, 2015 <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/usa-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/> accessed on May 19, 2019



In his book *“Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’ Trap?”*, Allison explains why Thucydides’ Trap is the best lens for understanding U.S.-China relations in the 21st century. The book discusses three fundamental questions<sup>105</sup>:

- 1) What has been the most significant geopolitical event of the last 25 years? **The rise of China. Never before a country has risen so far and so fast, on so many different dimensions.** *“Things have happened so fast, that we haven’t even had time to be astonished”* as he said.
- 2) What will be the most significant geostrategic challenge for the United States in the next 25 years? **The impact of the rise of China on U.S. and on its sense of its role on the world and on the international order that it has conducted and largely underwritten for the last 70 decades.** As professor said: *“Regarding the impact, we haven’t seen the end of. We’ve only seen the beginning of”*.
- 3) Can China – U.S. escape Thucydides trap? **No and yes.** No, in the aspect that history repeats itself. If U.S. insists on *“business as usual”* (and that is what we have seen the last 20 years), then we should expect *“history as usual”*, meaning war, a catastrophic one. Yes, in the aspect that *“only those who failed to study history are condemned to repeat it”*.

Allison also looks at the last 500 years and finds 16 cases<sup>106</sup> with a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power. In 12 of the cases (or 75%), the outcome is war. In 4 of the case the outcome is not war. *“When the parties avoided war, it required huge, painful adjustments in attitudes and actions on the part, not just of the challenger but also the challenged”*<sup>107</sup>. (All cases are presented at the following table).

Based on this research, Allison concludes that Thucydides proposition about *“inevitable”* may be an exaggeration but *“if we said that odds are not good, that would be historically correct”*.

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<sup>105</sup> Allison, Graham, "Destined for War: Can America and China Escape [...]", *Talks at Google*, Jul 18, 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDZAVNPbtBg> accessed on May 19, 2019

<sup>106</sup> Thucydides ’s Trap Case File, *HARVARD Kennedy School-BELFER CENTER for Science and International Affairs* <https://www.belfercenter.org/thucydides-trap/case-file> accessed on May 19, 2019

<sup>107</sup> Allison, *The Atlantic*, 2015

Table 5: Thucydides' Trap Case File

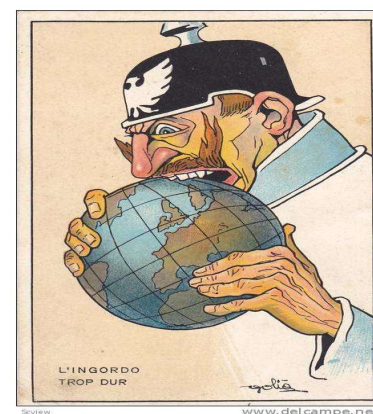
	Period		Ruling Power	Rising Power		Result
1	First half of 16th century		France	Hapsburgs		War
2	16th–17th centuries		Hapsburgs	Ottoman Empire		War
3	17th century		Hapsburgs	Sweden		War
4	17th century		Dutch Republic	England		War
5	Late 17th–early 18th centuries		France	Great Britain		War
6	Late 18th–early 19th centuries		United Kingdom	France		War
7	Mid-19th century		United Kingdom, France	Russia		War
8	19th century		France	Germany		War
9	Late 19th–early 20th centuries		Russia, China	Japan		War
10	Early 20th century		United Kingdom	United States		No war
11	Early 20th century		Russia, U.K., France	Germany		War
12	Mid-20th century		Soviet Union, U.K., France	Germany		War
13	Mid-20th century		United States	Japan		War
14	1970s–1980s		Soviet Union	Japan		No war
15	1940s–1980s		United States	Soviet Union		No war
16	1990s–present		United Kingdom, France	Germany		No war

SOURCE: HARVARD BELFER CENTER FOR SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL REALATIONS<sup>108</sup>

**“If we only knew...”** (German Chancellor’s Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg comment in 1917, regarding the consequences of WWI, 1917<sup>109</sup>)

Photo: caricature of Kaiser Wilhelm II attempting to devour the world

In his article, entitled ‘*Just How Likely Is Another World War? Assessing the similarities and differences between 1914 and 2014*’<sup>110</sup>, Allison focuses on the circumstances that allow the outbreak of World War I, making a comparison between 1914 and 2014. He stresses on the similarities between the two period, noting that “*Thucydides directs us to a powerful commonality*”:



<sup>108</sup> Website <https://www.belfercenter.org/thucydides-trap/resources/case-file-graphic> accessed on May 19, 2019

<sup>109</sup> Allison, Graham, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017, p. xi

<sup>110</sup> Allison, Graham, *Just How Likely Is Another World War? Assessing the similarities and differences between 1914 and 2014*, *The Atlantic*, Jul 30, 2014 <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/07/just-how-likely-is-another-world-war/375320/> accessed on May 19, 2019

- 1) **Thucydides' Trap:** In 1914, the dominant Britain viewed with alarm a rising Germany which overtook its industrial production and naval supremacy. In 2014, U.S. long-standing hegemony is being challenged by an emerging China which on track to surpass the United States in the next decade as the world's largest economy.
- 2) **The virtual inconceivability of 'total' war:** To Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany, a first cousin of king George V of England, war was "*simply unthinkable*". During this period of 'long peace' after WWII, and due to economic globalization and nuclear weapons, war seems equally unthinkable today since participants would lose more than they would gain.
- 3) **Interdependence:** In 1914, the U.K. and Germany were each other's major European trading partner and principal foreign investor. In 2014, China is the United States' second-largest trading partner, the U.S. the largest buyer of Chinese exports, and China the largest foreign holder of American debt.
- 4) **Rising nationalism that accentuates territorial disputes:** "*As a rising China claims islands administered by Japan in the East China Sea, or controlled by neighbors in the South China Sea, many hear echoes of events in the Balkans a century earlier*".
- 5) **Powerful military establishments focused on a primary enemy:** In 1907, Germany's naval expansion approached the point at which it could challenge British naval primacy. The memorandum written by Eyre Crowe, the leading analyst in the British foreign ministry, predicted Germany's pursuit of "*political hegemony and maritime ascendancy*" would pose a threat to the "*independence of her neighbors and ultimately the existence of England*".

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Defense planned against something it calls the 'Anti-Access/Area Denial threat', to resolve a perceived shift towards instability in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations<sup>111</sup>. "*Since its humiliation in 1996, when it was forced to back down from threats to Taiwan after the U.S. sent two aircraft carriers to support Taiwan, China has planned, built, and trained to push U.S. naval forces back beyond Taiwan to the first island chain and eventually to the second*".

- 6) **Entangling alliances** "*which can be a double-edged sword*"<sup>112</sup>: In 1914, a web of complex alliance commitments threatened rapid escalation into great power war. After unifying Germany in 1870, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck constructed a network of alliances that would keep the peace in Europe while isolating Germany's principal enemy, France. Kaiser Wilhelm wrecked Bismarck's finely tuned alliance structure by refusing to extend Germany's alliance with Russia in 1890. Two years later, Russia allied with France. This led Germany to strengthen its ties to Austria-Hungary, and Britain to entertain deeper entanglement with both France and Russia.

In 2014, U.S. has many allies in East Asia with various commitments to them which cover a spectrum from engagement in cases of attack (e.g. Japan) to support and consultation.

Among the differences, the article highlights the existence of nuclear weapons which make a war irrational and unlikely, but not unthinkable.

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<sup>111</sup> 'Understanding the Anti-Access and Area Denial Threat: An Army Perspective', United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2015, p.2

<sup>112</sup> George Washington, 1796

### 3.3 “To Put It Bluntly: China Cannot Rise Peacefully”

In his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, John J. Mearsheimer, the R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, also suggests that rising powers are rarely content with the current distribution of power within the international system; on the contrary, they face a constant incentive to change it in their favor. They almost always have revisionist intentions, and they will use force to alter the balance of power if they think that it can be done at a reasonable price. (“*Simply put, great powers are primed for offense*”<sup>113</sup>). In his theory of great power politics, which he calls ‘Offensive Realism’, Mearsheimer explains *why* great powers behave this way: It is the structure of the international system that forces states – which only seek to be secure – to act aggressively towards each other. And this situation, which no one consciously designed or intended, is “*genuinely tragic*”<sup>114</sup>.

As Mearsheimer puts it, we cannot think seriously about this issue (whether China can rise peacefully or not) without a theory; it is a theoretical issue since we have no facts about the future. “*And we need to have a theory which we must have confidence in, meaning that this theory has been good in explaining the past and the present and therefore, it will do a good job in explaining the future too*”. Based on his own theory, Mearsheimer follows three steps to support the argument that ‘China cannot rise peacefully’<sup>115</sup>: 1) Firstly, he makes an elaboration on Offensive Realism. 2) Then, he presents a synoptic view of American foreign policy from 1783 (the year that U.S. gained its independence) up until the present, which is consistent with his theory. 3) Finally, he supports the argument that China is likely to imitate United States; China is going to behave how the theory predicts, just like the U.S. behaved as the theory predicts.

#### Offensive Realism

His theory starts with five assumptions about how the world works: 1) States are the principles actors in international politics and there is *no higher authority* that sits above those states. In international relations terms, this is *anarchy* (the opposite of hierarchy). 2) All states have some *offensive military capability* which, of course, varies from state to state. 3) No state can be certain about the *intentions* of the other states, especially over the long term. 4) The principle goal of every state is *survival* (not the only goal but the principle one, simply because if a state cannot survive, it cannot pursue any other goal). 5) States are basically *rational actors* (strategic calculators).

These five assumptions lead to three forms of behavior: 1) First there is *fear*: States in the international system fear each other because of offensive capabilities and offensive intentions, as well as the fact that there is no higher authority to provide help. 2) Second form of behavior is *self-help*: States realize that they operate in a self-help system. 3) They also realize that the best way to survive in this

<sup>113</sup> Mearsheimer, John J., *The tragedy of great power politics*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, p.2

<sup>114</sup> Mearsheimer, 2001, p.2

<sup>115</sup> Mearsheimer, John J., University of Chicago, ‘Why China Cannot Rise Peacefully’, *University of Ottawa-Center of International Policy Studies*, Oct 17, 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXov7MkgPB4> accessed on May 19, 2019

system is to be *really powerful*; the most powerful state in the system or the hegemon. If a state could be a global hegemon, its survival would almost be guaranteed.

However, projecting power over huge amounts of land and enormous bodies of water is not easy. And so is not global hegemony (except for the unlikely event wherein one state achieves clear-cut nuclear superiority<sup>116</sup>). So the best outcome that a potential hegemon can hope for is to be a *regional hegemon*. In addition to that, what would further protect state's security is to make sure that there is *no peer competitor*; no other state in the international system is a regional hegemon. This view revolves around the concept of *freedom of roam*. As the professor explains, the reason why U.S. can roam all around the world, "sticking its nose in everybody's business", is not only because it is powerful but also because it does not have any security threats in its own backyard. So what U.S. cares mostly is not to allow a situation to develop where a country dominates Asia (or Europe), the way it dominates the Western Hemisphere because then it will be free to roam. Thus, the ideal situation, from an American point of view, is that China (or Germany, or Russia) has to worry about threats in its own backyard and it is not free to wander around the world. In other words, Americans want other great powers to be present in Asia, so that if China emerges as a potential hegemon, those powers will contain it by themselves, allowing U.S. to remain safely on the sidelines. So the bottom line of the theory is that, in order to be safe, a state must (1) be a regional hegemon and (2) make sure that no other state is a peer competitor (dominates its region the same way).

### **A synoptic view of American foreign policy since 1783**

The U.S., which dominates the Western Hemisphere, is the only regional hegemon in modern history; and this has not happened by accident. When it gained its independence (1783) it was a weak state, comprised of 13 small colonies that run up and down the Atlantic seaboard. However, over the course of roughly the next 70 years, American leaders went to great lengths to establish a regional hegemony; they marched across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean; they displaced huge numbers of native Americans from their land; and they went on war against Mexico (1846-1848) over the independent Republic of Texas; they invaded Canada in 1812 (for the purpose of incorporating it into the U.S.) and they had their gun sights on Canada for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; they would have also expanded into the Caribbean, had it not been the slavery issue. As Mearsheimer says, using the words of the American Senator and historian H.C. Lodge, "*U.S. had a record of conquest, colonization, and territorial expansion unequalled by any people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Or I might add the 20<sup>th</sup> century*"<sup>117</sup>. By 1898 (after the Spanish-American war), the last European empire in America had collapsed and the U.S. had become a regional hegemon.

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<sup>116</sup> Mearsheimer, 2001 p.22.

<sup>117</sup> Mearsheimer, John J., *The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia*, The Chinese Journal of International Politics, Vol. 3, 2010, 381–396 [doi:10.1093/cjip/poq016](https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poq016), pp. 388



But, American leaders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were not just concerned with turning U.S. into a powerful territorial state. They were also determined to push the European great powers out of the Western Hemisphere. This policy is known as the ‘Monroe Doctrine’<sup>118</sup>. (Photo: ‘Uncle Sam’ stakes his claim in the Western Hemisphere in a political cartoon outlining the basic tenants of the Monroe Doctrine)

Fortunately for the U.S., there were not peer competitors in the 19th century when it was in the process of establishing hegemony over the Western Hemisphere. But in the 20th century there were four peer competitors: Imperial Germany, Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. And U.S. played a critical role in putting all these competitors out of history. So U.S. followed the theory.

### **How China will behave when it gets more powerful? “What is good for the goose is good for the gander.”**

What was good for Americans, why wouldn’t be good for Chinese too? Mearsheimer expects China to act the way U.S. has acted over its long history. China is going to be the most powerful state in Asia by far. It also remembers what happened when it was weak; it was victimized by Europeans, Americans and Japanese. Chinese people fully realize what are the consequences of being weak; as a result, they also recognize that the only way to survive in the anarchic international system, where the intentions of the other states are unknown, is to be really powerful. It would have been much better for China if, from 1850 forward, it was, by far, the most powerful state of the planet instead of being one of the weakest states. He continues saying that China will try to dominate the Asia-Pacific region (and become a regional hegemon), much as the U.S. dominates the Western Hemisphere. For good strategic reasons, it will seek to maximize the power gap between itself and potentially dangerous neighbors like India, Japan and Russia (with which it seems to be friend today). Of course, it will pursue military superiority, but not in the aspect of conquering territories (like the U.S.); rather, in order to dictate the boundaries of acceptable behavior to neighboring countries<sup>119</sup>. A much more powerful China is also expected to try to push the U.S. out of the Asia-Pacific region, developing each own version of the Monroe Doctrine. In fact, we are already seeing inklings of that policy.

### **And what is the likely American response?**

They are not going to tolerate peer competitors as the theory says. Both theory and the empirical record are quite clear. China is going to have the same treatment as the other four peer competitors in the past.

<sup>118</sup> Articulated by the American president James Monroe in 1823, the three main concepts of the doctrine were separate spheres of influence for the Americas and Europe, non-colonization, and non-intervention. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/monroe> accessed on May 19, 2019

<sup>119</sup> Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 389

U.S. will go to enormous lengths to *contain* China and make sure that it will not dominate Asia. Proof of that is Obama's 'Pivot to Asia'<sup>120</sup>. The more power China accrues; the more U.S. will pivot to Asia.

### **How China's neighbors are likely to behave?**

China's neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region are certain to fear its rise as well, and they will do too whatever they can to prevent China from achieving regional hegemony. Most of China's neighbors will eventually join an American-led balancing coalition, designed to check China's rise, much as the way Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and even China joined forces with the U.S. to contain the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The balancing coalition would include U.S.-South Korea-Japan-Taiwan-Singapore-Vietnam-India and Russia.

And why do neighbors want U.S. in the area? From their point of view, the threat is China and not the U.S. which is a distant power. Their great fear is that U.S. will not be there for them. The problem that these countries face is that they are not big enough to build the military capability to deter China, which is not a status quo power (content with the status quo) as it has many territorial disputes with its neighbors. Given the size differential, all neighbors are looking at the U.S. for help. This explains Obama's Pivot to Asia to reassure them that U.S. will be there for them.

### **The argument about economic interdependence. "Who is going to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs?"**

The professor examines the arguments that, at times, have been used against his theory. One argument is that China will not grow further. Another, that it has a Confucian culture and it will rise peacefully. But, as he believes, these arguments are not valid. Nuclear weapons are a strong counter-argument to the theory, but as the Cold War demonstrates, this does not mean that war between nuclear powers is no longer thinkable; they still have reason to fear each other<sup>121</sup>. There is no question that great-power war is less likely in a nuclear world, but great powers still compete for security even under the nuclear shadow, sometimes intensely, and war between them remains a real possibility. The United States and the Soviet Union, for example, waged an unremitting security competition for forty-five years, despite the presence of nuclear weapons on both sides<sup>122</sup>.

According to his view, the most serious argument of all against a hegemonic war is that of economic interdependence. U.S. and China, as well as China and its neighbors have such economic interdependence that, one could say, that there is no way to fight a war. Economics matters a lot. However, in more circumstances, *politics trumps economics*, or security considerations trump economic ones. For example, Chinese have made it clear that Taiwan is of such importance to them that if it declared its independence, they would go to war, even though they would have 'to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs'. Furthermore, to Japanese, China is a trading partner. However, the dispute over the Senkaku islands could fuel nationalism (politics); an ideology even more popular than democracy (especially to the Chinese Communist Party which lacks democratic legitimacy). Even if economics

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<sup>120</sup> The pivot is meant to be a strategic "re-balancing" of U.S. interests from Europe and the Middle East toward East Asia) <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/04/what-exactly-does-it-mean-that-the-us-is-pivoting-to-asia/274936/>

<sup>121</sup> Mearsheimer, 2001, p.24

<sup>122</sup> Mearsheimer, 2001, p.30

has sometimes a deepen effect, politics ultimately triumphs. That is why we finally have a security competition.

**Is it war possible? “If China becomes a giant Hong Kong, it is going to be very messy in Asia.”**

Mearsheimer says that, one problem with intentions is that, unlike military capabilities which one can see and count, they cannot be empirically verified<sup>123</sup>. In that aspect, it is difficult to distinguish whether a state intends to use its military capabilities offensively or defensively. A very familiar concept in international relations literature is ‘security dilemma’: one state's gain in security often inadvertently threatens others<sup>124</sup>. As the professor explains, a very good example of this concept is the notion of ‘China’s containment’ that was mentioned above. From the U.S. perspective, developing a balancing coalition in order to contain China could be a very defensively oriented strategy. But, from the Chinese aspect, this will not look like containment but like *encirclement* (just as Triple Entente in 1914 looked like to Germany). On the other hand, anything that the Chinese do today to defend themselves, perfectly legitimate on their part (e.g. increasing defense spending, purchasing aircrafts etc.), U.S. automatically categorizes it as ‘offensive in nature’ and feel obliged to build their defensive capabilities to offset Chinese offensive capabilities, and so on and so forth... The result would be an intense security competition between China and its rivals, with the ever-present danger of great-power war hanging over them. In short, China and the United States are destined to be adversaries as China's power grows<sup>125</sup>.

This theory - like all social science theories - is right sometimes but not all of the time. Mearsheimer estimates that his theory is (also) right about 75% of the time (“*this is as good as you can get in social science about theory*”). He just hopes that this is one of the times that his theory will be proved wrong...

### 3.4 Conclusions

Even though theories are simplifications of reality, leaving out all sorts of factors that sometimes matter greatly, we have no choice but to employ them in order to make sense of the world. And if we are trying to predict what will happen if China rises, there is no way to do that without a theory<sup>126</sup>. On the one hand, there are the ‘optimistic’ theories which suggest that the end of the Cold War has brought us to “*the end of history*”<sup>127</sup>. This aspect suggests that, probably due to the great tragedies that humanity suffered because of war, Gilpin’s ‘transformation of human consciousness’<sup>128</sup> has been achieved and great powers no longer view each other as potential military rivals, but instead as members of a family of nations. However, on the other hand, ‘pessimists’ insist on the idea that the real world remains a realist world. And history usually repeats itself. Actually, history is a useful guide to the future. Even if it is human nature and the

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<sup>123</sup> Mearsheimer, 2010, p.383

<sup>124</sup> Jervis, Robert, *Cooperation under the Security Dilemma*, World Politics vol. 30, no.2, Cambridge University Press, January 1978, pp. 167–174, (pp.170)

<sup>125</sup> Mearsheimer, 2001, p.2

<sup>126</sup> Mearsheimer, John J., University of Chicago, ‘Why China Cannot Rise Peacefully’, University of Ottawa-Center of International Policy Studies, Oct 17, 2012

<sup>127</sup> Fukuyama, Francis, “*The End of History?*”. The National Interest No 16, summer 1989, pp.3–18  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184> ‘The End of History: “*the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government*”’.

<sup>128</sup> Gilpin, 1988, pp.611



passions that dominates it, or the structure of the international system that cause states to compete for power and act aggressively against each other, the outcome is that a great power war has always been and will always be a possibility. In the case of U.S./China, could it be over Taiwan, North Korea (this has already happened in 1950), South China Sea or the Senkaku Islands? Only the future will tell us...

What makes a future Chinese threat so worrisome is that it might be far more powerful and dangerous than any of the potential hegemony that the U.S. confronted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Neither Imperial Germany, nor Imperial Japan, nor Nazi Germany, nor the Soviet Union had nearly as much latent power as the U.S. had during their confrontation<sup>129</sup>. But if China were to become a giant Hong Kong... it is hard to see how the U.S. could prevent it from becoming a peer competitor. *“Two centuries ago, Napoleon warned: ‘Let China sleep; when she wakes, she will shake the world’. Today China has awakened, and the world is beginning to shake”*<sup>130</sup>.

## **PART II - GRAND STRATEGY: UNDERSTANDING CHINA’S INTENTIONS**

### **CHAPTER 4: CHINA’S PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT GRAND STRATEGY**

#### **4.1 From Maoism to Dengism**

As Michael Pillsbury refers in his book, *“it was not Nixon who went to China, but China that went to Nixon”*<sup>131</sup>. After the catastrophic policies of ‘The Great Leap Forward’<sup>132</sup> and ‘Cultural Revolution’<sup>133</sup>, based on the autarkic road that Mao had operated, China recognized that it should become part of the international system. It also recognized the crucial importance of winning American support and cooperation in its pursuit of economic growth. (*“The Mao–Nixon accord of 1972 marked a profound change in their relationship”*<sup>134</sup>). Shortly after Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping initiated socialist market reforms in 1978, thereby beginning the radical change in Mao's ideology. Deng Xiaoping Theory (or Dengism<sup>135</sup>) did not claim to reject Marxism–Leninism or Mao Zedong Thought, but instead it was supposed to adapt them to the existing socio-economic conditions of China, creating ‘a Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’, as it has been

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<sup>129</sup> Mearsheimer, 2001, p.103

<sup>130</sup> Allison, 2017, p. vii

<sup>131</sup> Pillsbury, Michael, 2015, p.67 (e-Book)

<sup>132</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.262

<sup>133</sup> Roberts, 2006, p.269

<sup>134</sup> Jacques, Martin, *When China Rules the World*, New York: Penguin Books, 2012, p.156

<sup>135</sup> Kim Woo Hyun, Kim Hee Tai, Choi Myung-Ha, *The Erosion of Chinese Communist Ideology Marxism-Leninism, Mao’s Thought, Dengism, and the Thinking of Jiang Zemin*, Chinese Politics 4th week –Ideology and Governance

called since then. Deng stressed opening China to the outside world: learning advanced science and technology from the developed countries; engaging economically with the outside world; and becoming part of the global system of trade, investment and finance. In 1971 the People's Republic of China (PRC) joined the U.N. Security Council, replacing the Taiwanese Republic of China (ROC). In 1979, U.S./China established formal diplomatic relations; a step which created the conditions for the PRC to join the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) in 1986 and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001.

Since 'Reform and Opening Up' in the late 1970s, China has experienced remarkable economic growth. Economic growth rates were transformed from the 4–5 percent of the Mao period to an annual growth rate of 9.5 percent between 1978 and 1992<sup>136</sup>. Currently, F (PPP)<sup>137</sup>. How China will use this economic power is one of the most important questions in international relations today. Will a more powerful China be a status quo or a revisionist power, or something in between? Understanding China's intentions is therefore very important.

## 4.2 China's Peaceful Development/Rise

The Chinese government has emphasized a grand strategy focusing on 'Peaceful Development', a vision set out in two white papers in 2005 and 2011, previously articulated as 'Peaceful Rise' (the term was replaced on the ground that 'rise' sounded too provocative<sup>138</sup> and China was in need of peace in order to achieve development).

Peaceful Development/Rise (PDR) was not a complete novel idea. Underpinning Chinese foreign policy for the last 60 years have been the so called 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence'. These are: 1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; 2) mutual non-aggression; 3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; 4) equality and mutual benefit; and 5) peaceful co-existence<sup>139</sup>. In addition, PDR has heavily borrowed from Deng Xiaoping's 24-character foreign policy doctrine which stated: "*making cool observations; securing its position; calmly coping with issues; concealing its capacities and biding its time; be good at maintaining a low profile; never claiming leadership*"<sup>140</sup>.

Currently, these principles are reflected on the wording of the 2011 white paper on China's Peaceful Development: "*Promoting the building of a harmonious world; pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace; promoting new thinking on security, featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit,*

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<sup>136</sup> Jacques, 2012, p.154

<sup>137</sup> Report for Selected Country Groups and Subjects (PPP valuation of country GDP), IMF-World Economic Outlook Database, Oct 2017

<sup>138</sup> Buzan, Barry, 2014, pp.384

<sup>139</sup> Weissmann, Mikael, *Chinese Foreign Policy in a Global Perspective: A Responsible Reformer "Striving For Achievement"*, Journal of China and International Relations (JCIR): VOL. 3, No. 1, 2015, pp.151-166, <https://doi.org/10.5278/ojs.jcir.v3i1.1150>, (pp.154)

<sup>140</sup> Danner, 2018, p.32

*equality and coordination; actively living up to international responsibility; promoting regional cooperation and good-neighborly relations”.*

However, one must look beyond principles and focus on facts to identify China’s foreign policy objectives. A good place to start is to interpret its Grand Strategy.

### 4.3 China’s Core Interests and Relevant Threats

A grand strategy must determine what a state’s ultimate goals and interests are or its *core interests*; the *primary threats* to those goals and interests; the ways in which a state’s finite resources can be used to deal with competing challenges and opportunities; and the *policies* and initiatives – military, diplomatic, and economic – geared toward defending its interests and achieving its long-term goals. “*It is the conceptual framework that helps nations determine where they want to go and how they ought to get there;*”<sup>141</sup>

China usually summarizes its core interests as being sovereignty, security and development<sup>142</sup>. These are further defined in China’s 2011 Peaceful Development White Paper as: *national security, state sovereignty, territorial integrity and national reunification; maintenance of China’s political system and social stability; ensuring sustainable economic and social development*. To elaborate on that:

**National Security** is a typical interest of any state and refers to the ultimate goal of survival: It covers state sovereignty and territorial integrity. Sovereignty refers to the country’s ability to exercise authority over all geographic claims, including Taiwan<sup>143</sup>. It also includes territory, which refers to the integrity of all land and maritime borders. Threats to national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity are the ‘three evils’ of *terrorism, separatism and extremism* referred to in China’s 2012 Defense White Paper<sup>144</sup>. China particularly experiences these forces in Xinjiang, Tibet and Taiwan. Threats to sovereignty also include challenges by rival claimants to disputed territories:

**Territorial Disputes:** Chinese territorial interests are focused mainly on disputes involving India, in Aksai Chin and in the Indian northeast with respect to the McMahon line and the status of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh; Japan, over the Senkaku Islands; Taiwan, which remains a complex dispute over both the political status of the island and the right to rule;<sup>145</sup> the South China Sea, where China and several Southeast Asian states have claims on the Spratly Islands (claimed entirely or in part by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines) and the

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<sup>141</sup> Brands, Hal, *What Good is Grand Strategy? Power and purpose in American statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014, p. 3

<sup>142</sup> Mazarr, Michael J., Heath, Timothy R. & Cevallos, Astrid St., *China and the International Order*, Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2018, p.13 [www.rand.org/t/RR2423](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2423) accessed on May 20, 2019

<sup>143</sup> Mazarr, Heath & Cevallos, 2018, p.14

<sup>144</sup> Ministry of National Defense, The People’s Republic of China, ‘The diversified employment of China’s armed forces’, Ministry of National Defense, April 2013, [https://media.nti.org/pdfs/China\\_Defense\\_White\\_Paper\\_2013.pdf](https://media.nti.org/pdfs/China_Defense_White_Paper_2013.pdf) accessed on May 20, 2019

<sup>145</sup> Swain & Tellis, 2000, p.131

Paracel Islands (claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam)<sup>146</sup>. These claims in the South China Sea are known as the ‘China’s Nine-Dash Line’, a U-shaped line made up of nine or ten dashes, sometimes likened to a ‘cow’s tongue’<sup>147</sup>, running down the coast of Vietnam, along the coasts of mainland Malaysia and Borneo, and looping back up past the islands of the Philippines to Taiwan.

While official Chinese documents, discussing territorial integrity as a core interest, mention Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet, China also released an official position paper on the South China Sea in late 2014 arguing for its “*indisputable sovereignty over the South China Sea Islands . . . and the adjacent waters*”<sup>148</sup>.

**National reunification** refers to Taiwan but also Hong Kong and Macaw after the end of the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ system. (Despite the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics in mainland China, “*the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR*<sup>149</sup> and the *Basic Law of the Macao SAR stipulate that the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years*”<sup>150</sup>. This date expires in 2047 for Hong Kong and 2049 for Macau.

National security also includes **the maintenance of the country’s political system**, defined by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule<sup>151</sup>. Thus, a vital objective of China’s leadership is for the party to remain in power. State Councilor Dai Bingguo, defined this core interest as “*China’s form of government and political system and stability, namely the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the socialist system and socialism with Chinese characteristics*”<sup>152</sup>. A threat to Chinese political system is the perception that the West seeks to undermine CPC rule due to ideological hostility towards socialism and authoritarianism, trying to impose western values such as democracy and human rights.

**Economic and social development:** Currently, the Constitution of the CPC refers “*Development is the party’s top priority in governing and rejuvenating the country*”<sup>153</sup>. The Constitution goes

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<sup>146</sup> US OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENCE- Annual Report to Congress: *Military and Security Developments Involving the PRC*, 2019, p.7 [https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019\\_CHINA\\_MILITARY\\_POWER\\_REPORT.pdf](https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf) accessed on May 20, 2019

<sup>147</sup> Miller, Tom, *China’s Asian Dream: Empire Building along the New Silk Road*, Zed Books Ltd., 2017, p.127 (eBook)

<sup>148</sup> Position Paper of the Government of the People’s Republic of China on the Matter of Jurisdiction in the South China Sea Arbitration Initiated by the Republic of the Philippines, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People’s Republic of China, Dec 7, 2014 [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/eng/snhwtlewj\\_1/t1368895.htm](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/eng/snhwtlewj_1/t1368895.htm) accessed on May 20, 2019

<sup>149</sup> Special Administrative Region

<sup>150</sup> Leng, Tiexun, *On the Fundamental Characteristics of the “One Country, Two Systems” Policy*, Academic Journal of “One Country, Two Systems” Vol. I, pp. 49-59, (pp.54)

[http://www.ipm.edu.mo/cntfiles/upload/docs/common/1country\\_2systems/issue1/p49.pdf](http://www.ipm.edu.mo/cntfiles/upload/docs/common/1country_2systems/issue1/p49.pdf) accessed on May 20, 2019

<sup>151</sup> Mazarr, Heath & Cevallos, 2018, p.14

<sup>152</sup> Dai Bingguo, ‘Adhere To The Path Of Peaceful Development’, *Xinhua News*, Dec. 6, 2010

<https://china.usc.edu/dai-bingguo-%E2%80%9CAdhere-path-peaceful-development%E2%80%9D-dec-6-2010> accessed on May 20, 2019

<sup>153</sup> *Constitution of the Communist Party of China*, Revised and adopted at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 24, 2017, p.4 <http://www.china.org.cn/20171105-001.pdf> accessed on May 20, 2019

on to state that strategic objectives of economic and social development are set as: “*to bring China into a moderately prosperous society*” by the time of the Party's centenary (in 2021), bring per capita GDP “*up to the level of moderately developed countries*”, and “*realize modernization*” by the time of the centenary of the People's Republic of China (in 2049). These goals are encapsulated in the concept of ‘Chinese dream of national rejuvenation’. Thus, another vital objective is to promote economic development in order to achieve the *two centenary goals*. Threat to development is disruption to supplies of vital resources necessary for sustainable economic development. This includes disruption of key shipping lanes or instability in distant countries that could interrupt China’s access to important natural resources and markets<sup>154</sup>. For example, around 80% of its energy is transported from Middle East and West Africa to China via tankers passing from the Indian Ocean through the South China Sea via the Strait of Malacca<sup>155</sup>, and China is looking for alternative transport route to bypass this classical chokepoint. This threat has been called ‘Malacca Dilemma’ and it has been also linked to the perceived threat of U.S.<sup>156</sup> (in the case of conflict, the U.S. would use its naval superiority to control the Malacca Straits and cut off the supply of these vital resources).

In his 2014 article, Barry Buzan summarizes the key components of China’s Peaceful Development Grand Strategy: “*Maintaining the exclusive rule of the communist party; maintaining high economic growth; maintaining the stability of Chinese society; defending the country’s territorial integrity, including reunification and territorial disputes; increasing China’s national power relative to the United States, other great powers and China’s neighbors, and achieving a more multipolar, less U.S.-dominated, world order (anti-hegemonism); maintaining favorable regional and global conditions for China’s development; avoiding having others perceive China as threatening*”<sup>157</sup>.

**Great-power status:** Danner adds another component to China’s core interests. As he refers in his book, “*what needs to be added to Buzan’s identifiers for this grand strategy is what is inherently included in it, perhaps without explicitly stating it: China’s ambition to rise to great-power status and to become a truly global power. After all, the chosen grand strategy of ‘Peaceful Rise’, which was later changed to ‘Peaceful Development’, entails this*”<sup>158</sup>. He emphasizes the importance that historical memory may play in the making of grand strategy<sup>159</sup>. As it was analyzed above, honor is a crucial component of Chinese collective memory. A great-power status would restore its honor (prestige, recognition) in the international system after a Century of Humiliation; and this is part of the China’s dream for rejuvenation and becoming great again. (“*Xi Jinping defined national rejuvenation in the Chinese dream which became the top national goal. The*

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<sup>154</sup> Mazarr, Heath & Cevallos, 2018, p.14

<sup>155</sup> US Energy Information Administration, ‘China-International energy data and analysis’, May 14, 2015 [https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis\\_includes/countries\\_long/China/china.pdf](https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/China/china.pdf) accessed on May 20, 2019

<sup>156</sup> Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 395

<sup>157</sup> Buzan, 2014, pp. 393

<sup>158</sup> Danner, 2018, p.35

<sup>159</sup> Danner, 2018, p.38

*national rejuvenation as a phrase literally refers to resuming China's historical international status as the world's most advanced state during the period of Zhenguan Prosperity (627–649 AD) in early Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD))”<sup>160</sup>.*

What China considers as threat to its rise to the status of great power is its ‘containment’ by the United States and its alliance system. China officially opposes hegemonism and power politics and it often speaks against ‘Cold War mentality’<sup>161</sup>. This has a two-fold meaning: Firstly, that China does not want to be perceived as a threat by its neighbors and the United-States in order not to provoke ‘security dilemma’ concerns which would hinder its development. Dai Bingguo has addressed this most directly: “*We do not seek hegemony and will never compete with other countries for leadership in our region, seek, so-called, joint hegemony or follow, so-called, Monroe Doctrine*”<sup>162</sup>. Secondly, China seeks to warn the U.S. and its allies against attempting to contain China to preserve U.S. hegemony in the region. Peaceful development white paper suggests that states “*should abandon the Cold War mentality and confrontation between different alliances*”. Dai Bingguo also said that “*there are those who, out of Cold War mentality and geopolitical needs, have continued to sell weapons to Taiwan in disregard of China's firm opposition*”.

Since grand strategy is a fundamentally realist concept, Danner uses Thucydides’ drivers of fear-honor-interest to make the following analysis: “***Fear*** and the attendant search for security (and survival) will be mainly associated with the grand strategy design component of ***military strategy***. ***Honor*** and the attendant search for prestige, status and recognition will be mainly associated with the grand strategy design components of ***diplomacy and legitimacy***. Also, (economic) ***interest*** and the attendant search for wealth is inherently connected to the grand strategy design component of ***economic policy***”<sup>163</sup>. Taking into account all the aforementioned elements, China’s Grand Strategy can be summarized as the table shows:

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<sup>160</sup> Yan, Xuotong, 2014, pp.164

<sup>161</sup> See for example, The Constitution of CPC, (p.7), and the 2011 white paper of China’s Peaceful Development

<sup>162</sup> Dai Bingguo, “Adhere To The Path Of Peaceful Development,” Xinhua News, Dec. 6, 2010

<sup>163</sup> Danner, 2018, p. 39

Table 6: China's Core Interests

<b><i>Drivers</i></b>	<b><i>Core interests</i></b>	<b><i>Components</i></b>	<b><i>Threats</i></b>	<b><i>Policies</i></b>
<b>Fear</b>	<b>Security/Survival</b>			
	national security	Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan, disputed territories	existential threats, terrorism, separatism, extremism	<b>military</b>
	state sovereignty			
	territorial integrity			
national reunification	Taiwan, Hong-Kong, Macau	separatism		
	social & political stability	CPC rule, socialism with Chinese characteristics	ideological opponents: Western values	
<b>Interest</b>	<b>Economic and Social Development</b>	2 centenary goals	access to natural resources and markets, key sea lines of communication, instability near vital energy sources	<b>economic</b>
<b>Honor</b>	<b>Great-Power Status</b>	Chinese dream of national rejuvenation	'China threat', China's containment, hegemonism, power politics, 'Cold War mentality'	<b>diplomatic</b>

## CHAPTER 5: PEACEFUL V.S. ASSERTIVE GRAND STRATEGY

While Deng's foreign policy doctrine served as the main basis for the current PDR in the beginning, not all of his suggestions can still be said to be followed completely. For example, 'keeping a low profile' and 'hiding one's strengths' cannot be said to be reconciled with China claiming territory in the East and South China Seas or building up a blue-water navy<sup>164</sup>. With the onset of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 and after, Chinese decision-makers are perceived to have changed their perception of China's capabilities relative to a seemingly declining United States. China seems less willing 'to bide its time'; instead it may feel that its time has come...

This is what has inspired the debate on China's rising assertiveness and the different interpretations on the nature and course of its grand strategy. There are several different viewpoints about China's grand strategy represented by different sources. In 2000, Swaine and Tellis, labeled China's grand strategy as 'calculative'<sup>165</sup>; they argued that by that time, China had already evolved a clear grand strategy aimed at pursuing its own development and rising within a US-dominated order. They

<sup>164</sup> See Chapters 7 & 8 of the present paper

<sup>165</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.97

described this strategy as primarily ‘transitional’, aiming at getting China through a difficult period of relative weakness without generating ‘China threat’ reactions from other international actors, until it became strong enough to assert itself in power terms. They made the prediction that, about 2020 - 2025<sup>166</sup>, this calculative strategy would, most probable, evolve into an ‘assertive’ grand strategy. In addition, Michael Pillsbury takes a similar view, talking about a ‘secret strategy’<sup>167</sup> aiming at China replacing the U.S. as a global hegemon, and whose origins can be found as early as the Mao’s era, when China approached United States. On the other hand, Martin Jacques supports that China is going to be ‘a different great power’<sup>168</sup> since it will compete U.S. not in terms of military power but rather economic and cultural preeminence. Finally, there is also the Chinese point of view; Yan Xuetong argues that China’s ‘keeping a low profile’ strategy has indeed shifted to a more proactive, ‘striving for achievement’<sup>169</sup> one, but not on the basis of strategic calculations and secrecy, but rather out of the recognition on the part of China that it should bear international responsibility as a great power. His argumentation is based on a ‘Chinese Realism’<sup>170</sup>, in contrast with the Western Realism which the concept of Grand Strategy comes from. Some of the above views are going to be further elaborated.

## 5.1 From a Calculative to an Assertive Strategy

In 2000, Swaine and Tellis argued that China’s engagement with the international system, from its opening up in the late 1970s, suggested that the country had pursued key interests, including prosperity, security, and prestige, by taking advantage of the economic and political opportunities offered by the existing system. They described China’s grand strategy during that period (from late 1970s to 2000) as ‘calculative’:

The logic underlying this calculative strategy was one of ‘constrained maximization’<sup>171</sup>, seeking to increase China’s power, but doing so in a non-provocative way. The objectives of this strategy included: 1) to strengthen domestic order and well-being by producing high rates of economic growth; 2) to increase the legitimacy of its governing regime; 3) to enhance its national economic and technological capabilities and thereby 4) to strengthen its military prowess; and 5) improve its standing and influence in the international political order<sup>172</sup>. This ‘calculative strategy’ could be summarized by its three main policies<sup>173</sup>:

1) First, a highly pragmatic, non-ideological policy approach keyed to market-led economic growth and the maintenance of amicable international political relations with all states, especially the major powers;

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<sup>166</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.xi

<sup>167</sup> Pillsbury, 2015

<sup>168</sup> Jacques, Martin, Why China Will Be a Very Different Kind of Great Power, *Eminent Speakers Series* 2014: zaobao.sg, Feb 23, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bahMPWwNKzo> accessed on May 22, 2019

<sup>169</sup> Yan, Xuetong, 2014, pp 153-184

<sup>170</sup> Yan Xuetong on Chinese Realism, the Tsinghua School of International Relations, and the Impossibility of Harmony’, ‘Theory Talk #51: *Theory Talks*, Nov 28, 2012 <http://www.theory-talks.org/2012/11/theory-talk-51.html> accessed on May 22, 2019

<sup>171</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.113

<sup>172</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.112

<sup>173</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.113



2) Second, a deliberate restraint in the use of force, combined with efforts to modernize and incrementally streamline the Chinese military, albeit at a modest pace; and

3) Third, an expanded involvement in regional and global interstate politics and various international, multilateral fora, with an emphasis, through such interactions, on attaining asymmetric gains.

**1) Market-led economic growth and amicable international political relations:** China had pursued amicable international political relations with all states, especially the major powers in order to ensure a secure and peaceful environment able to support its economic development. In this context, China had focused on developing and maintaining cordial relations with the United States to encourage it to consistently underwrite the continuing growth in Chinese power and at the same time hinder any U.S. efforts that may be directed toward frustrating the expansion in Chinese capacities<sup>174</sup>. This was grounded in the recognition that the U.S. was an important trading partner and major investor in China, while simultaneously remained a major rival in a competition for relative strength<sup>175</sup>. As a *trading partner*, U.S. could ensure continued access to the richest and most valuable market in the world and also assure permanent ‘most favored nation’ status which China enjoyed before its admittance into the World Trade Organization in 2001 (a bilateral agreement was signed in 1979 which required annual renewal)<sup>176</sup>. In addition, a *U.S. investor*, with its significant economic interests deriving from large investments in China, could undercut any adverse political objectives that may be pursued by the U.S. government, coopting U.S. policy through its domestic politics<sup>177</sup>. Chinese efforts to deal with U.S. as a *competitor*, had been concentrated on encouraging an ‘Asia for Asians’ sentiment by convincing both the U.S. and Asian states that the ‘Asian way’ remained a distinctive alternative to the Aglo-American modes of ordering relations and that the Asia-Pacific region could manage its own affairs<sup>178</sup>.

**2) Restraint in the use of force – efforts to modernize Chinese military:** As part of its calculative strategy, China had sought to develop a range of military capabilities to sustain an expanded level of political and operational objectives. These objectives included: (a) securing the defense of Chinese sovereignty and national territory against threats or attacks from all manner of opponents, including highly sophisticated military forces; (b) acquiring the ability to counter or neutralize a range of potential security threats along China’s entire periphery, but especially in maritime areas; (c) acquiring the ability to use military power as a more potent and versatile instrument of armed diplomacy and statecraft in support of a complex set of regional and global policies; and (d) eventually developing the power-projection and extended territorial defense capabilities commensurate with the true great power status expected in the 21th century<sup>179</sup>. These efforts had materialized at two levels: The first level consisted of slow but determined efforts at nuclear modernization which was not focusing on increasing the size of its nuclear inventory, but rather on deterring preemptive strikes<sup>180</sup>. The second level occurred in the conventional realm, area where Chinese achievements were much more significant. Because China’s land borders were relatively secure at this time, the most visible dimensions of the conventional modernization had involved *air and naval forces*. Particularly, naval capabilities were seen as

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<sup>174</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.114

<sup>175</sup> Ibid

<sup>176</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.116

<sup>177</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.118

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

<sup>179</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.121

<sup>180</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.123

indispensable for the defense of offshore claims, especially those relating to Taiwan and South China Sea<sup>181</sup>. However, the amount of resources devoted to military modernization had increased in a pace that was intended neither to undermine civilian development nor to alarm both the peripheral states and the major powers; which was, in essence, the clearest manifestation of the ‘calculative’ strategy<sup>182</sup>.

**3) Expanded involvement in international, multilateral fora, with an emphasis on attaining asymmetric gains:** China either participated or had sought to actively participate in all regimes that promise asymmetric gains. In this category lied all the regimes connected with the international economy, global trade, the diffusion of technology, and international governance<sup>183</sup>. In 2001, it entered the World Trade Organization on preferential terms as a developing country (because of this quest for asymmetric gains, the U.S. had for several years prevented China from securing membership in the organization). It had also profitably interacted with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), and other financial institutions that promise preferential access to capital, technical know-how and resources<sup>184</sup>. China had continued to participate fully in the United Nations for reasons connected with both status and interests. As one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, it had the opportunity to shape global and regional governance<sup>185</sup>. It had also participated in regional institutions when it realized that its lack of participation could result in these institutions adopting policies that might not be in China’s best interests, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum and the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference<sup>186</sup>. Moreover, China had sought to undercut through participation, those regimes that threaten the political interests of its communist government. The best examples of these were in the issue-areas of human rights, personal liberties and political freedoms as it viewed them as a western view of political arrangements rather than as universal norms<sup>187</sup>. China had also undercut or defected from those regimes that threaten its political and strategic interests. For example, it had assisted the Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs of some countries in its periphery, such as Iran and Pakistan, overlooking the universal obligations it had undertaken with respect to proliferation. (China had joined international regimes such as the Biological Weapons Convention in 1985, the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1992, the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996)<sup>188</sup>. In other cases, it had extorted benefits from the developed states as the price for its participation in regimes such as the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in 1987<sup>189</sup>.

The study predicted that it was only by the period 2015-2020 at the very earliest - and more likely 2020-2025 - that China might begin to adopt a *new* security strategy. Growing Chinese power would most likely result in a more assertive China, seeking to establish some sort of hegemony to promote and

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<sup>181</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.125

<sup>182</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.128

<sup>183</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.134

<sup>184</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.135

<sup>185</sup> Ibid

<sup>186</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.136

<sup>187</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.136-137

<sup>188</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.138

<sup>189</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.139

protect its interest<sup>190</sup>. China could be expected to pursue most, if not all, of the core elements of those assertive grand strategies pursued by major powers in the past. These elements include<sup>191</sup>:

- 1) Efforts to augment its military capabilities in a manner commensurate with its increased power; including increasingly muscular overseas presence and greatly enlarged foreign security commitments.
- 2) Develop a sphere of influence by acquiring new allies and underwriting the protection of others;
- 3) Acquire new or reclaim old territory for China's resources or for symbolic reasons by penalizing, if necessary, any opponents who resist such claims;
- 4) Prepare to redress past wrongs it believes it may have suffered;
- 5) Attempt to rewrite the prevailing international 'rules of the game' to better reflect its own interests;
- 6) Even ready itself to thwart preventive war or to launch predatory attacks on its foes.

## 5.2 Moral Realism: The Chinese Theory of International Relations

The 2011 white paper on China's Peaceful Development stated that the Chinese government based its foreign policy on the fine tradition of Chinese culture, and that "*peaceful development carries forward Chinese historical and cultural tradition*"<sup>192</sup>. Yan Xuetong, professor and Dean of the Institute of International Relations, at Tsinghua University, explains how Chinese realism, based on ancient Chinese thought, was conceived and became the basis of Peaceful Development:

Since, International Relation Theory has been shaped primarily by the history of western countries, a debate among Chinese scholars led to the conclusion that ancient Chinese thought could *enrich* it so that it can better understand and predict interstate world and develop more universal values. A great source of inspiration was the pre-Qin Chinese history: Three thousand years ago, the Western Zhou dynasty was like the U.S. hegemon after the Cold War, a unipolar system. After the Western Zhou dynasty was the Spring and Autumn period and there were some thirty countries within the realm, which by the Warring States period was reduced to seven, before being united as one country in the Qin dynasty. So drawing a parallel between Chinese history and contemporary world politics, after the Cold War we entered a unipolar world, resembling the Zhou dynasty. Where is it moving? Many people are talking about multipolarization, which means a transfer from a unipolar configuration to a multipolar one, similar to the transfer from the Western Zhou domination to the Spring and Autumn period. Thus, they turned to considering what happened in that period, and what one might learn from the thinkers of that time<sup>193</sup>. In his book, Yan concludes that there emerged a rich discourse of statecraft that may still be relevant for the present-day context<sup>194</sup>:

The pre-Qin thinkers held that *morality* and the interstate order are directly related, especially at the level of the personal morality of the leader and its role in determining the stability of interstate order.

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<sup>190</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.232

<sup>191</sup> Swaine and Tellis, 2000, p.233

<sup>192</sup> China's Peaceful Development 2011 White Paper, (chapter IV. China's Path of Peaceful Development Is a Choice Necessitated by History)

<sup>193</sup> Yan, on Chinese Realism, 2012, p. 3

<sup>194</sup> Yan, Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press - China Series, 2011, p.4

Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, Mozi and Guanzi all explain shifts in hegemonic power through the one mediating variable of the need to employ worthy people, that is, all of them think that employing worthy and capable persons is a necessary, even the crucial condition for successful governance<sup>195</sup>.

From that period also derives the concept of ‘Humane Authority’ which is an ancient Chinese political concept about the highest form of world leadership based on both material strength and morality<sup>196</sup>. According to Chinese thought, one can divide ‘hegemony’ into three types: tyranny, hegemony, and humane authority: States that rely on tyranny to get their way will end up on the bottom of the pile; states that rely on hegemony can end up as great powers; but humane authority is the real key to becoming the world’s leading power<sup>197</sup>. Tyranny is out of the question. As for hegemony, China does not intend to behave like the US. Instead, China will provide a different type of international leadership for the world; a humane authority<sup>198</sup>. President Xi has suggested to the U.S. that they should mutually develop ‘a new type of major-power relationship’, that promotes a healthy form of strategic competition between them. This idea is about avoiding a Cold War confrontation but also providing international leadership that is different from American hegemony<sup>199</sup>:

U.S., as a typical hegemon, conducts its foreign affairs using a double standard; it presents norms as the principle for dealing with its friends, but power politics as a principle for dealing with its enemies. A humane authority, by contrast, should have a coherent principle underpinning its behavior. That means it will make a judgement on whether a state is at fault or not, according to *international norms* rather than personal relationships<sup>200</sup>. Thus, the world will witness a new international system if Chinese government is able to improve international norms with the guiding principles of Moral Realism<sup>201</sup>; Moral Realism modernizes the morality of Humane Authority with its principles of ‘fairness, justice, and civility’<sup>202</sup>. And Yan’s hypothesis is that Humane Authority is more likely than hegemony to succeed in influencing the norms of the international system. (“*The norms of today cannot achieve harmony on a global scale. We need to reform and create new international norms to govern the behavior of all nation states in order to make a relatively harmonious, or less conflictive international society. So when I talk about humane authority, I mean that such authority should develop or create those much-needed new norms*”<sup>203</sup>).

According to the ancient Chinese thought, to create new international norms there are three approaches<sup>204</sup>: 1) ‘Make yourself an example’, that means, make yourself a model for the world; 2) ‘punish those who violate the norms’; and 3) ‘protect and encourage those who abide by the norms’. If you cannot achieve your goal just by setting an example, then the second approach is acceptable. Even though pre-Qin thinkers believed that morality is the key to maintaining order between states, they also hold that to speak of morality does not imply a total rejection of violent force to uphold order<sup>205</sup>. Besides,

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<sup>195</sup> Yan, 2011, p.5

<sup>196</sup> Yan, 2011, p.86-88

<sup>197</sup> Yan, 2011, p.12

<sup>198</sup> Yan, on Chinese Realism, 2012, p. 2

<sup>199</sup> Yan, 2011, p. xiii

<sup>200</sup> Yan, on Chinese Realism, 2012, p. 4

<sup>201</sup> Yan, 2011, p. xiv

<sup>202</sup> Yan, 2014, pp.163

<sup>203</sup> Yan, on Chinese Realism, 2012, p. 6

<sup>204</sup> Ibid

<sup>205</sup> Yan, 2011, p.41

even a humane authority leadership needs the support of military power. (*“It is unthinkable for a state could attain humane authority under heaven relying purely on morality and hard power of the lowest class”*<sup>206</sup>). Finally, humane means a superpower has more friends and receives more international support than others. (*“Being humane not only requires having an ample number of allies but also being moral and having strong leadership, or as people nowadays like to say, undertaking more international responsibility”*<sup>207</sup>).

Thus, the main assumptions of Moral Realism are: 1) Similar to Structural Realism – Anarchy is the nature of the international system and security dilemmas are inevitable. Because states are very sensitive to their relative power gap with others, it is impossible for the second largest power to hide its strength during the forming process of bipolarity<sup>208</sup>. 2) Different from Structural Realism – Political (or International) power is more important than material power in order for a major power to achieve national interests. For the second largest power to balance against the top power, it needs strategic allies more urgently than economic profits<sup>209</sup>. 3) Similar to Structural Realism – The competition for power is a zero-sum game and structural conflicts between the rising power and the existing power are inevitable. However, when the strategy of annexation is not available, the competition will turn to how to make more allies<sup>210</sup>. 4) Different from Structural Realism – The key necessary conditions for a major power to acquire more allies is international morality (or morality of human authority) and strategic credibility (providing security protection and economic benefits to other nations, especially neighbors)<sup>211</sup>. 5) Different from Liberalism which exports the ideology of democracy and free trade with military might, moral realism follows the doctrine of *“no rejection to those who come to learn and never go out to lecture others”*<sup>212</sup>. 6) Different from Classical Realism, which views the function of international morality as being the protection of human life, Moral Realism asserts that international morality also plays a role in the legitimization of policy and an increase of national power<sup>213</sup>. 7) Different from Classical Realism which argues that foreign policy consistent with international morality actually sacrifices national interests, Moral Realism contends that moral foreign policy is favorable to the strategic interest of a rising power. (*“The top strategic interest of a rising power is to establish a new world order. It cannot achieve that goal if its foreign policy is fundamentally contrary to international morality”*<sup>214</sup>).

### 5.3 From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement

China’s plan to create a favorable environment for national rejuvenation, as well as overcome the threats pertaining to this core interest, is the ‘Striving for Achievement’ strategy<sup>215</sup>. In 2013, President Xi Jinping, in his speech at the foreign affairs conference of the Chinese Communist Party, formally presented the strategy, signaling a transformation of China’s foreign strategy from

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<sup>206</sup> Yan, 2011, p.12

<sup>207</sup> Yan, on Chinese Realism, 2012, p. 2

<sup>208</sup> Yan, 2014, pp.159

<sup>209</sup> Ibid

<sup>210</sup> Yan, 2014, pp.160

<sup>211</sup> Ibid

<sup>212</sup> Yan, 2014, pp.162

<sup>213</sup> Yan, 2014, pp.163

<sup>214</sup> Ibid

<sup>215</sup> Weissmann, 2015, pp.151-166

the Keeping a Low Profile (KLP) - which was adopted by Deng Xiaoping - to the Striving for Achievement (SFA). In the past two decades, the KLP strategy had successfully created a favorable international environment for China's economic development, but not its rejuvenation. The favorable environment for economic development did not bring China more friends or help it build a good global image. The public perception of the 'China treat' persisted. In his article, Yan presents, via the theoretical framework of Moral Realism, how the SFA strategy will serve China's goal of national rejuvenation better than the KLP by attracting more allies. A comparison between the two strategies follows:

### **KLP versus SFA**<sup>216</sup>

- 1) The goal of the KLP strategy was maintaining peace in surrounding areas for China's economic development. The goal of the SFA strategy also addresses the importance of regional peace and stability, but it also emphasizes that foreign policy should serve the need of national rejuvenation, not just economic development. In his speech on 'diplomacy toward surrounding countries' in October 2013 (which was characterized as the highest level conference on diplomatic work in China since the beginning of communist leadership in 1949), Xi stressed that the strategic goal of China's diplomatic works regarding surrounding countries is "*to serve the implementation of national rejuvenation, to consolidate a friendly neighborhood, to protect national sovereignty, security and development, to improve political relations with surrounding countries, to strengthen economic interdependence, to deepen security cooperation, and to establish close cultural relations*". According to Xi, the goals of China's diplomatic works are mainly *political*, different from the economic goals of the KLP strategy. Even the target of strengthening economic interdependence is out of political concerns rather than economic interests. We can simplify the different goals of the KLP and SFA, respectively as ***making money*** and ***making friends***.
- 2) Under the KLP guideline, China passively adapted itself to changes in the international environment. The SFA strategy indicates that China will take initiatives to shape its external environment in a favorable direction. Xi encouraged Chinese officials "*to bravely undertake responsibility, to be creative and more initiative in achieving progress in diplomatic work toward surrounding countries*".
- 3) The tenets of KLP are "*to undertake no leadership, insist on non-alliance and give first priority to relations with the United States*". The tenets of SFA are to *undertake responsibility, being close, credible, benefiting and inclusive*. This means that China's policy toward surrounding states will be more concerned about strategic relations rather than economic cooperation. To further elaborate on that: *Being close* to surrounding states does not only mean improving relations with neighbors but also implies that China will no longer take a neutral stance or side with the United States in conflicts between the United States and China's neighbors. Not the U.S. but China's neighbors will be the first priority. *Being credible* is regarded as a key factor for a good leader, and 'strategic credibility' is a precondition for becoming a humane authority, or a hegemon in Chinese traditional political thoughts. The fact that Xi adopted 'credibility' as one of the four foreign policy principles shows that China's foreign policy is being transformed from weak-state diplomacy to strong-power diplomacy. In addition, the principle of 'credibility' also implies that China will undertake more international responsibility on international issues, especially security ones. In contrast, the KLP strategy never touched on the concept of credibility

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<sup>216</sup> Yan, 2014, pp.166-170

because credibility means too much international responsibility and a leadership role. Credibility is opposite to the principle of undertaking no leadership.

*Being benefiting* refers to economic help to developing countries and to a ‘win-win’ situation. Xi said: “*Let surrounding countries benefit from our development*” and “*provide more aid to developing countries within our capability*”.

*Being inclusive* refers to the principle of openness. Xi explained that China should actively push for regional cooperation with an open mind. Both the SFA and the KLP encourage regional cooperation but there are two differences between them. First is that the SFA requires more initiative and is more active than the latter. Second, the regional cooperation of the KLP is exclusively economic but the SFA targets regional cooperation including political, security, cultural, and economic areas. In his speech titled ‘Establishing China-ASEAN Community of common destiny with Joint Hands’, Xi Jinping illustrated the ‘Community of Common Destiny’ as consolidated political and strategic mutual trust, up-rated free trade zone, new concepts of comprehensive security, common security and cooperative security for regional peace and stability, extensive social and cultural exchange, and mutual respect of others’ civilization. It is obvious that the ‘Community of Common Destiny’ differs from military alliance but it also includes military cooperation, which was avoided by the KLP strategy.

- 4) Xi suggested “*to search for shared interests with surrounding countries, to uphold the new concept of morality and interests, to be of principle, to value friendship and to speak morality and justice*”. The ‘new concept of morality and interests’ means that morality is superior to economic profits, while the KLP gives first priority to economic concerns. ‘To be of principle, to value friendship and to speak morality and justice’ means that China will make policy toward a given country according to the character of China’s relations with that country. With the KLP guideline, China once tried to develop equal relations with every state without differentiating between friends and enemies. The SFA guideline will push China to categorize foreign relations into four types: 1) strategic pillars like Russia and Pakistan, 2) normal states like Germany and India, 3) global competitor with only the United States, and 4) hostile countries like Japan and the Philippines. The SFA strategy also tries to establish ‘moral reputation’ and ‘strategic credibility’ for China by letting neighbors benefit economically from China’s growth. This approach differs from the KLP’s principle of economically equal and mutual benefits.

Thus, China’s plan to reach its top core interest of national rejuvenation (as presented in previous section: Honor - Great Power Status - Chinese Dream/ National Rejuvenation), is the Striving for Achievement strategy. This strategy - which has the characteristics of Humane Authority, highly advocated by Moral Realism - will help China deal with the threats pertaining to its core interest (namely ‘China threat’, China’s containment, hegemonism, power politics, ‘Cold War mentality’). Thus, the central aim of this strategy is to strengthen China’s friendship with its neighbors and also mobilize international support. And China is willing to pay for this support! The proposal of the SFA strategy is the establishment of ‘a Community of Common Destiny’ where China will allow ‘friends’ to benefit from China’s development through both economic aid and security protection. This is also related to the concept of ‘international responsibility’. (“*Moral realism argues that the rising power will never have a favorable environment unless it can initiatively and morally shape the international environment. The rising power has to undertake the security responsibility for a better international environment, otherwise the rise-dilemma will automatically deteriorate its relations with other countries.... The KLP strategy cannot work out a favorable environment*”)

*for China's rejuvenation because it avoids international responsibility which presents an image of a selfish and threatening rising state. On the contrary, SFA gives priority to political dignity and morality; a morality crystalized as justice and fairness*"<sup>217</sup>).

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In a debate<sup>218</sup> between Yan and Mearsheimer, Yan presents Moral Realism, as an alternative to Offensive Realism, and explains that there are more strategies for China to become a leading power apart from being violent, just like the U.S. did. As a realist, he cannot exclude the possibility of China dragging into war, but he is not as pessimistic as Mearsheimer is. On the other hand, Mearsheimer's opinion is that, even though it is a smart strategy for China to try, "*being nice won't work*" for three reasons: 1) Since nobody can know another state's intentions – and that is especially true when it comes to future intentions – what is really scaring for China's neighbors and U.S. is Chinese capabilities. "*And whenever you see a country that has the kind of potential that China has, it is scaring!*" 2) The second reason, "*that there is going to be a trouble*", is that China's neighbors have an incentive to cause trouble now to settle disputes with China, before it gets really powerful. "*If we look at the disputes that China has been involved in, over the past 10 years, China initiated virtually none of those disputes; it is the Philippines, the Vietnam and Japan that have initiated those disputes.... Neighbors have a vested interest in settling disputes now, when China is not that powerful and U.S. is*". 3) "*China is a revisionist power; it is unhappy with the status quo regarding Taiwan, Senkaku Islands, the border with India, the South China Sea and the rules have been written in international institutions. When it gets more and more powerful, it is going to change the rules. For those three reasons, being nice won't work. Both neighbors and U.S. are going to be increasingly scared of China...*".

## **CHAPTER 6: THE MOST SALIENT ECONOMIC & DIPLOMATIC POLICIES OF CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGY**

China is calling all nations to become its friends and benefit from its peaceful development. However, it particularly focuses on the *developing world* since, according to the Chinese view, the move towards multipolarity is irreversible<sup>219</sup> and developing countries and emerging economies are important international actors that could help promote a multipolar world, and greater democracy in international relations<sup>220</sup>. In order to achieve this double goal (win international

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<sup>217</sup> Yan, 2014, pp. 182-183

<sup>218</sup> 'Can China Rise Peacefully? A debate between John Mearsheimer and Yan Xuetong in Beijing, China'. *University of Chicago CPOST*, Jan 2, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBrA2TDcNto> accessed on May 31, 2019

<sup>219</sup> China's 2008 Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean

<sup>220</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., *At the Dawn of Belt and Road - China in the Developing World*, California: RAND Corporation, 2018, [www.rand.org/t/RR2273](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2273), p.222



support and simultaneously make the world more multipolar - or oppose hegemonism), China's flagship foreign policy is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

This section will discuss how China's engagement with the developing world, under the diplomatic umbrella of the BRI, serves its core interests. The section will answer the following questions: 1) What is the BRI? 2) Which are the particular goals that China pursue in each region of the developing world involved in the Initiative? 3) How does the Initiative serve China's core interests?

## 6.1 What is the Belt and Road Initiative (New Silk Road)?

*“More than two millennia ago the diligent and courageous people of Eurasia explored and opened up several routes of trade and cultural exchanges that linked the major civilizations of Asia, Europe and Africa, collectively called the Silk Road by later generations. For thousands of years, the Silk Road Spirit – peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit... contributed greatly to the prosperity and development of the countries along the Silk Road. Symbolizing communication and cooperation between the East and the West, the Silk Road Spirit is an historic and cultural heritage shared by all countries around the world”*<sup>221</sup>. This is the preface of the first government document released on the principles, framework, and cooperation priorities of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in March 2015.

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping came to power, he has pushed for the realization of the ‘China dream’ to rejuvenate the Chinese nation through constructing a ‘Community of Common Destiny’. The BRI represents China's strategic path for achieving this community in the next thirty or more years<sup>222</sup>. It is considered Beijing's most ambitious foreign policy initiative and it signals the significant shift from ‘Keeping a Low Profile’ to ‘Striving for Achievement’. During the Party Congress of 2017, the Initiative was officially incorporated into CPC constitution as part of ‘Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era’. *“This signifies, at the very least, a commitment to reaching the full scope of the project as an item on the national agenda”*<sup>223</sup>.

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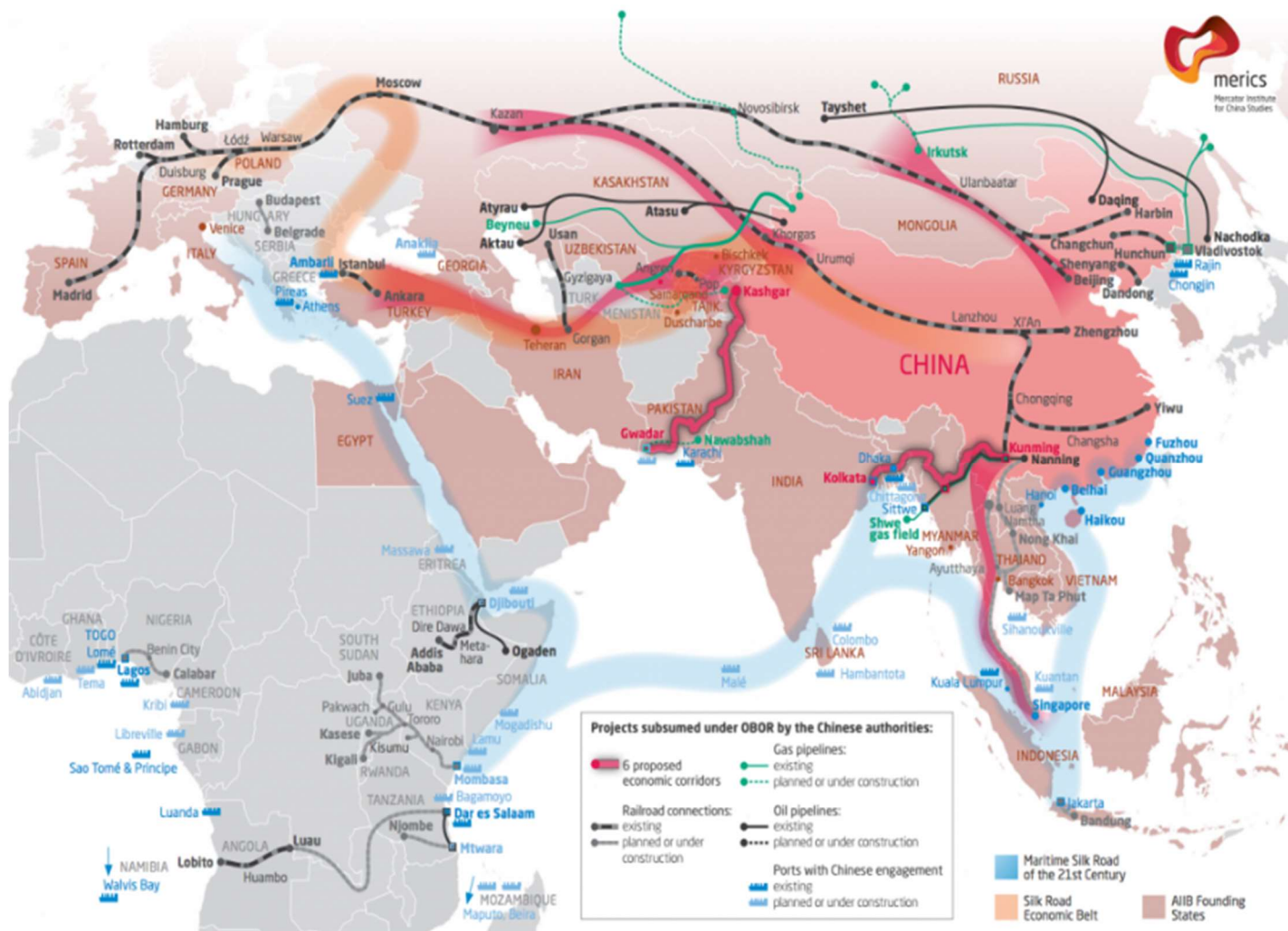
<sup>221</sup> ‘Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road’, *National Development and Reform Commission PRC*, March 2015

[http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330\\_669367.html](http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html) accessed on May 31, 2019

<sup>222</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.27

<sup>223</sup> Cui, Angie, *Building the Belt and Road*, Harvard International Review (HIR), Winter 2018, pp.16-18

Map 1: The Belt and Road Initiative



Source: Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS)

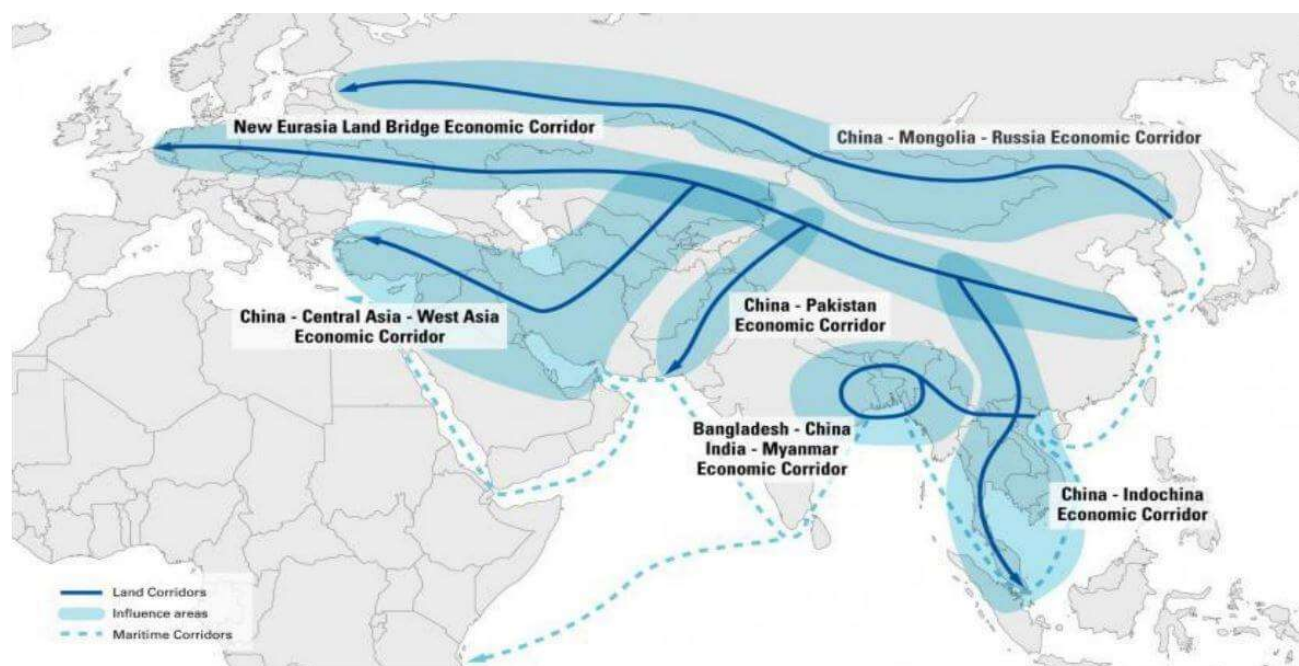
The Initiative has been characterized as an extremely challenging and comprehensive effort to build vast web of infrastructure—roads, railways, canals, and pipelines intended to link China to its neighborhood and the wider world. It involves 65 countries across Asia, Europe and Africa, and represents 70% of the world’s population and more than 40% of the world’s GDP<sup>224</sup>. The *Belt* refers to the *new Silk Road Economic Belt*; it consists of a series of overland networks through Central Asia to South Asia, to the Middle East and onward to Africa and Europe. The *Road* refers to a *21st Century Maritime Silk Road* stretching from China through the South China Sea to the India Ocean to South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe<sup>225</sup>. China has proposed to set up six economic corridors along the BRI: “*On land, the Initiative will focus on jointly building a new*

<sup>224</sup> Zhou, Weifeng & Esteban, Mario, *Beyond Balancing: China’s approach towards the Belt and Road Initiative*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2018, 27:112, pp. 487-501 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1433476> accessed on June 1, 2019

<sup>225</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.28

*Eurasian Land Bridge and developing China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia and China-Indochina Peninsula economic corridors by taking advantage of international transport routes, relying on core cities along the Belt and Road and using key economic industrial parks as cooperation platforms. At sea, the Initiative will focus on jointly building smooth, secure and efficient transport routes connecting major sea ports along the Belt and Road. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor are closely related to the Belt and Road Initiative, and therefore require closer cooperation and greater progress’’<sup>226</sup>.*

Map 2: The Six Economic Corridors along the BRI



Source: Hong Kong Trade Development Council and Nomura Global Economics.

According to the 2018 study<sup>227</sup> of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the six economic corridors concern:

**1. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC):** The CPEC is the most prominent and ambitious of the BRI corridors. It is said to be at the heart of the BRI as it is seen as a key model for what the Initiative’s projects will eventually look like<sup>228</sup>. The CPEC is supported by a bilateral trade agreement between China and Pakistan. Most of the investments, estimated at close to \$50bn, are being spent on building and modernizing the overland connections between Xinjiang in western

<sup>226</sup> ‘Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road’, (III Framework), *National Development and Reform Commission PRC*, March 2015

<sup>227</sup> ‘Connectivity Along Overland Corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative’, DISCUSSION PAPER MTI Global Practice No. 6, *IBRD/World Bank*, October 2018, p.10-12  
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/264651538637972468/pdf/130490-MTI-Discussion-Paper-6-Final.pdf>  
 accessed on June 1, 2019

<sup>228</sup> Cui, 2018, p.17

China to the Arabian Sea across the Himalayas. They are comprised of a network of roads extending almost 3,000 km, the port of Gwadar in Pakistan, a rail line and an oil pipeline between the two countries. The corridor will also see ancillary investments in solar power and a hydro power station. The CPEC is part of a broader vision to enhance connectivity between China and the South and West Asia countries of India, Iran, Afghanistan, and the Central Asian Republics. When completed, the corridor should enable China's imports of oil to go through the pipeline and therefore avoid the busy routes through the Straits of Malacca. However, outside these benefits, the corridor is also one of the more controversial ones, as it cuts through disputed territory between India and Pakistan.

**2. China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC):** The China, Mongolia, Russia Economic Corridor is the most direct route between north-east China and its economic hubs and markets in Russia and Europe. The corridor is therefore a convergence of the Eurasian Economic Community that is championed by Russia, the BRI and Mongolia's initiative to enhance connectivity with the two neighbors. The three governments have agreed to build an economic corridor and strengthen cooperation in transportation infrastructure connectivity, port construction, industrial capacity, investment, trade and economy, cultural exchanges and environmental protection in order to improve economic benefits amongst each of the countries. In 2015 the three governments agreed to rail freight and to establish a Mongolian-Russian-Chinese joint railway transportation and logistics company.

**3. New Eurasia Land Bridge:** \*Land Bridge refers to the transport of containers by rail, between ports on either side of a land mass.

The New Eurasia Land Bridge is an international railway line running from Lianyungang in China's Jiangsu province through Alashankou in Xinjiang to Rotterdam in Holland. After exiting Chinese territory, the new land bridge passes through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and Poland, reaching a number of coastal ports in Europe. Capitalizing on the New Eurasia Land Bridge, China has opened an international freight rail route linking Chongqing (China) to Duisburg (Germany); a direct freight train running between Wuhan (China) and Mělník and Pardubice (Czech Republic); a freight rail route from Chengdu (China) to Lodz (Poland); and a freight rail route from Zhengzhou (China) to Hamburg (Germany). All these new rail routes offer rail-to-rail freight transport, as well as the convenience of 'one declaration, one inspection, one cargo release' for any cargo transported.

**4. China-Central Asia-West Asia:** The China-Central Asia West Asia Economic Corridor will run from Xinjiang via Alashankou, on the China-Kazakhstan border, to join the existing railway networks of Central Asia and Middle East. The corridor covers the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan as well as Iran and Turkey. An extension of the line could be added to run to Ukraine via Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia. Once completed, trains can run from eastern China to Iran taking less than half the time of an alternative route by sea via the port of Shanghai.

**5. China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC):** The corridor also known as Nanning-Singapore Economic Corridor, aims to connect eight major cities—Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Bangkok (Thailand), Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), Vientiane (Laos), Hanoi (Vietnam) and the Chinese city of Nanning. From there, additional connectivity nodes would be extended to the major economic hubs of Guangzhou and Hong Kong, thus forming a web connecting ten cities with cumulative population of over 50 million. Essentially, the corridor connects China and the contiguous ASEAN states. ASEAN has one of the more connected transport networks among the developing regions of the world. The network has been developed over time but especially through the Greater Mekong Sub-region initiatives.

**6. Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC):** The proposed BCIMEC will be comprised of expressway and high-speed rail links between the Chinese city of Kunming in Yunnan Province and Kolkata in India via Mandalay in Myanmar and the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. In addition to the land bridge the four countries have also agreed to build air and water ways connecting each other as well as power transmission lines and oil pipelines. The corridor will connect a collective market of over 400 million people including West Bengal, India's fourth most populous state.

## 6.2 The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)



U.S. commentators refer to the BRI as China's Marshall Plan. However, its budget is about USD\$ 1 trillion; three times that of the amount of US aid given to help rebuild western European economies after WWII, by today's dollar value<sup>229</sup>. The Initiative is primarily funded by two financial institutions – the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund, (a state-owned development fund which draws resources from the China Development Bank, China Investment Corporation, the Export-Import Bank of China, and the country's foreign exchange reserves<sup>230</sup>). At its signing ceremony in June 2015, China's finance minister Lou Jiwei said the AIIB represented “*an important move on the part of China to fulfil its growing international responsibilities, and to improve and complement the existing international order*”<sup>231</sup>. The following month saw the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB), a global development bank set up by the five BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa—to “*mobilize resources for infrastructure and*

<sup>229</sup> Cui, 2018, p.17

<sup>230</sup> Ibid

<sup>231</sup> Lou, Jiwei, ‘Inclusive AIIB can make a difference’, *China Daily USA*, June 25, 2015

<http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201506/25/WS5a30960ca3108bc8c672cd2b.html> accessed on June 1, 2019

*sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries, complementing the existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development*<sup>232</sup>. Headquartered in Shanghai, the NDB has been called the AIIB's sister institution. Both banks operate in a similar space to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank<sup>233</sup>.

**International response:** The proposal for the AIIB was well received by most Asian states but regarded skeptically by allies of the U.S. and the West in general, since the IMF, WB and the ADB already handled loans for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and infrastructure development support<sup>234</sup>. However, while Washington heavily lobbied its allies not to join the bank, UK surprisingly announced in March 2015 that it would join the AIIB. *“That astonished the whole world including Washington and triggered a domino effect. When the AIIB started operations in January 2016, the bank had 57 founding members, including Washington’s closest allies such as the UK, Germany, France, Australia, Israel and South Korea. After only six months, Canada also announced its decision to join the AIIB”*<sup>235</sup>. *“Even geopolitical rivals of China, like India, decided it would be foolish to look a gift horse in the mouth”*<sup>236</sup>. Taiwan also applied to join - potentially under a different name such as ‘Chinese Taipei’, to avoid enflaming the ‘One China’ question. However, its application was rejected due to a disagreement over a proper name<sup>237</sup>. In addition, U.S. and Japan, which seem to have perceived the Bank as an attempt by China to go against the institutional economic practices preferred by them, have never applied. (*“When the AIIB’s articles of agreement entered into force on 31 December 2015, the only two noticeable absentees were the US and Japan”*<sup>238</sup>). Currently, the AIIB has expanded its membership to 93 (44 regional, 26 non-regional, and 23 prospective members)<sup>239</sup> and become the world’s third largest multilateral financial institution after the IMF and the World Bank and the first created and ruled by emerging and developing countries<sup>240</sup>.

### **6.3 Which are the Particular Goals that China Pursues in Each Region of the Developing World Involved in the BRI?**

**China in Southeast Asia**<sup>241</sup> (Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Philippines, Timor Leste)

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<sup>232</sup> Agreement on the New Development Bank – Fortaleza, Brazil, July 15 (Article 1) <https://www.ndb.int/wp-content/themes/ndb/pdf/Agreement-on-the-New-Development-Bank.pdf> accessed on June 1, 2019

<sup>233</sup> Miller, 2017, p.32

<sup>234</sup> Danner, 2018, p.127

<sup>235</sup> Zhou & Esteban, 2018, p.499

<sup>236</sup> Miller, 2017, p.30

<sup>237</sup> Danner, 2018, p.132

<sup>238</sup> Miller, 2017, p.30

<sup>239</sup> AIIB, Members and Prospective Members of the Bank as of April 24, 2019, <https://www.aiib.org/en/about-aiib/governance/members-of-bank/index.html> accessed on June 1, 2019

<sup>240</sup> Zhou & Esteban, 2018, p.500

<sup>241</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.37

Southeast Asia is the most important developing region for China and one of its most significant trade partners. In 2009, China surpassed both the United States and Japan to become ASEAN's largest trade partner. In addition, much of Chinese global trade transits the South China Sea (SCS) and the Strait of Malacca, and China has significant interests to maintain secure maritime shipment and Southeast Asia lines of communication. SCS also boasts vast, unexplored natural resources. China has also undertaken extensive and rapid land reclamation activities to strengthen its claims in the SCS. Beijing's core agenda for the region is the Belt and Road Initiative. Although the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road extends beyond Southeast Asia, Chinese strategists view the region as crucial to the success of the initiative. In 2010, China signed the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) and it also supports the completion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade agreement with ASEAN (comprised of Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines) and six other countries (16 total, including China, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand) that was often portrayed as competing with the now defunct Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement. Beijing hopes that greater integration with the region will encourage regional actors to accept China's growing influence as well as its territorial claims. Maritime Southeast Asia, in particular, is becoming an arena of strategic competition and hedging between China, its neighbors, and, increasingly, the United States, Japan, and even India.

In 2011, China further established a China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund that had an initial capital of RMB 3 billion (approximately \$500 million). In 2013, Xi announced that the fund would also support the construction of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

To sum up, China has three overarching interests in Southeast Asia: 1) Promote and protect trade, investment, and other linkages to the region to support China's economic growth. This includes protecting China's sea lines of communication and developing the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road to further expand political and economic cooperation. 2) Protect Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity, including upholding Chinese claims to features in the SCS, enlarging these features, and increasing China's maritime presence and capabilities. 3) Maintain regional stability and promote regional solidarity and cooperation with China by minimizing unwanted influence of external actors and increasing Chinese exchanges with the region.

**China in Central Asia**<sup>242</sup> (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Russia\*)<sup>243</sup>

Central Asia is of great importance to the BRI as it serves as the land bridge to West Asia and Europe. Beyond the Belt and Road effort, China's key multilateral vehicle for further inserting itself in the region, has been the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which was created by the leaders of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with later participants

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<sup>242</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.89

<sup>243</sup> Russia is not considered to be part of Central Asia; rather, given to its size and interests, it is the most important country of the region.

Uzbekistan and recently India and Pakistan (in 2017). It is the first multilateral organization to be established by and be headquartered in China, and subsequently China has played the leading role in the SCO. SCO member states support Chinese stands on a variety of issues (security, energy, economic cooperation). Most obviously, this support comes on the matter of the so called ‘three evils’ of terrorism, separatism, and extremism (Beijing has become increasingly alarmed over a rise in disaffection among ethnic minorities, notably the Tibetans and Uighurs who tend to be concentrated inland in westernmost China (in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region).

Economically, China has worked hard to tap the energy resources of Central Asia (in particular tapping petroleum in Kazakhstan and natural gas in Turkmenistan), as well as the markets (by 2012 appeared to have surpassed Russia as Central Asia’s top trader). It has facilitated both, through the construction of infrastructure—including roads, railways, and pipelines.

Map 3: The Newly Built and Planned Pipelines and Railways in Central Asia<sup>244</sup>



Source: Bruegel

For example, the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline runs 1,830 kilometers from the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border, through Kazakhstan, to Khorgos in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. A multiline pipeline, the first line became operational in 2009, the second in 2010, and the third in 2014. In 2014, China and Tajikistan agreed to build a fourth line that would run from Turkmenistan through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan before reaching China, with the expectation that the four lines together would be able to supply 80 billion cubic meters per year by 2020. However, in terms of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the region, while China’s share has been growing, it has never exceeded 10 percent of the region’s total. FDI in Central Asia tends to be dominated by the United States and Europe.

<sup>244</sup> Batsaikhan, Uuriintuya & Dabrowski, Marek, *Central Asia — twenty-five years after the breakup of the USSR*, Russian Journal of Economics 3, 2017, pp. 296–320



Thus, where Central Asia is concerned, Beijing has had three overriding interests: 1) Ensure domestic stability and China's national unity; 2) promote and protect Chinese economic interests in the region and beyond; and 3) increase Chinese influence and limit the influence of other outside powers.

**China in South Asia**<sup>245</sup> (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives)

Under the Belt and Road Initiative, South Asia has become ever more important to the PRC, mainly because Chinese commercial vessels traverse the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean on their journeys to and from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. More notably, China's BRI entails multiple overland routes through South Asia, and Southeast Asia lanes through the Indian Ocean.

Among the South Asian countries, Pakistan is China's closest partner. Beijing has ambitious plans for Pakistan to play a central role in China's economic plans for South Asia—as a maritime and continental transportation and trading hub. Beijing is especially concerned about energy security, especially where petroleum is concerned. China has been a net importer of oil since 1993, and the overwhelming majority of this petroleum from overseas arrives in the PRC via Southeast Asia. The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor is an effort to diversify the routes. The CPEC, as well as the Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Economic Corridor will facilitate China's energy imports from the Persian Gulf and Africa and reduce its dependence on the Malacca Strait where the US can exert great influence.

China's biggest rival for influence in South Asia and Central Asia, is India, the world's other giant (which poses a more significant challenge if it aligns with the U.S.). India also poses a threat to Chinese territorial integrity and national unity through its territorial claims in the Himalayas and its tacit support for the Tibetan Government in exile. Despite that, China and India are also partners and China has envisioned India as part of the Maritime Silk Road.

Despite its efforts to diversify energy routes, China is likely to continue to rely heavily on the sea-lanes to supply its external energy needs. To improve security in the Indian Ocean, China has adopted, what has been called, a '*String of Pearls*' strategy; a concept often viewed as a military initiative, with the aim of providing China's navy access to a series of ports stretching from the South China Sea to the Arabian Sea. The Chinese naval base on Hainan Island (which is said to be the base of control for China's claims in the SCS) is generally considered the first of the 'pearls'. Woody Island, the largest of the Paracel Islands, which hosts an upgraded Chinese airstrip, has also been identified as another 'pearl'. Other 'pearls' includes Chinese investment in ports such as Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh and Gwadar in Pakistan. A key element in this strategy is developing Pakistan's port of Gwadar which is located 50 miles from the Iranian border and approximately 300 miles from the Strait of Hormuz. Gwadar was reported to be 11.5 meters deep, enough to accommodate submarines and aircraft carriers, and as of late 2015, it was said to function as a 'listening post' to monitor U.S. naval activity in the Indian Ocean and Persian

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<sup>245</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.121

Gulf. This has caused some consternation, particularly in India, which sees itself as being encircled<sup>246</sup>.

Map 4: China's 'String of Pearls' Project



Source: SOUTH FRONT

Persistent disaffection among ethnic Tibetans and rising alienation among Uighurs has increased the unease of PRC leaders. However, the greatest threat to China within the region stems from Afghanistan. Although the country is a partner, the unrest there, its production of heroin, and its proximity to Xinjiang raises the specter of terrorism that Chinese leadership fears. Since the early 1990s, China has viewed Afghanistan as the regional center of Islamic radicalism, which Beijing fears, if unchecked, can spread throughout Central Asia and spill over into Xinjiang.

Economically, Pakistan is the only country in the region to have a free trade agreement with China. That being said, China has not neglected other countries in the region. It has, for example, various forms of comprehensive cooperative partnerships with Nepal, the Maldives, and Bangladesh and is negotiating free trade agreements with both Sri Lanka and the Maldives. In addition, since 2005 China has been an observer of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). India is by far China's largest trading partner in the region and is both its largest source of imports and its largest export destination, and China is exploring the possibility of a free trade agreement with India, too. But even before that, China and India were both negotiating partners in the RCEP.

To sum up, China's interests in the region concern: 1) to ensure China's internal stability; 2) to balance against India; 3) to defend China's burgeoning economic interests, including safeguarding trade and transportation routes.

<sup>246</sup> Tiezzi, Shannon, 'The Maritime Silk Road Vs. The String of Pearls', *The Diplomat*, Feb 13, 2014 <https://thediplomat.com/2014/02/the-maritime-silk-road-vs-the-string-of-pearls/> accessed on June 1, 2019

**China in the Middle East**<sup>247</sup> (Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen)



The Middle East is also intended to be an integral part of China's BRI. Linking China to Europe through the Persian Gulf and West Asia, it is noted in the main Belt and Road document<sup>248</sup>, and the Maritime Silk Road includes Israel, in which China is building a new port in Ashdod on the Mediterranean with the idea of rail link from Eilat on the Red Sea.

Map 5: Proposed railroad in Israel to be constructed by China  
Source: Aanirfan<sup>249</sup>

The Middle East is the most important source of imported energy for China. (In 2014, China was the largest net oil importer in the world at 6.1 million barrels per day. The region supplied 52 percent of China's gross imports). Moreover, in recent years

China has invested billions in the region.

As China is seeking to strengthen its relations with developing countries and increase its influence in a pivotal part of the world, it has worked hard to maintain good relations with all states in the region. As of 2015, China was the only major power in the world to enjoy cordial relations with every country or governing authority in the Middle East, including Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Palestinian authority. Beijing views Iran and Saudi Arabia as its most important regional partners. Other major partners in the region include Egypt, Israel, and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The rise of radical Islamic movements, such as the Islamic State, not only threaten Chinese economic interests in the Middle East, including energy supplies, transportation routes, and PRC citizens in the region, but are also seen to pose a threat to CCP rule. Beijing is worried that these popular and extremist movements may inspire ethnic Han dissidents to push for greater democracy in China and Uighur activists to press for greater autonomy or religious freedom in Xinjiang. Beijing is especially alarmed by cooperation and coordination between PRC Uighurs, the Uighur diaspora abroad, and Muslim groups in Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Uighur

<sup>247</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.147

<sup>248</sup> 'Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road' (III. Framework), *National Development and Reform Commission PRC*, March 2015

<sup>249</sup> <http://aanirfan.blogspot.com/2014/09/israel-china-deal.html> accessed on June 9, 2019

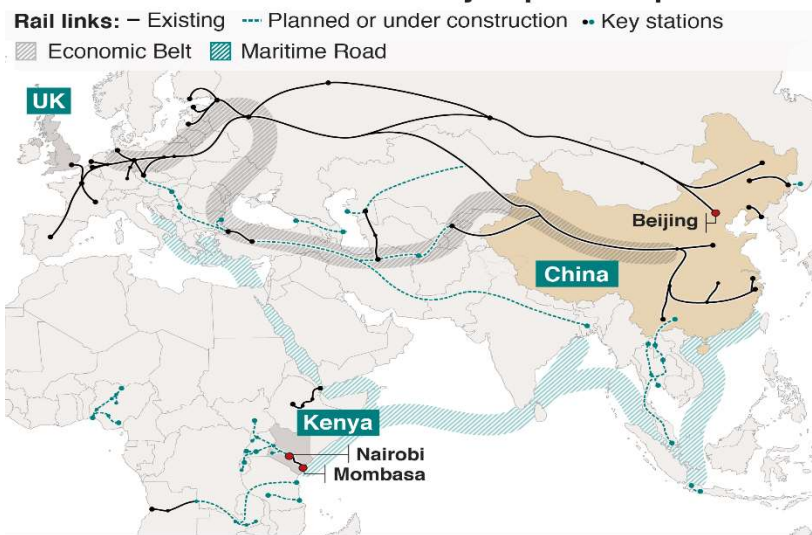
radicals have reportedly been trained in Pakistan, fought with the Taliban in Afghanistan, and joined the ranks of ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

To sum up, Beijing has three overarching interests in the Middle East: 1) Sustaining Chinese access to the energy resources, continuing the flow of trade, and protecting Chinese investments in the region; 2) enhancing China's stature and influence in a region of geostrategic importance; 3) preserving China's domestic stability, defending China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as securing the PRC's periphery in an ostensibly distant region that Beijing has concluded is closely intertwined with pressing security challenges back home.

### China in Africa<sup>250</sup>

China is a long-established diplomatic partner to Africa, and Chinese interests on the continent extend beyond acquiring natural resources to encompass trade, security, diplomacy, and soft power. As of late 2015, Beijing had diplomatic relations with 51 of the 54 African nations and was the continent's top trade partner. Since 2000, Chinese imports from the region have grown 20-fold. Indicative of the region's importance to China, Africa also receives roughly half of China's total foreign aid. Much Chinese aid comes in forms of concessional loans, resource-backed loans, and tied aid, along with more traditional forms of aid. China has also ongoing economic engagement with African countries both bilaterally and multilaterally through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

#### Belt and Road Initiative railway expansion plans



While South Africa is China's most important regional partner, Beijing views half a dozen other nations as also playing crucial political or economic roles. Djibouti, for example, is an important major partner with growing military links to China. In 2014 the two countries signed a security and defense strategic partnership agreement, giving port access to People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) ships. As of 2015, the two countries agreed

to establish, what China refers to as, a 'facility to provide logistical support' but that others have subsequently described as China's first overseas military base. China's BRI also envisions linking the east coast of Africa to its 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Nairobi is one of the designated

<sup>250</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.171

stops along the Maritime Silk Road which may include a railway in Kenya from Nairobi to Mombasa. (Map 6)

China's economic engagement has focused on gaining access to natural resources, creating markets for Chinese-manufactured goods, and developing manufacturing facilities that can take advantage of the continent's low labor costs. China's principal interest in Africa is to ensure access to the raw materials it needs to fuel its own economy—principally oil, gas, metals, and minerals. It has, thus, invested heavily in countries that are richly endowed with such resources, and its trade with the continent is overwhelmingly concentrated in raw materials. China also looks to Africa as a growing market for Chinese-made products. Africa is the second largest foreign market for Chinese construction projects (by 2014, some 2,000 Chinese companies were in Africa and many of them were heavily involved in roads and rail construction) and represents roughly a third of all construction projects abroad. Examples include a \$9 billion rail and road network contract with the Democratic Republic of Congo (more than that country's national budget)<sup>251</sup>.

China's 2006 Africa Policy White Paper states that the general principles and objectives of China's African policy include support for African countries' sovereignty, mutually beneficial economic cooperation, mutual support in international fora, sustainable development, and African support for the 'One China' principle<sup>252</sup>. In 2011, China issued a White Paper on its global foreign aid—46 percent of which went to Africa—in which it emphasized sustainability and the absence of political preconditions, "*vowing never [to] use foreign aid as a means to interfere in recipient countries' internal affairs or seek political privileges for itself*"<sup>253</sup>. In general, close relations with the majority of Africa's 54 countries provide China with a 'strong dose' of international legitimacy. Having experienced its own rapid economic growth and development, China offers itself as a *model* that African leaders can emulate as they attempt to lead their own nations to prosperity. Beijing is also eager to have African allies at the UN, where African votes have helped defeat anti-Chinese resolutions at UN human rights bodies. Along with FOCAC, China has augmented its collaboration with the African Union (AU) as a way to give its engagement greater regional impact and legitimacy. In March 2015, China accredited its first full-time ambassador to the AU, making it only the second country other than the United States to do so.

China has three overarching interests in Africa: 1) Access to natural resources, particularly oil and gas, and export markets for Chinese manufactured goods; 2) international political legitimacy as a global power, including recognition of Beijing as the sole representative of China (the 'One China' policy) and acknowledgement of the principle of non-interference in sovereign countries' internal

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<sup>251</sup> Ben-Ari, Nirit, 'On bumpy roads and rails', *Africa Renewal/ United Nations Department of Public Information*, Apr 2014 <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2014/bumpy-roads-and-rails> accessed on June 2, 2019

<sup>252</sup> 'China's African Policy', *Xinhua News*, Jan 12, 2006 [http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-01/12/content\\_156490.htm](http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-01/12/content_156490.htm) accessed on June 2, 2019

<sup>253</sup> China's Foreign Aid, Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, April 2011 [http://english.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2014/09/09/content\\_281474986284620.htm](http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284620.htm) accessed on June 2, 2019

affairs; 3) sufficient political stability and security for China to safeguard its citizens and pursue its economic and commercial interests.

#### **6.4 How does the Initiative Serve China's Core Interests?**

After having examined separately each part of the developing world which China intends to be engaged with, through the BRI, we can conclude that the particular goals that it pursues in each of these regions coincide with its core interests. In sum: 1) In terms of security, China in the developing world seeks to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity - including upholding Chinese claims to disputes (in South-East Asia and India), ensure domestic stability and China's national unity and secure CCP's authority (by excluding threats coming mainly from South and Central Asia, and the Middle East). 2) In terms of economic growth, to promote trade and investment, protect Chinese economic interests abroad, and ensure access to natural resources. 3) In terms of great power status, to promote regional solidarity and cooperation, increase China's stature and influence, decrease the influence of other great powers, and enhance China's political legitimacy.

Thus, China sees partnering with the developing world as critical to promote its core interests and intends to use the BRI as an economic and diplomatic tool to promote and protect them. To elaborate on that, BRI serves China's goals and interests in multiple ways:

##### **Security**

*Relevant threats: existential threats, terrorism, separatism, extremism, disputed territories*

If China can make inroads into the infrastructure of potentially weak developing states in China's periphery, helping them economically in general and possibly integrating the region further, this can help to keep peace in Asia, especially around China's borders. Ultimately, this may add stability to governments of weaker states, which in turn can help China to maintain *national unity* and have safer *border security*. In addition, distributing money where it is most needed for development purposes also increases the likelihood of its neighbors becoming *less threatened* by China which also contributes to China's border security and its defense of territorial integrity.

##### **Economic Development**

*Relevant threats: access to natural resources and markets, secure key sea lines of communication, manage instability near vital energy sources*

China seeks to sustain its economic growth and sees the developing world as offering significant economic potential. The economic benefits that China will likely gain from the BRI is *having access to natural resources*, which the Developing World has in abundance; *creating jobs and projects* for Chinese construction companies for the necessary infrastructure work over the next decades; and maintaining a *beneficial regional and global market for Chinese exports* on which China still heavily depends. *"The importance of the Developing World was elevated for China after the 2008 financial crisis. One of China's lessons from the 2008 financial crisis was that it is*

*too risky for China to tie its development mainly to western developed countries. Instead, China needed to increase its engagement with developing countries that are growing at a rapid pace and have significant market demand*<sup>254</sup>.

Also, if China invests in BRI nations' infrastructure the way it does in Africa (i.e., employing its own workers, which it brings to the construction sites, and with its own state-owned corporations), then it directly fuels China's own economy via *extra turnover for corporations and remittances sent back to China by workers*<sup>255</sup>.

Finally, in funding infrastructure initiatives, China's new institutions will help *internationalize the use of RMB* (Renminbi, Chinese Yuan). China, for example, is encouraging the AIIB and the Silk Road Fund to use the RMB in the basket of currencies to denominate and settle loans<sup>256</sup>.

As mentioned above, China is heavily dependent on energy imports from the Persian Gulf, the New Eurasian Land Bridge and China-Central and West Asia Economic Corridor allow it to forge stronger energy ties with Russia and Central Asian states and reduce its reliance on energy imports from the Persian Gulf. The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor and Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Economic Corridor will facilitate China's energy imports from the Persian Gulf and Africa and reduce its *dependence on the Malacca Strait* where the US can exert great influence. In addition, the Maritime Silk Road helps Beijing to build its maritime power and expand influence in the Indian Ocean for improving maritime security and advancing its maritime interests. For example, China's investment in Hambantota Port (Sri Lanka), Gwadar Port (Pakistan) and Kyaukpyu port (Myanmar) (see 'String of Pearls' above), allows Beijing to *reinforce its naval presence in the Indian Ocean*, ensure the security of its trade and energy routes, and foster its role as a maritime power<sup>257</sup>.

### **Great Power Status**

*Relevant threats: 'China threat', China's containment, hegemonism, power politics, 'Cold War mentality'*

China believes the international system is heading toward multipolarity and wishes to work with developing countries to increase its global influence. As China seeks to become a more important international player, it will need to win the support of developing countries. After the 2008 financial crisis (which was "*not only an economic and financial crisis, but also a crisis of systems, institutions and ideas...*"<sup>258</sup>), Chinese experts have recognized the growing political and economic influence of the Developing World and the narrowing of the power gap between developed and

<sup>254</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.31

<sup>255</sup> Danner, 2018, p.136

<sup>256</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.29

<sup>257</sup> Zhou & Esteban, 2018, p.492

<sup>258</sup> Yang, Jiechi, (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PPC), 'The Evolving International Pattern and China's Diplomacy', China Institute of International Studies, August 22, 2011 [http://www.ciiis.org.cn/english/2011-08/22/content\\_4425488.htm](http://www.ciiis.org.cn/english/2011-08/22/content_4425488.htm) accessed on June 2, 2019

developing countries<sup>259</sup>. As a developing country itself, China also identifies with the concerns of fellow developing countries and views the United States, Japan, and other western countries as dominating decisions in existing international institutions. For example, despite China's rapid economic growth in the past decades, its economic power has not translated into proportional vote shares in the IMF or World Bank (see Table below). While China's share of global GDP in 2016 was 14.98 percent, and the U.S. share was 24.94 percent - less than twice as much - the U.S. vote share of 16.52 percent in the IMF was more than twice China's vote share with 6.09 percent. Even worse, Japan with a global share of GDP of 6.63% ranks second (after U.S.) in the IMF's voting rights. Finally, in the ADB, Japan and the US contribute 31% of the capital stock and control 26% of the votes. China and other major developing countries have repeatedly asked for more equitable representation<sup>260</sup>.

Table 7: Countries' GDP and Vote Shares in International Organizations (2016)

Year	2016				
	U.S.	China	Japan	Germany	U.K.
Country					
% of world GDP <sup>261</sup>	24.94	14.98	6.63	4.66	3.55
% of IMF voting rights <sup>262</sup>	16.52	6.09	6.15	5.32	4.03
% of ADB voting rights <sup>263</sup>	12.710	5.459	12.798	3.763	1.934
% of WB voting rights <sup>264</sup>	Allocation of votes by organization:				
WB/IBRD (International Bank of Reconstruction and Development)	15.98	4.45	6.89	4.03	3.78
WB/IFC (International Financial Corporation)	20.99	2.3	6.01	4.77	4.48
WB/IDA (International Development Association)	10.17	2.21	8.3	5.36	6.46
WB/MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency)	15.02	2.64	4.22	4.2	4.03

Thus, China is looking for 'allies' in the developing world to get help in its attempt to transform the US-led global system and promote its own international status in a peaceful way, which is embedded in the BRI. Schweller and Pu contend that a peer competitor, that does not possess the military capabilities to directly challenge the US hegemony through hard balancing, seeks to create a new international order by shaping a *revisionist counter-hegemonic coalition* and delegitimizing the hegemon's global authority<sup>265</sup>. In a way, the Initiative is an effort to gain the legitimacy to claim that the Chinese form of governance, civil society, and development is successful and could

<sup>259</sup> Ibid

<sup>260</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.33

<sup>261</sup> [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/gdp\\_share/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/gdp_share/) accessed on June 2, 2019

<sup>262</sup> <https://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/memdir/members.aspx> accessed on June 2, 2019

<sup>263</sup> <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/218696/oi-appendix1.pdf> accessed on June 2, 2019

<sup>264</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/leadership/votingpowers> accessed on June 2, 2019

<sup>265</sup> Schweller, Randall L. & Pu, Xiaoyu, *After unipolarity: China's visions of international order in an era of U.S. decline*, *International Security* 36(1), (2011), pp. 41–72



be an alternative model. It is to offer what has been called the ‘*Beijing Consensus*’, a model for developing countries that poses an alternative to the ‘*Washington Consensus*’<sup>266</sup>:

### **The Beijing Consensus**<sup>267</sup>

Based on the ideals of liberalization, privatization, and deregulation, the Washington Consensus (WAC) – and its adoption by the world’s leading economic institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank – provided a prescription for development in the Third World. Nevertheless, implementation of the Consensus has had mixed results as it has led to multiple currency crises, stagnation, and recession during financial turmoil and may ultimately have led to the collapse of several nations’ economic systems. The most recent and more severe financial crisis, which began in late 2007, has further eroded confidence in the western, neoliberal economic model. On the other hand, the Beijing Consensus (BJC) is quickly gaining appeal within the developing world, where it was felt that the WAC was simply a new way for the developed North to take advantage of the developing South. Instead of prescribing rigid recommendations for the problems of distant nations, the BJC is pragmatic—much like China in the post-1979 world—and recognizes the need for flexibility in solving multifarious problems. In short, it uses China as an alternative model for development in the Third World.

In contrast with the western version of the ‘regulatory state’, the eastern ‘development state’ has intervened actively in the economy in order to guide or promote particular substantive goals. In addition, where the WAC prescribes the same strict and homogeneous reforms to nearly all developing countries, the BJC recognizes the need for a unique approach according to each nation’s unique challenges. In BJC’s case, the three main ideals are: 1) innovation, in the sense that ‘different strategies are appropriate for different situation’; 2) pursuit of dynamic goals, focusing on measures such as quality-of-life (in accordance with the UN Development Program’s Human Development Index) and rejecting the per capita GDP as the be-all of development priorities (the BJC recognizes that an increasing GDP, left without other goals and serious strategies for achieving them, will not solve problems of everyday relevance to the population); and 3) self-determination, which emphasizes the need for developing countries to actively seek independence from outside pressure, as it is imposed by ‘hegemonic powers’, such as the U.S.. As an ‘alternative’, BJC is naturally appealing to states that have not benefited from the existing international power structure.

In that sense, China probably seeks to form an ‘interests-based coalition’<sup>268</sup>, through the BRI and the AIIB, not only to counterbalance American predominance without provoking it directly, but also to promote its own power status in the international order and reshape global governance, moving from a rule-taker to rule-maker.

Another good example of how China seeks to reshape global financial governance through the creation of new multilateral institutions is the quota reforms by the IMF and WB. For a very long time, Beijing persistently pushed for quota reforms of the IMF and the World Bank giving China

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<sup>266</sup> Cui, 2018, p.18

<sup>267</sup> Turin, Dustin R., *The Beijing Consensus: China's Alternative Development Model*, 2010, VOL. 2 NO. 01 *INQUIRIES JOURNAL* <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/134/2/the-beijing-consensus-chinas-alternative-development-model> accessed on June 2, 2019

<sup>268</sup> Zhou & Esteban, 2018, p.499

and other emerging economies more voting power to better reflect the changes in global economic power, but failed. In October 2013, President Xi first mentioned the idea of a new Asian bank which would work along the lines of the so-called Beijing Consensus<sup>269</sup>. (“*In 2013 Beijing’s patience finally wore out: rather than fruitlessly seeking to increase its representation in existing institutions, it would set up its own*”<sup>270</sup>.) Soon after the launching of the AIIB, in December 2015, the IMF conceded to include the Renminbi as the fifth currency in its Special Drawing Rights basket (together with the US dollar, euro, British pound sterling, and Japanese yen). As a result, China’s voting power in the IMF increased from 2.98% in 2006 to 6.09% in 2016 and ranked in third place after the US and Japan. Meanwhile, China’s voting power in the World Bank also increased from 2.77% to 4.45% in 2016 and ranked in third place after the US and Japan. (see Table above)

Finally, China makes use of the BRI as a vehicle of *soft balancing* to frustrate the US containment and encirclement of China. “*In this context, the BRI can be seen as a ‘Pivot to Europe’ strategy to counterbalance the US’s ‘Pivot to Asia’, breaking US containment of China and undermining its dominance*”<sup>271</sup>.

## CHAPTER 7: THE MOST SALIENT MILITARY POLICIES OF CHINA’S GRAND STRATEGY

China’s military strategy is mainly underpinned by a ‘threat-based logic’, in addition to a ‘strong army concept’, ideas which are not mutually exclusive, but rather interconnected<sup>272</sup>. The 2015 China’s Military Strategy white paper states that a strong military is part of the ‘Chinese Dream’<sup>273</sup>, necessary to protect its core security needs and address various security threats<sup>274</sup>.

### 7.1 China’s Security Threats

The 2015 white paper includes an extensive list of security threats and challenges to China’s core interests discussed previously in this paper:

**1. The U.S. adjusting its Asia-Pacific strategy to strengthen alliances and expand military presence:** (“*As the world economic and strategic center of gravity is shifting ever more rapidly to Asia-Pacific region, the U.S. carries on its ‘rebalancing’ strategy and enhances its military*

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<sup>269</sup> Danner, 2018, p.128

<sup>270</sup> Miller, 2017, p.31

<sup>271</sup> Zhou & Esteban, 2018, p.492

<sup>272</sup> Cooper III, Cortez A., *PLA Military Modernization Drivers, Force Restructuring, and Implications*, RAND Corporation, 2018, p.6 [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT488/RAND\\_CT488.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT488/RAND_CT488.pdf) accessed on June 3, 2019

<sup>273</sup> ‘China’s Military Strategy’, (*II. Missions and Strategic Tasks of China’s Armed Forces*), Ministry of National Defense of the PRC, 2015 [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2015-05/26/content\\_4586805.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2015-05/26/content_4586805.htm)

<sup>274</sup> ‘China’s Military Strategy’, (*IV. Building and Development of China’s Armed Forces*), 2015

presence and its alliances in the region”<sup>275</sup>). The United States is directly mentioned in a threat context, and there are also mentions of “new threats from hegemonism, power politics and neo-interventionism”, that are indirect references to the United States. “Combined, all these references put the United States above all other listed threats”<sup>276</sup>.

Map 7: Where the Great Powers Meet



**2. The Japanese threat to territorial sovereignty and maritime rights in the East China Sea:** (“Japan is sparing no effort to dodge the post-war mechanism, overhauling its military and security policies”). U.S. and Japanese alliance actions in the Asia-Pacific region are grouped as a general threat and the dispute over the Senkaku Islands has been considered as the most dangerous one. As Obama

stated in 2014 “our treaty commitment to Japan is absolute and Article V covers all territories, including the Senkaku Islands”<sup>277</sup>.

**3. The maritime territorial disputes in the South China Sea:** (“On the issues concerning China’s territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, some of its offshore neighbors take provocative actions and reinforce their military presence on China’s reefs and islands that they have illegally occupied. Some external countries are also busy meddling in South China Sea affairs; a tiny few maintain constant close-in air and sea surveillance and reconnaissance against China”). Regarding South China Sea’s disputes, China claims frequently that U.S. and its allies are militarizing the SCS, when they conduct Freedom of Navigation operations. China has condemned those moves as ‘Cold War thinking’<sup>278</sup>.

**4. General ‘separatism’:** Taiwan separatism figures prominently, and the white papers cites ‘general separatism’, including Tibet and Xinjiang, as a threat. (“Reunification is an inevitable trend in the course of national rejuvenation” and “the ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces and their activities are still the biggest threat to the peaceful development of cross-straits

<sup>275</sup> ‘China’s Military Strategy’, (I. National Security Situation), 2015

<sup>276</sup> Cooper III, 2018, p.6

<sup>277</sup> ‘China’s Maritime Build-Up’, *Great Decisions*, The Foreign Policy Association, Jan 2, 2017 (documentary)

ISBN #: 978-0-87124-258-7

<sup>278</sup> Ibid

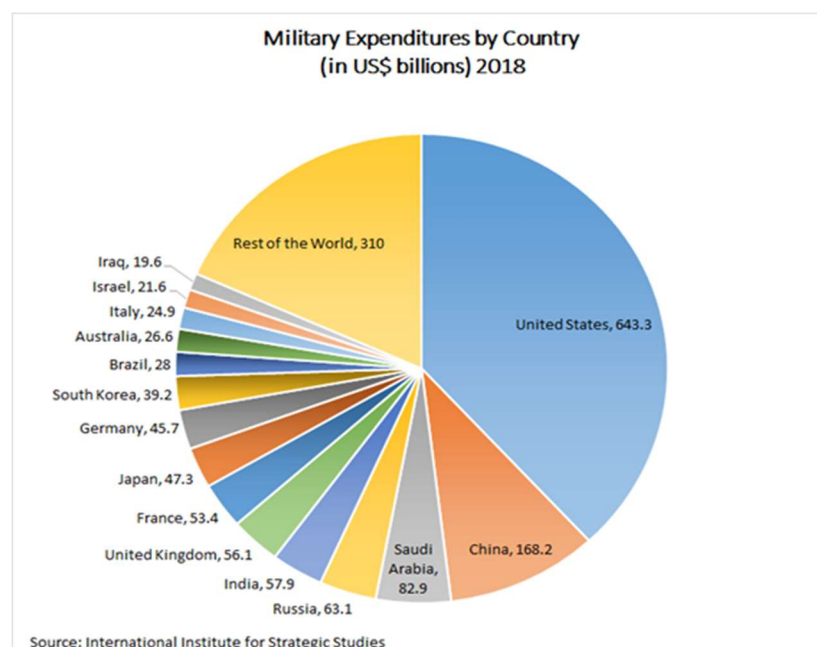
relations”. In addition, “*separatist forces for ‘East Turkistan independence’ and ‘Tibet independence’ have inflicted serious damage...*”.

**5. The security of overseas interests concerning energy and resources, strategic sea lines of communication, as well as Chinese institutions, personnel and assets abroad:** (“*With the growth of China’s national interests... the security of overseas interests concerning energy and resources, strategic sea lines of communication (SLOCs), as well as institutions, personnel and assets abroad, has become an imminent issue*”).

**6. Major powers developing more sophisticated space and cyber technologies:** “*The world revolution in military affairs (RMA) is proceeding to a new stage. Long-range, precise, smart, stealthy and unmanned weapons and equipment are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Outer space and cyber space have become new commanding heights in strategic competition among all parties. The form of war is accelerating its evolution to informationization. The aforementioned revolutionary changes in military technologies and the form of war have posed new and severe challenges to China’s military security*”.

China’s 2015 defense white paper also upholds that China will pursue “*a national defense policy that is defensive in nature, oppose hegemonism and power politics in all forms, and will never seek hegemony or expansion*”. However, even though it states that “*in the foreseeable future, a world war is unlikely*”, it also recognizes that due to “*new threats from hegemonism, power politics and neo-interventionism*”, as well as other “*hotspot issues*” (including territorial disputes), “*the world still faces both immediate and potential threats of local wars*”.

## 7.2 PLA Modernization Drivers: Restructuring to Meet the Threat



In the mid-1990s, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) was still an antiquated force that would have faced enormous difficulty projecting power anywhere beyond China’s borders. Chinese defense spending amounted to only around 2 percent of the global

total<sup>279</sup>. Now, after decades of rapid economic growth and steadily rising defense spending, China has the second-largest defense budget in the world (which, however, remains a fraction of what U.S. spends - Figure 1).

Currently, the PLA is pursuing an ambitious modernization program that aligns with China's two centenary goals. "*China's military leaders want to achieve mechanization and to make 'major progress' toward informatization by 2020, ahead of the first centenary goal. They also seek to reach a goal of 'basic modernization' by 2035, and become a world class military, which could be interpreted as 'peer capability' with the U.S. military, by the second centenary goal in the middle of this century*"<sup>280</sup>.

### **Key Concepts of China's Military Strategy**

As China's assessments of threats and of its place in the world have evolved, so has its military strategy. Through examining Chinese threat perception patterns, it is possible to discern Beijing's top priorities for adjustments to military strategy and subsequent modernization initiatives. Currently, the two key concepts of Chinese military strategy are 'active defense' and 'local informatized warfare'<sup>281</sup>.

According to the latest version of China's Defense White Paper, the most important task of the PLA is "*to win informatized local wars*" with emphasis on "*maritime military struggle*". According to the RAND corporation's study<sup>282</sup>, the former concept states that future wars will be geographically localized, primarily along China's periphery; be limited in scope, duration, and means; and be conducted "*under conditions of informatization*". (In its 2011 annual report on China's military power, U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) describes 'informatization' as "*conditions in which modern military forces use advanced computer systems, information technology, and communication networks to gain operational advantage over an opponent*" and interprets the concept as referring to "*high-intensity, information-centric regional military operations of short duration*"<sup>283</sup>). Finally, the same study says that, because local wars are limited in geography and short in duration, planning is geared toward 'quick decision outcomes' or, in other words, use of *asymmetric capabilities* against a technologically superior adversary to quickly bring the conflict to a close.

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<sup>279</sup>Brands, Hal, 'China's Plan: A Global Military Threat, *Bloomberg Opinion*, June 10, 2018

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-06-10/china-s-master-plan-a-global-military-threat> accessed on June 3, 2019

<sup>280</sup> Annual Report to Congress: *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, U.S. OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, May 2018, p.45

<https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/16/2001955282/-1/-1/1/2018-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT.PDF>

accessed on June, 3 2019

<sup>281</sup> Heath, Timothy R., Gunness, Kristen & Cooper III, Cortez A., *The PLA and China's Rejuvenation*, RAND Corporation, 2016, p. ix

[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1400/RR1402/RAND\\_RR1402.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1400/RR1402/RAND_RR1402.pdf) accessed on June 3, 2019

<sup>282</sup> Ibid

<sup>283</sup> Cooper III, 2018, p.2

The emphasis on ‘maritime military struggles’ indicates that China expects significant elements of a modern conflict to occur at sea<sup>284</sup>. China’s 2015 National Military Strategy white paper stresses the importance of preparing for potential contingency operations in peripheral areas (East and South China Seas) and gradually shifting from a focus on ‘offshore waters defense’ to a combination of ‘offshore defense’ and ‘open seas protection’.

In addition to the focus on ‘local informatized war’, the latest strategy also highlights the importance of ‘active defense’, a concept it describes as strategically defensive but operationally offensive<sup>285</sup>. It is rooted in a commitment not to launch a strategic offensive (strike first) but to respond robustly if an adversary challenges China’s national unity, territorial sovereignty, or interests. (“*We will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked*”<sup>286</sup>). According to this concept, defensive counterattacks can respond to an attack, or be launched to disrupt an adversary’s preparations to attack. RAND corporation’s analysis estimates that active defense “*has implications for deterrence and escalation, particularly when it comes to territorial and sovereignty disputes, given that active defense instructs the PLA to take offensive action in order to prevent conflict*”<sup>287</sup>. According to the same study, this can be combined with the fact that Chinese official documents and academic writings have shown greater interest in crisis management, deterrence, and escalation control. “*The shift in thinking reflected in these sources, suggests that Beijing may be more willing to accept the risk of armed conflict in a future crisis involving Chinese core interests than it has been in the past few decades*”<sup>288</sup>.

## Regional Dominance

According to the DoD report, modernization and restructuring of China’s military and security infrastructure has resulted in Chinese forces becoming dominant in the region, and competitive to the US. “*PLAN is the largest navy in the region by number of ships (more than 300) ... it will consist of seven brigades and will be capable of overseas expeditionary operations*”<sup>289</sup>, the report said.

In conjunction with the naval modernization, a modernized air force would support the distant goals of the Chinese military. This modernization has resulted in the People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) as “*the largest air force in the region and the third largest in the world,*” the report said, with the aim of becoming a strategic air force. “*Growth in the PLAAF is closing the gap with the U.S. Air Force across a spectrum of capabilities, gradually eroding the United States’*

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<sup>284</sup> Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2018, p.45

<sup>285</sup> Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2018, p.46

<sup>286</sup> ‘China’s Military Strategy’, (*III. Strategic Guideline of Active Defense*), 2015

<sup>287</sup> Heath, Gunness & Cooper III, 2016, p.35

<sup>288</sup> Heath, Gunness & Cooper III, 2016, p.ix

<sup>289</sup> Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2018, p.28

longstanding significant technical advantage”<sup>290</sup>, the report said, a strong statement for the strength of the PLAAF.

### 7.3 Reclamation and Militarization of Disputed Islands in the South China Sea

Xi Jinping, November 7, 2015 “Let me make this clear. The South China Sea islands have been China’s territory since ancient times. It is the bounds of duty of the Chinese government to uphold China’s territorial sovereignty and legitimate maritime rights and interests”<sup>291</sup>.

China has proceeded in an ambitious effort to advance its territorial claims in the SCS. It currently holds 8 outposts in the Spratly Islands. Vietnam has 48 outposts, the Philippines has 8, Malaysia has 5, and Taiwan holds one. All the claimants have engaged in various degrees of outpost upgrade and land reclamation, but Vietnam was the most active from 2009 to 2014, reclaiming approximately 60 acres of land<sup>292</sup>. However, “no other state attracts more attention than China in the SCS disputes, particularly due to the expansive nature of its claims, its use of force over the islands in the past, and its growing naval capabilities”<sup>293</sup>.

Map 8: Chinese Maritime Claims in the South China Sea and Land Reclamation, June 2015 (Source: ‘Pentagon Says China Has Stepped Up Land Reclamation in South China Sea’, Wall Street Journal, Aug 20, 2015)<sup>294</sup>.

China began land reclamation on its outposts, in December 2013, a plan put forward by the Chinese Navy. As of June 2015, Chinese reclamation had proceeded at a rapid pace and China had reclaimed approximately 2,900 acres (1,700 hectares) of land, or 17 times more land than all the other claimants combined. Its 3,000-meter airstrip on Fiery Cross Reef was, in late summer 2015, more than twice as large as the next largest and was the only one that could accommodate bombers<sup>295</sup>. The



<sup>290</sup> Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2018, p.33

<sup>291</sup> ‘China’s Maritime Build-Up’, *Great Decisions*, The Foreign Policy Association, Jan 2, 2017 (documentary) ISBN #: 978-0-87124-258-7

<sup>292</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.48-49

<sup>293</sup> Kipgen, 2018, pp.437

<sup>294</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pentagon-says-china-has-stepped-up-land-reclamation-in-south-china-sea-1440120837> accessed on June 3, 2019

<sup>295</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.49

figure displays the location of China's reclamation efforts on the Spratly Islands. China has manufactured 7 artificial islands.

Map 9: Chinese oil ring in Vietnamese EEZ, Source: 'The \$1 billion Chinese oil rig that has Vietnam in flames', The Washington Post, May 14, 2014<sup>296</sup>.



In July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague ruled on the case, filed by Philippines against China, under the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention (LOSC). This ruling included findings that China violated Philippines' sovereign rights within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); that China has no basis on which to claim historic rights within the nine-dash line to the extent that any claim exceeds maritime entitlements China could claim under the LOSC; and that Mischief Reef, Subi Reef, Second Thomas Shoal, and Reed Bank do not generate maritime entitlements<sup>297</sup>. China refused to recognize the case (or participate in the proceedings of the arbitration). In response to the ruling, it reiterated its historical claim of sovereignty over the SCS and it claimed that the

dispute should be resolved directly, through negotiation, between the concerned parties<sup>298</sup>.

It is said that China has tried to portray its actions in the SCS as *defensive* and the other claimants—particularly the Philippines and Vietnam—as instigating problems in the region<sup>299</sup>. This includes China's relocation of an oilrig close to the Vietnamese coast (map above), in May 2014, that sparked massive and deadly anti-Chinese riots in Vietnam and a significant dip in bilateral relations between the communist neighbors. (*“Beijing must have known the move would elicit some reaction, but it clearly didn't predict having to evacuate thousands of Chinese nationals desperate to put some distance between them and violent Vietnamese protests... The whole episode... demonstrates how volatile the region can be”*<sup>300</sup>).

<sup>296</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/05/14/the-1-billion-chinese-oil-rig-that-has-vietnam-in-flames/?utm\\_term=.e8168a6a895c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/05/14/the-1-billion-chinese-oil-rig-that-has-vietnam-in-flames/?utm_term=.e8168a6a895c) accessed on June 3, 2019

<sup>297</sup> Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2018, p.13

<sup>298</sup> Kipgen, 2018, pp.438

<sup>299</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.49-51

<sup>300</sup> Whiteman, Hilary, 'How an oil rig sparked anti-China riots in Vietnam', CNN, May 19, 2014

<https://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/19/world/asia/china-vietnam-islands-oil-rig-explainer/index.html> accessed on June 3, 2019



The RAND corporation's study reports that, China's strategy in the SCS is largely one of 'divide and conquer; encourage ASEAN countries with no disputes with China to stay on the sidelines and deal with dispute claimants on a bilateral basis. (*"China is proceeding cautiously to prevent ASEAN countries from uniting against China"*<sup>301</sup>.) ASEAN has been unable to pursue its traditional policy of achieving consensus in the case of SCS dispute, primarily because not all ASEAN members have similar interests on the issue<sup>302</sup>. Another reason is the bilateral relations between China and some smaller ASEAN members, such as Laos and Cambodia. (*"Because of its economic and military power, China has been able to silence some of the ASEAN members or even make them support its position, indirectly"*<sup>303</sup>.) ASEAN and China are currently negotiating a Code of Conduct which is intended to manage disputes and avoid conflict, pending their permanent solution, by direct negotiation or arbitration among the claimants. However, progress on coming up with a set of rules has been slow<sup>304</sup>.

There is no single country in ASEAN which is a party to the SCS dispute, capable of challenging China individually. This is an important reason why ASEAN (as well as Japan) has depended on the presence of U.S. to balance the influence of China<sup>305</sup>. Some of these disputes involve U.S. allies with whom there exist long-standing cooperation and security treaty commitments or strategic partners with whom there is a rapidly growing security relationship. (*"We have a big alliance system there; we have treaty allies, such as Japan, South Korea and Australia; we have defense agreements with Thailand and the Philippines; we have new security partnerships with Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, India. So, we are very present in Asia"*<sup>306</sup>). The U.S. does not take a position on sovereignty over the disputed land features, but it recognizes that China's reclamation and militarization activities have far surpassed that of other claimants. (*"What China has done, has been very provocative and against international law. U.S. stands by the right of navigation and the use of the rule of law to determine these disputes. And that is U.S. position"*<sup>307</sup>).

While China's uncompromising attitude is widely considered to be an obstacle to a peaceful solution, China has also taken steps to mitigate the tensions in the South China Sea. As such, China has avoided major conflicts with other claimants. Its pursuit of regional integration in the areas of economic, commercial and infrastructural development, has resulted in significant increase of China-ASEAN bilateral trade (as mentioned above) and major infrastructural project in the region (especially through the BRI). It is said that one important reason behind China's efforts toward

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<sup>301</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.49

<sup>302</sup> Kipgen, 2018, pp.435

<sup>303</sup> Kipgen, 2018, pp.445

<sup>304</sup> Yong, Charissa, 'Asean, China agree on text to negotiate Code of Conduct in South China Sea', *The Straits Time*, Aug 2, 2018 <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/asean-china-agree-on-text-to-negotiate-code-of-conduct-in-south-china-sea> accessed on June 3, 2019

<sup>305</sup> Kipgen, 2018, pp.443

<sup>306</sup> 'China's Maritime Build-Up', *Great Decisions*, The Foreign Policy Association, Jan 2, 2017 (documentary) ISBN #: 978-0-87124-258-7

<sup>307</sup> Ibid

regional integration was to prevent the SCS dispute from escalation. It is also believed that China's investment in the region and its policy of freezing the dispute was to earn gratitude from the ASEAN countries, or to gain leverage that would lead to the abandonment of the SCS disputes by other claimants<sup>308</sup>. As a result, while the new Filipino president Rodrigo Duterte desires to gain Chinese investment and aid and join the Maritime Silk Road for improving infrastructures and boosting growth, he decided to suspend a 2016 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration against China, and agreed to resolve disputes through a bilateral dialogue<sup>309</sup>.

#### 7.4 An ADIZ in the East China Sea 'with Chinese Characteristics'

In late 2013, China proclaimed a controversial Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea (ECS) which includes the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. An ADIZ has no basis in international law and is not overseen by any international organization. So definitions and rules vary between different countries. Typically, such zones extend well beyond a country's airspace<sup>310</sup> to give its military time to respond to potentially hostile incoming aircraft<sup>311</sup>. The international norm is that such zones only cover undisputed territory, do not apply to foreign aircraft not intending to enter territorial airspace, and do not overlap<sup>312</sup>.



Map 10: China's and Japan's ADIZs, Source: Global Security.org

China's ADIZ is unusual in that it overlaps with Japan's, South Korea's and Taiwan's, and covers disputed territory. In addition, China's defense ministry said that under a new set of rules, all aircraft entering the zone must notify Chinese authorities and are subject to emergency military measures, if they do not identify themselves or obey orders from Beijing. Unlike other ADIZ around the world, notification requirements are extended to both civilian and military aircraft, rather than just civilian aircraft as is usually the case. Therefore, the zone has been characterized as an ADIZ 'with Chinese characteristic'<sup>313</sup>.

<sup>308</sup> Kippen, Nehginpao, ASEAN AND CHINA IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTES, *Asian Affairs*, 49:3, 2018 pp. 433-448 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2018.1487691> accessed on June 2, 2019

<sup>309</sup> 'Duterte's visit presents overdue opportunity for China-Philippines rapprochement', *CHINA DAILY*, Oct 18, 2016 [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-10/18/content\\_27091868.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-10/18/content_27091868.htm) accessed on June 2, 2019

<sup>310</sup> Under international law, a country's sovereign airspace extends to the outer limits of its territorial waters, 12 nautical miles from its coastline.

<sup>311</sup> 'The A to Z on China's Air Defense Identification Zone', *The Wall Street Journal*, Nov 27, 2013 <https://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2013/11/27/the-a-to-z-on-chinas-air-defense-identification-zone/> accessed on June 4, 2019

<sup>312</sup> Pike, John, China-PLAAF/ Air Defense Identification Zone, *Global Security.org*, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/adiz.htm> accessed on June 4, 2019

<sup>313</sup> Ibid

Map 11: Senkaku Islands dispute, Source: Wikipedia

To understand the 2013 ADIZ proclamation by China, one has to go back to former rounds of disputes between Japan and China over the islands, which are called Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China. Aside from a 1945 to 1972 period of administration by the United States, as part of the Ryukyu Islands, the archipelago has been controlled by Japan since 1895. The PRC and the ROC (which also claims the islands) argue that documentary evidence prior to the First Sino-Japanese War indicates Chinese possession and that the territory is accordingly a Japanese seizure that should be returned as the rest of Imperial Japan's conquests were returned in 1945<sup>314</sup>.



The current round of the territorial dispute can be said to have begun in 2010 when plans for the mutual exploitation of the natural resources in the ECS were again frustrated in September because of the collision between a Chinese fishing boat and two Japanese Coast Guard vessels off the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Japan detained the Chinese captain concerned, but eventually released him after about two weeks. *“China acted as a more forceful actor in this renewed dispute over the islands and started blocking crucial exports to Japan of rare earths which are metals vital to Japan’s auto and electronics industries”*<sup>315</sup>. The time during the incident and the following months were marked by nationalistic protests in both countries. Eventually, the situation stabilized to the extent that a celebratory visit of a Chinese delegation to Japan, commemorating 40 years of official Sino-Japanese relations, was planned for 2012. However, as with the earlier plans for joint development of natural resources in the ECS, these plans were thwarted too when the Japanese government purchased three of the disputed islands from their private owner in September 2012 - *“an action that effectively nationalized the islands”*<sup>316</sup>. The Chinese government went on to cancel the planned celebration of four decades of Sino-Japanese relations. The nationalization of the islands infuriated Chinese<sup>317</sup>. *“The Chinese protests were destructive not only to Japanese cars (photo) and goods but also to Japanese expats living in China. On many occasions since these event, Chinese and Taiwanese military ships, including the Chinese aircraft carrier, have regularly entered the waters around the archipelago to protest Japan’s purchase of the*

<sup>314</sup> Hugh, Greg, ‘Island dispute between China and Japan fosters nationalism in both countries’, *China Insight*, Oct 30, 2012 <https://www.chinainsight.info/politics-2016/955-island-dispute-between-china-and-japan-fosters-nationalism-in-both-countries.html> accessed on June 4, 2019

<sup>315</sup> Danner, 2018, p.154

<sup>316</sup> Danner, 2018, p.155

<sup>317</sup> Voigt, Kevin, ‘Dangerous waters: Behind the islands dispute’, *CNN*, Sep 24, 2012

<https://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/24/world/asia/china-japan-dispute-explainer/index.html> accessed on June 4, 2019



islands”<sup>318</sup>. In November 2013, China unilaterally set up the ADIZ over the ECS which did not really assuage this dispute but rather had the opposite effect.

**U.S. response:** From its point of view, the U.S. is promoting stability in the heated dispute by supporting the balance of power in Asia in bolstering the weaker side, that of Japan. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry

stated: *“We don't support efforts by any state to apply its ADIZ procedures to foreign aircraft not intending to enter its national airspace. The United States does not apply its ADIZ procedures to foreign aircraft not intending to enter U.S. national airspace. We urge China not to implement its threat to take action against aircraft that do not identify themselves or obey orders from Beijing”*<sup>319</sup>. U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel expressed concern. *“We view this development as a destabilizing attempt to alter the status quo in the region. This unilateral action increases the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculations... This announcement by the People's Republic of China will not in any way change how the United States conducts military operations in the region”*. He also reiterated the official stance that the U.S. would support Japan in the event of a war with China over the Senkaku islands<sup>320</sup>.

**Japanese response:** In a statement, the Japanese Foreign Ministry stated: *“The airspace the Chinese side established today is totally unacceptable and extremely regrettable as it includes the Japanese territorial airspace over the Senkaku Islands, an inherent territory of Japan.... Unilaterally establishing such airspace and restricting flights in the area is extremely dangerous as it may lead to miscalculation in the area...”*<sup>321</sup>.

Despite several international protests, China's move received broad domestic support<sup>322</sup>. Currently, tensions remain high over the Senkaku Islands in the ECS, as Beijing strengthens its coast guard, which is now being called a ‘second navy’ by Chinese media. Since the beginning of this year there have been several instances of Chinese ships intruding into Japanese waters around the Senkakus. In July 2018, the Chinese coast guard was placed under the control of the Central Military Commission, the highest organ of the country's military. The Commission reportedly instructed three coast guard vessels patrolling in the East and South China seas to be fully prepared

<sup>318</sup> Danner, 2018, p.155

<sup>319</sup> Pike, John, China-PLAAF/ Air Defense Identification Zone, Global Security.org

<sup>320</sup> Chan, John, (ICFI), ‘Heightened tensions over China's air defence zone’, *World Socialist Web Site*, Nov 26, 2013 <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2013/11/26/pers-n26.html> accessed on June 4, 2019

<sup>321</sup> Pike, John, China-PLAAF/ Air Defense Identification Zone, Global Security.org

<sup>322</sup> Hong, Zhang, ‘Chinese public offers broad support to ADIZ’, *South China Morning Post*, 29 Nov, 2013 <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1368206/public-offers-broad-support-adiz> accessed on June 4, 2019

for various situations, “*an apparent sign of the country’s determination to protect its maritime interests*”<sup>323</sup>.

## CHAPTER 8: CONVERGENCE WITH OR DIVERGENCE FROM PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT GRAND STRATEGY?

Mixed signals, coming out of China over the last decade have led international community to often discuss about ‘contradiction’ or ‘incoherence’ in China’s grand strategy; where official pronouncements indicate a China that views itself like a peaceful country, trying to accomplish sustained economic development and other policy goals that are inconsistent with those of a rising regional hegemon, yet, often deeds signal its desire to assert its leadership in the region and in the world. Using Barry Buzan’s key components of China’s Peaceful Development Grand Strategy discussed above (in particular, those which are focusing on the international rather than domestic level), Danner examines the contradictions in China’s grand strategy<sup>324</sup>. This paper will make a similar analysis, presenting how China’s diplomatic and economic policies of the BRI and AIIB converge with its PD grand strategy, while its military ones do not, aiming to explain China’s contradictory behavior.

### 8.1 Belt and Road Initiative and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

**1. Defending the country’s territorial integrity, including reunification and territorial disputes:** China clearly *converges with* its PD grand strategy here, since, as it has been explained above, infrastructure investment will help keep peace and stability in China’s periphery, also affecting its unity. The AIIB also follows this logic; economic exchange and commitment to common development are the most effective means of ensuring stability on China’s borders.

**2. Maintaining favorable regional and global conditions for China’s development;** The factor of keeping favorable economic markets is an important one in the case of BRI. Since a number of investments in the region are associated with this initiative – investments which cannot only help China’s neighbors but also help China’s own economy as a kind of economic stimulus – this can be considered to perfectly *converge with* the PD grand strategy.

**3. Increasing China’s national power relative to the United States, other great powers and China’s neighbors, and achieving a more multipolar, less U.S.-dominated world order (anti-hegemonism);** *Convergence;* Both BRI and AIIB would put China at the center of a thriving region, with China having the leverage over the participant states. (However, what kind of power increase will be involved, remains to be seen.) In addition, if one subscribes to the view that China is not rejecting the global architecture, as some have suggested, but it just wants to supplement

<sup>323</sup> ‘Tensions high over Senkakus amid buildup of China’s ‘second navy’’, *The Japanese Times*, Feb 27, 2019 <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/02/27/national/tensions-high-senkakus-amid-buildup-chinas-second-navy/#.XJaFxygzY2w> accessed on June 4, 2019

<sup>324</sup> Danner, 2018, p.36-37

and reshape it, in an attempt to redress the inequities in the Bretton Woods system, then, this would also mean convergence with PD grand strategy regarding anti-hegemonism. *Divergence*; However, the AIIB can also be seen as diverging from this factor: if China does in fact have hegemonic ambitions, then challenging the post-World War II order may be counted as an action against its own principle of anti-hegemonism. (*“It will use multilateral organizations such as the AIIB, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and ASEAN Plus One, in which the US plays little or no role, to push its own regional agenda. The reality is that China is already challenging the post-World War II order established in Asia under the watchful eye of Washington”*<sup>325</sup>).

**4. Avoiding having others perceive China as threatening;** *Convergence*; Perhaps the prime value of the BRI is that it presents China’s rise in non-threatening terms to its Asia-Pacific neighbors and countries in the wider world<sup>326</sup>. The fact that investing so heavily in the region can be interpreted as altruistic behavior (even though China is likely to benefit more than the BRI participant nations) may ameliorate some foreign decision-makers’ perception of China rising and should, therefore, be considered as converging with PD grand strategy. *Divergence*; On the other hand, *“those who view the OBOR<sup>327</sup> critically, fear that China is planning to establish a quasi-tributary system over vast parts of Asia and therefore a modern-day suzerainty over many weaker states. Such an attempt... would called for China to grasp hegemony and therefore be perceived as threatening”*<sup>328</sup>. The AIIB could be meant to cement this sphere of influence in economic and financial terms. Moreover, some observers interpret the AIIB as a power politics’ instrument of China to show discontent with the U.S.-led Bretton Woods institutions. In such view, China would probably pursuit to replace the institutions of the current global order. These moves would naturally be perceived as threatening.

**5. Rising to great power status (restoration of China’s honor/prestige/reputation).** *Convergence*; trying to create more economic growth for and investment in neighboring states shows international solidarity on the part of China, and its reputation increases. *“If it becomes anything like the US Marshall Plan (which is the expectation of many), then this also converges with the PD grand strategy in terms of being a so-called responsible stakeholder”*<sup>329</sup>.

In sum, there is little to be said about the negative or assertive side of the BRI, apart from some doubts of neighboring states about China aiming for hegemony or being a threat. However, if such goals exist, then China is trying to secure the approval of relevant nations via buying them off with promised rewards rather than forcing them with military threats into doing what China wants. Very similar to the BRI, the AIIB perfectly converges with the PD grand strategy. The little doubt there is about possible divergence is the interpretation of China’s ambition in Asia as a regional hegemon or of a future threat, and on the global level of challenging the organizational structure

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<sup>325</sup> Miller, 2017, p.17

<sup>326</sup> Scobell, Andrew et al., 2018, p.28

<sup>327</sup> One Belt One Road: the previous name of the BRI

<sup>328</sup> Danner, 2018, p.87

<sup>329</sup> Ibid

which the U.S. and its allies created after the WWII. Whether the endeavor to initiate the BRI and the AIIB is with benign, altruistic intentions or selfish, power maximizing ambitions, its goal (development of Asia) is a noble cause in itself – probably to be seen separately from China’s intentions. Spending large sums of money to the apparent advantage of adjacent nations – some of which cannot look back on historically friendly relations with China, such as India, Vietnam and Philippines – surely increases China’s reputation and converges with PD.

## 8.2 Activities in the East and South China Seas

**1. Defending the country’s territorial integrity, including reunification and territorial disputes;** *Convergence*; from the Chinese point of view, the islands constitute an inherently Chinese territory. Thus, its actions in the ECS and SCS are not against the requirements of defending (or reunifying) one’s territory and, therefore, is converging with its PD grand strategy. Also, if the ADIZ can be said to be directed against Japan and the American superpower’s alliance, “*this would be classic balance-of-power strategic behavior on China’s part, or ‘anti-hegemonism’ on China’s official vocabulary, and therefore converging with its PD grand strategy*”<sup>330</sup>. *Divergence*; however, from an objective viewpoint, the actions can be seen as violations of other countries’ territorial integrity and, thus, as diverging from PD grand strategy.

**2. Maintaining favorable regional and global conditions for China’s development;** *Divergence*; even though, these military actions did not have a direct influence on economic markets, some repercussions can be transferred from them, not only to diplomacy but also into economy, especially in the case of Japan.

**3. Increasing China’s national power relative to the United States, other great powers and China’s neighbors, and achieving a more multipolar, less U.S.-dominated, world order (anti-hegemonism);** *Convergence*; since the territorial claims exceeded China’s actually controlled maritime territory, this led to new territorial gains on the part of China and thus to an increase of its power. This counts more in the ECS, considering that the declaration of the ADIZ was a gain against Japan (a power to be reckoned with and not a weak neighbor state of China). *Divergence*; on the other hand, if one understands China’s actions as a sign of non-acceptance of de facto existing borders, and therefore revisionism, then a different argument arises; these actions could be seen as offensive, power-maximizing, and border-enlarging international doings by China, and they would constitute pursuing hegemony itself.

**4. Avoiding having others perceive China as threatening;** *Divergence*; such an assertive behavior clearly contributed to observers seeing China as a threat.

**5. Rising to great power status (restoration of China’s honor/prestige/reputation).** *Divergence*; even though, declaring an ADIZ or building-up islands could seem like defensive actions at first glance, they could also lead to further escalation and to an increase in the chance of violent conflict (especially where Japan is concerned) and, thus, they could be seen, at least from

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<sup>330</sup> Danner, 2018, p.160

an international perspective, as offensive and irresponsible. Certainly, China's goal here was to secure national borders rather than relate to international level. Nevertheless, China was stretching the international rules by such behavior and, since acting like an international responsible power is part of its PD grand strategy, it diverges from it. Moreover, it by no means increased China's international reputation. The Table summarizes the above findings.

Table 8: Convergence or Divergence from China's PD Grand Strategy

	<b>CORE INTERESTS</b>	<b>POLICIES</b>	
	<b>Key Components of PD</b>	<b>Economic &amp; Diplomatic</b>	<b>Military</b>
	<b>SECURITY</b>		
1.	Defense of Territorial Integrity	<i>Convergence</i>	<i>Convergence &amp; Divergence</i>
	<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>		
2.	Maintenance of Favorable Conditions for China's Development	<i>Convergence</i>	<i>Divergence</i>
	<b>GREAT POWER STATUS</b>		
3.	Increase of National Power/Anti-hegemonism	<i>Convergence &amp; Divergence</i>	<i>Convergence &amp; Divergence</i>
4.	Avoidance of 'China Threat' Misperception	<i>Convergence &amp; Divergence</i>	<i>Divergence</i>
5.	Rise to Great Power Status/ Restoration of honor	<i>Convergence</i>	<i>Divergence</i>

### 8.3 Conclusions: Interpreting China's Contradictory Behavior

“Internal coherence of a nation's grand strategy can be defined as the manner in which different policies within a grand strategy design support or undermine each other”<sup>331</sup>. In the case of China's grand strategy incoherence, the military policy inputs undermine its efforts to promote peace and development through its economic and diplomatic policies. More specifically, China's general grand strategy of Peaceful Development seems to contradict the recently rising assertiveness that it notably exhibits in the East and South China Seas disputes, while continuously increasing its military budget and modernizing its military forces<sup>332</sup>.

As this paper argued earlier, China is an honor society and its grand strategy needs to be examined separately, in a different light from other western great powers in order for its intentions and logic to make sense. Taking into account 'honor' as a driving force, what contradicts or seems irrational in western eyes (which primarily focus on security and wealth) may probably make perfect sense in a Chinese perspective and possibly explain the ambivalence in China's behavior, ranging from

<sup>331</sup> Danner, 2018, p.31

<sup>332</sup> Tweed, David, 'China Defense Spending Set to Rise 7.5% as Xi Builds Up Military', *Bloomberg*, Mar 5, 2019 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-05/china-s-military-spending-slows-as-economy-cools> accessed on June 4, 2019



peaceful to assertive. There is no doubt that economic interest and the search for wealth, as well as security considerations, also play an important role in China's foreign affairs, but 'honor' may contribute to a better understanding of Chinese policy. (*"In this line of argument, which dates as early as Thucydides' Peloponnesian War, honor is an important socio-cultural driver which may well lead to change in international relations. Honor is a function of self-esteem; self-esteem, in turn, forms and influences identity... Many international relations scholars insist that survival is the overriding goal of all states... This is not true of honor societies"*<sup>333</sup>).

Even though China felt as a victim for over a hundred years of colonization and forced opening, it still places high emphasis on honor. On the one hand, China can be said to have the underlying complex acquired by the 'Century of Humiliation' (an attack to its honor). On the other hand, it has an 'implanted gene' of acting as the regional hegemon in Asia. (*"This comes from its long-ranging history as the central authority in its tributary system in hierarchically organizing nations and states surrounding itself with China at the pinnacle of it"*<sup>334</sup>). Both past greatness and humiliation are related to China's honor and, therefore, are relevant to explain its grand strategy manifestations. Currently, China is trying to climb back up to where it 'rightfully' belongs in order to overcome its acquired trauma. There are several obvious actions that it has taken in the past decade or so, which are clear attempts to increase its reputation (e.g. the Confucius Institutes, the 2008 Olympics, the continued participation in UN peacekeeping missions, foreign aid, etc.). The most important of these actions have been the BRI and the AIIB; much like the tributary system contributed to China's *external legitimacy* in history (gaining prestige and recognition from the international community), the BRI and AIIB can do something of that sort, by adding to its honor-prestige-reputation. Thus, Chinese actions, aiming at external legitimacy, use peaceful means and are perceived as perfectly converging with PD grand strategy.

However, international interaction associated with *internal legitimacy* (gaining domestic support) is usually conducted in a fashion that is perceived by the international community as assertive and divergent from China's PD. As mentioned above, due to the 'Century of Humiliation', a sort of obsession with sovereignty, national unification, and territorial integrity has been ingrained into China's collective memory. It is clear that the cases of the disputes in the ECS and SCS relate to internal legitimacy. The main objective of Chinese activities in the East and South China Seas is accommodating the *rising nationalism* within China and what its people expect from its government: the rise in status and respect from others. Standing up to Japan, for example, which was the power that last occupied China during WWII, is looked upon favorably by nationalist factions in China. *"No incoming Chinese leader can be perceived to be weak on territorial claims"*<sup>335</sup>. It is the CCP duty to lead China back to its erstwhile splendor, including the restoration of its borders, as they were before the 'Century of Humiliation'. (*"Chinese people support the government to be more aggressive, more assertive; so they make the issue not just a conflict over*

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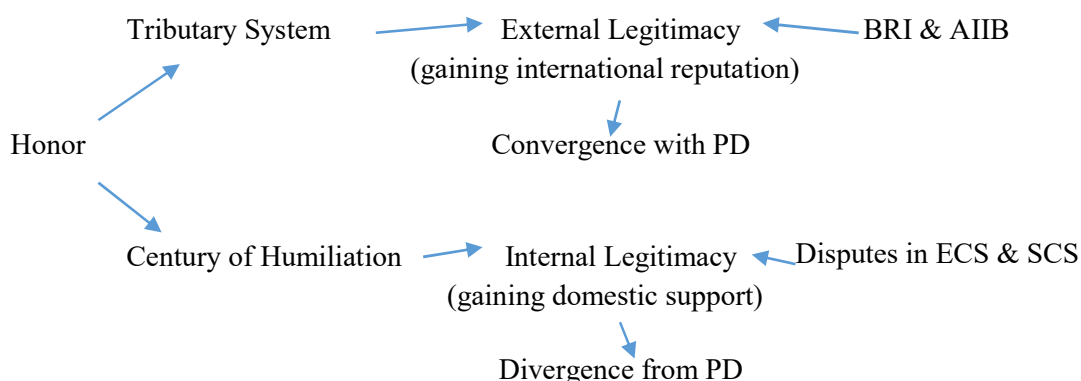
<sup>333</sup> Danner, 2018, p.12

<sup>334</sup> Danner, 2018, p.16

<sup>335</sup> Voigt, Kevin, 'Dangerous waters: Behind the islands dispute', *CNN*, Sep 24, 2012

resources; it is a conflict over identity... It is also about the CCP telling a story about Chinese power, to the Chinese people; and this is perhaps more important; this is about the legitimacy of the CCP”<sup>336</sup>). Thus, the Chinese government, in the absence of democratic legitimation by its own population, has increased its accommodation of some of its popular nationalistic demands (most prominently its historic animosity with Japan), which translates into its foreign affairs. Some of China’s foreign affairs will, therefore, not speak to external legitimacy and its search to increase its reputation internationally, but actually to internal legitimacy and the Communist government’s search to stay in power via legitimizing itself and increasing domestic approval. The Figure depicts the above conclusions:

Figure 2: ‘Honor’ and China’s Internal and External Legitimacy



Taking into account Chinese ‘honor’ we can conclude that:

- 1) Even if China’s actions might seem irrational to a foreign nation, they are perfectly rational to China by its own standards of measurement; it is mostly acting with economic interest (wealth) and fear (security), however, in certain circumstances, honor, internal or external legitimacy and other intangible factors, makes China leave the course of ratio, as it is perceived by foreign nations. In addition, sometimes, China’s rationality is driven by emotion, taking into consideration its humiliation trauma and the desire to, once again, rise to status it used to have for centuries, earning the respect of others.
- 2) China intends to use peaceful means to reach its core interests of security, wealth, and honor pertaining to external legitimacy. However, in order to defend its honor related to internal legitimacy and the humiliation trauma, it is willing to become assertive and diverge from its PD grand strategy.

To Beijing, its conduct in the East and South China Seas does not contradict promises of a ‘peaceful rise’ for China. In a speech celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Xi promised that China will “*firmly stick to the path of peaceful development*”, and argued that history is proof of Beijing’s benign intentions:

<sup>336</sup> ‘China’s Maritime Build-Up’, *Great Decisions*, The Foreign Policy Association, Jan 2, 2017 (documentary)  
ISBN #: 978-0-87124-258-7

“There’s no gene for invasion in Chinese people’s blood, and Chinese people won’t follow the logic that ‘might is right’”<sup>337</sup>. However, in another instance, he also supported that: “China would never conduct invasion and expansion, but would never permit any piece of Chinese territory to separate from China”<sup>338</sup>. In China’s viewpoint, these are not different foreign policy visions: China’s rise is peaceful, but China will not hesitate to use whatever means to defend itself. There is no contradiction between Beijing’s peaceful inclinations and a strong defense of its own territory. Besides, in Beijing, “China’s territorial claims are undeniable and absolute, and other countries are causing the trouble by trying to infringe on China’s territory”<sup>339</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

Speaking in Paris in 2014, President Xi quoted Napoleon’s old adage about China being a sleeping lion which, when it wakes, it will shake the world. “*The lion has already awakened, but it is a peaceful, amiable and civilized lion*”<sup>340</sup>, he said.

To answer the question that was initially posed (if China is still committed to its Peaceful Development and how its recent assertiveness can be explained), this paper did not observe any switch to a different grand strategy (as proposed by many scholars). The general trend is that China still maintains its PD grand strategy since, through it, it can achieve all of its core interests without being perceived as a threat or having to worry about its potential containment. Besides, the PD grand strategy was specifically developed to alleviate the fears of those that believed China would be a threat to them with its increasing economic and military capabilities and contain its development. It was also framed as an overt comparison to the legacy of colonialism and imperialism; by promising a ‘peaceful rise’, China is, in effect, promising not to use force to expand its territory.

But this promise has no bearing on the areas China already claims. Thus, it deviates from its PD grand strategy, in cases where its sovereignty, national unification and territorial integrity are threatened (or China believes they are) or, in other words, for defense purposes. Another divergence from PD concerns the accommodation of nationalism in China, pertaining to its humiliation trauma and the ‘promise’ that Chinese leadership made to its people for national rejuvenation. Thus, China’s style of conducting the same grand strategy has recently become more proactive and at times more assertive. This is probably due to the altered Chinese self-perception

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<sup>337</sup> Tiezzi, Shannon, China’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ and the South China Sea, *The Diplomat*, May 17, 2014

<https://thediplomat.com/2014/05/chinas-peaceful-rise-and-the-south-china-sea/> accessed on June 6, 2019

<sup>338</sup> Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2018, p.46

<sup>339</sup> Tiezzi, Shannon, China’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ and the South China Sea, *The Diplomat*, May 17, 2014

<sup>340</sup> Miller, 2017, p.149

since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis that China's time may now have come (since the crisis originated in the U.S., and China was not too deeply impacted by it).

Because of that, China has to take into consideration how its actions are perceived by others, since the 'security-dilemma' and 'China-threat' issues often arise from its policies. Specifically, it needs to think very carefully about the self-fulfilling prophecy aspects of both historical record and realism. To be more specific, and having the benefit of two additional decades of China's foreign policy, we can notice that Swain and Tellis 2000 prediction about a future assertive grand strategy on China's behalf, has been formalized in China's PD Grand Strategy. To elaborate on that, the foresaid study predicted that:

*“If history is a reasonably accurate guide, China could be expected to pursue most, if not all, of the core elements of those assertive grand strategies pursued by major powers in the past:*

- 1) ***Efforts to augment its military capabilities in a manner commensurate with its increased power; including increasingly muscular overseas presence and greatly enlarged foreign security commitments;*** “A strong army is part of the Chinese Dream” and China works to build a world-class army by 2050. As the 2018 U.S. Annual Report to Congress stated “*PLAN is the largest navy in the region by number of ships ... and it will be capable of overseas expeditionary operations*”. Furthermore, “*as China's global footprint and international interests have grown... it likely will seek to establish additional military logistics facilities in countries with which it has longstanding, friendly relationships*”.
- 2) ***Develop a sphere of influence by acquiring new allies and underwriting the protection of others;*** China's goal is to 'make friends' and establish a 'community of common destiny' which does not concern military alliances, but it does include 'international responsibility' (or 'strategic credibility') on security issues.
- 3) ***Acquire new or reclaim old territory for China's resources or for symbolic reasons by penalizing, if necessary, any opponents who resist such claims;*** China has not attempted to acquire new territory, but it does reclaim what it thinks it 'rightfully' belongs to it. As its Defense White Paper stated: “*Reunification is an inevitable trend in the course of national rejuvenation*” and China does not engage in foreign relations with a country that does not accept Tibet and Taiwan as inherent parts of China's territory. It also uses economic sanctions (e.g. the case of Japan and the blocking of rare earths exports).
- 4) ***Prepare to redress past wrongs it believes it may have suffered;*** “*Rejuvenation is also about taking back what has been stolen from China*”<sup>341</sup>.
- 5) ***Attempt to rewrite the prevailing international 'rules of the game' to better reflect its own interests;*** China is neither a revisionist power, aiming to radically change the international system (since it has been a large beneficiary of it), but nor a pure status quo power, accepting the world as it is. For example, establishing the AIIB may be part of

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<sup>341</sup> 'China's Maritime Build-Up', *Great Decisions*, The Foreign Policy Association, Jan 2, 2017 (documentary)  
ISBN #: 978-0-87124-258-7

Beijing's efforts to reshape global governance and strengthen its global leadership role, and also to delegitimize the U.S.-dominated system and create a 'fairer' and 'more inclusive' international order. Besides, as Yan Xuetong said "*the top strategic interest of a rising power is to establish a new world order*".

6) *Even ready itself to thwart preventive war or to launch predatory attacks on its foes.* China considers the U.S., its alliance-system, and its presence in the Asia-Pacific region as the most imminent threat that it faces, and prepares itself for 'local informatized wars' with an emphasis on 'maritime struggle' and 'open seas protection'. In addition, the 'active defense concept instructs the PLA to take offensive action in order to prevent conflict.

We can assume that the study, successfully, foresaw some aspects of China's future grand strategy, which, nevertheless, are labelled as 'peaceful' by China, but as 'assertive' by the 'other' side. In case that China's grand strategy stops being perceived as peaceful and defensive but rather considered as assertive and offensive (the 'offensive' element of China's 'active defense' entails that, creating the possibility of miscalculations and escalation), then, as theory predicts, 'a small event could trigger a crisis', leading participants find themselves caught in the dangerous dynamics of 'Thucydides trap' ... Or, as Xi put it "*should major countries time and again make the mistakes of strategic miscalculation, they might create such traps for themselves*"<sup>342</sup>.

Whether China's rising assertiveness since 2008-2009 is a long-term move away from its PD grand strategy – and therefore an indication that 'China cannot rise peacefully' - remains to be seen. This would quickly reveal that the whole PDR rhetoric, from Deng onward, was and is simply propaganda: a transitional strategy to cover a period of weakness until China became strong enough to assert itself to power terms. "*This outcome, in turn, would vindicate those realists who always suspected that PDR was a Sun Tzu style Art of War strategic deception, and that as China grew stronger it would become more assertive*"<sup>343</sup>.

Lastly, if China is, in fact, honest about its intentions and finally manages to achieve its rise peacefully, that would be a unique idea for a Grand Strategy; it would be a truly historic accomplishment that would mark the end of the western dominated era of warlike rise, and the move to a new model of international relations...

\* \* \*

Grand strategies evolve over time. For China, change may be driven in response to reactions of other states, discontinuities in the international order, in response to leadership transitions, or by the personal outlook of individual leaders. Since Xi Jinping is still in the early stages of his leadership, we can expect further change during his time in power. Watching for changes in

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<sup>342</sup> Gilsinan, Kathy, 'Cliché of the Moment: China's Increasing Assertiveness', *The Atlantic*, Sep 25, 2015 <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/south-china-sea-assertiveness/407203/> accessed on June 15, 2019

<sup>343</sup> Buzan, 2014, pp.404

China's grand strategy and analyzing the drivers of such changes presents a rich opportunity for future scholarship.

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