A Resurgent Chinese Identity:

Analysing the Shift in China's Foreign Policy Since 2004

MA Thesis by Aftab Bose

S1894986

MA International Relations

Specialisation: International Studies

Email: bose.aftab@gmail.com

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Leiden University

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Abstract: In 2004, China's foreign policy appeared to enter a relatively expansive phase. The Chinese President, Hu Jintao, began to confidently make proclamations for a new world order, China's bilateral aid activities increased exponentially and China began to assert itself in international organisations. The change in China's foreign policy would appear intuitively consistent with the activities of any country that has achieved the economic growth that China has. However, upon closer examination, China's foreign policy not only displays consistencies with principles that have been prevalent in Chinese society since ancient times, but also appear to de-legitimise the hegemonic position of the United States in a number of cases. In essence, it would appear as if China has made the decision to bring about a transformation in international norms to better suit its identity, particularly in light of the diminishing influence of the US.

1. Introduction

1.1. Context and background

One of the most essential components in the consolidation of hegemonic power for a State is establishing a framework of norms and values conducive to its interests. Alongside garnering universal conformity, these norms must also carry connotations of legitimacy and moral superiority. For the remainder of this paper, such a framework of norms and values is referred to as a normative structure. Specifically, this paper observes the current normative structure designed by the United States of America (US) and how it is affected by the rapid ascension of an ideologically antithetical country, namely China.

A wave of international integration over the last two centuries has forced China – a historically proud and isolationist civilisation – to interact with the global economy on relatively unfavourable terms. During the first half of the 20th Century, popular discourse in China revolved around revisionist strategies of staging a revolution to reform the international system, overthrowing the US in the process. In 1979, however, a number of liberal economic reforms in China were accompanied by a shift in its foreign policy towards a more participative position in International Relations (IR). Popular opinion held that China had come around to accepting the world order as it was, an assertion that

was backed by a spike in its adherence to international norms. However, closer examination reveals that certain core principles in China's foreign policy have remained above compromise despite international pressure. In recent times, China has become vocal and proactive in its advocacy of these principles, irrespective of their compatibility within the international normative structure. Simultaneously, the normative structure established by the US has come under scrutiny due to a number of domestic and international transgressions such as failed military campaigns, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) as well as number of alleged human rights violations .

In light of these developments, the question this paper seeks to answer is: Has China returned to a revisionist objective with respect to the normative structure in International Relations? In 2004, China's foreign policy experienced a number of changes that included the proclamation of a 'peaceful rise' to power, a vision for a new world order, a significant increase in aid-related activities, as well as an increasingly assertive position in international organisations. Through extensive analysis of these developments, this paper argues that China's foreign policy has indeed undergone a reversal from the cooperative position it took in 1979, back to a revisionist position since 2004. Further, this paper employs the Constructivist notion of shifting norms, values and identities to highlight the two main features of China's revisionist strategy. Firstly, the confident projection of a new identity as a China of the modern world, prepared to establish new norms and envision a new world order. Secondly, the systematic de-legitimisation of the normative structure established by the US, thereby creating a vacuum that can be filled with new principles.

1.2. Research Puzzle

Over the last three decades, China has surprised everyone with its monumental economic growth, as a result of which every aspect of China's behaviour has come under intense scrutiny. Some of the questions that come to mind are: What norms and values constitute China's unique identity? How has this identity manifested itself during China's ascension to power in a disparate normative structure? What does the ascension to power of China mean for the faltering normative structure established by the US? This paper will attempt to answer these questions through an examination of contemporary Chinese foreign policy placed in historical context. The theory applied and the methodology used for this purpose, are described below.

2. Theory and Methodology

2.1. Theoretical framework

This paper argues from a Constructivist point of view, which operates in a paradigm that is separate from those of other theories such as Realism and Liberalism. As explained by Weins, where Realism, Liberalism and other variants of the same rest on 'rationalist and materialist' assumptions about human nature, Constructivism finds its basis in 'irrational social construction'.[1] In essence, Constructivists believe that all identities, interests, norms and values are socially constructed, which means they have the potential to transform, based on varying circumstances. In the international scenario, the State would be the primary agent to establish these identities. Moreover, the concepts that are socially constructed by States are subject to differing interpretations based on the shared understanding of individual circumstances. Renowned Constructivist scholar Alexander Wendt has illustrated this perfectly by stating that:

> 500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United
> States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons, because the British
> are friends of the United States and the North Koreans are not,
> and amity or enmity is a function of shared understanding.[2]

Constructivism was selected as the theoretical framework for this paper due to the room that it offers to move beyond the core assumptions about human nature that are made by other IR theories. The core assumptions in Realism and Liberalism (and other derivative theories), for example, revolve around definitions of 'rationality' and 'self-interest' that are arguably best suited for western societies. Discussions on Chinese philosophy that emerge in this paper will deal with concepts that might be classified amongst modern western societies as irrational. An example of such a concept would be the Confucianist notion of a harmonious society, where individuals are proud to serve their purpose to maintain social harmony and are not concerned with personal gains.[3] Such a concept

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1 Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," International Security, 20, No. 1,(Summer 1995): 73, accessed on 26th June 2017 atmaihold.org/mediapool/113/1132142/data/Wendt-Constructing.pdf
[2] Ibid.
[3] James Li "Traditional Chinese World Order", *Chinese Journal of International Law* 1 (2002): 29, accessed October 11, 2016 doi:
http://heinonline.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/HOL/Page?public=false&handle=hein.journals/chnint1&page=20&collection=journals

challenges the very basis of rationality that other IR theories assume. Given the fact that this paper argues for a transformation of global society to one that is tolerant of, and receptive to foreign norms, it is recognised that the 'social construction' explanation provided under Constructivist theory would be best suited to deal with such fundamentally novel concepts.

As mentioned above, this paper argues that China seeks to reconstruct the norms in IR to better suit its own ideology and principles, not out of a desire for power but out of a devotion to historical principles. China has always held a worldview that differs fundamentally from the Westphalian world order that we exist within today. Perhaps it is testament to the sanctity of China's historical principles that it has remained steadfastly devoted to them at every stage. As a result, China now hopes to leverage the substantial power that it has garnered to construct a world order in which it can maintain integrity with its own historical identity. In essence, this paper argues that China is motivated by ideological integrity, something that would not resonate with Realist or Liberalist explanations.

2.2. Methodology

This paper employs an analytical approach, specifically discourse analysis, to argue the case of a resurgent Chinese identity. In keeping with an analytical approach, the problem is broken down into its various components, each of which is subjected to an individual discourse analysis. In this case, the argument is that China is in the process of projecting its own identity and ideology in order to bring about a shift in the international normative structure established by the US.

Firstly, a general analysis is provided on the role of identity, ideological supremacy and normative legitimacy in accumulating power at a hegemonic level. Secondly, this is applied at a practical level to understand the current ideological supremacy of the US. Thirdly, analysis is provided on the decline of US hegemony. Fourthly, an attempt is made at constituting a general Chinese identity, based on the consistencies between ancient Chinese philosophy and contemporary Chinese society. Lastly, discourse analysis of contemporary Chinese foreign policy is conducted to demonstrate the projection of this ideology as well as the simultaneous de-legitimisation of the values

espoused by the US. As mentioned above, international norms and values are assumed to be socially constructed and, therefore, subject to complete transformation.

3. Literature Review

Before engaging in analysis and argumentation, it is important to address some of the assumptions upon which this paper rests. For example, is the establishment of a normative structure really essential in consolidating hegemonic power? What is the nature of norms established by the US? Is the position of the US as a hegemon really on the decline? What is responsible for the 'ascension of China' to a position of power? What are some of the existing explanations of this ascension provided under other theoretical farmeworks? The following section explores these questions.

3.1 Normative Structures

3.1.1 The Ideological Dimension of Hegemonic Power

In most cases, a hegemon is portrayed as the most powerful actor in a continuing scenario, one who has the power and ability to determine the behaviour of other actors as well as the outcomes of most incidents. Scholars such as Gramsci and Marx have conducted extensive analysis on hegemony, contextualised within the dynamics of class relations. When contextualised in the international scenario, however, the notion of hegemony assumes a more complex form.

> ...the concept of hegemony may imply a great capacity for coercion and/or a great degree of influence or control of the structures of the international system and the international behaviour of its units, but it excludes situations where we have the establishment of relations of direct and official control of foreign governments or territories.[4]

According to this definition, a hegemon could be any State that occupies a position to exert such an influence over all other countries. Naturally, the question then arises of

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[4]Andreas Antoinades, "From 'Theories of hegemony' to 'Hegemony Analysis' in International Relations," presented at *49th ISA Annual Convention,* San Francisco (2008): 2

how such an overarching position is attained. During his analysis on Gramsci's 'Theory of Hegemony,' Robert Bates argues that "the concept of hegemony …. means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularisation of the world view of the ruling class."[5] The striking feature of this statement is that it places more importance on the role of ideas in hegemony than the more tangible influences of economic and political might. This may be attributed to the fact that most ascensions to hegemony have been designed around an ideological doctrine. In the Cold War, for example, while the US and the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) were engaged in a major race with respect to technology, arms and economic growth, the heart of the conflict lay in the ideological divide between the authoritarian communist regime in the USSR and the democratic capitalist philosophy of the US.

So what exactly is the role of ideology in the consolidation of hegemonic power? As described by Gramsci, the dissemination of ideas held by the ruling class generates consent. How so? Ian Hurd attributes this power to the concept of legitimacy. According to Hurd, legitimacy has the power to exert an internal force on an actor in society as opposed to the external force exerted by coercion.. The feeling of being morally 'right' represents a powerful source of motivation that potential hegemons seek to exploit through the accumulation of legitimacy.[6] Perhaps the most comprehensive analysis on relatively intangible methods of domination, however, has come from Joseph Nye through his concept of "Soft Power". Nye argues that in addition to the ability to coerce others, hegemons also require the ability to influence the long-term attitudes and preferences across the world.[7] This ability is accumulated through the widespread dissemination of a country's language and cultural values in an attempt to make them universally attractive and legitimate.[8] As elucidated by Kurlantzick, "Soft power stems from both government and non-government actors—from business people and pop stars and language teachers."[9]

[5] Thomas R. Bates, "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, 2 (1975): 352, Stable URL:http://www.jstor.org/stable/2708933
[6] Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Relations", *International Organization,* 53,2(1999): 387
[7] Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics," New York: PublicAffairs (2004): 268.
[8]Ibid.
[9] Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Charm Offensive in Southeast Asia," *Current History,* (2006): 272

3.1.2 The US as a Hegemon

Keeping in mind these various dimensions of hegemonic power, one could begin to understand the motivations that drove the struggle for moral and ideological supremacy during the Cold War. The struggle culminated in the emergence of a single hegemon, i.e., the US, and the collapse of the Soviet Union and all the values that it stood by. Since then, not only has the US accumulated the largest share of military and economic power in the world, but it has also established a normative structure that has come to be accepted on a global scale. Whether with respect to democratic values, liberalised economies or the partial surrender of sovereignty to international organisations, the US has attached itself to a number of values that it has propagated with the use of its economic and political might. As explained by Regilme and Parisot, the US propagated the so called 'neo-liberal' order, which entails large-scale privatisation and liberalisation of markets, primarily through institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB).[10] The economic integration that resulted was further accompanied by 'cultural hegemony,' which essentially drove other countries into perceiving the world in the same manner as the US. These policies have endowed the US with both, legitimacy and moral high ground as well as the attractiveness to dictate the terms in IR. As phrased by Mark Beeson, the US currently "has a unique potential to shape both the rules and regulations that govern the increasingly interconnected international system, and the behaviour of the other state and non-state actors that effectively constitute it."[11]

Given the fact that US hegemony is constructed around a normative structure, Social Constructivism would suggest that this leaves room for a change in the future. Throughout history, a number of nations have held the title of a hegemon, ranging from the Roman Empire to the British Empire. Viewed from such a historical perspective, a hegemon would almost appear to be a necessity of some sort. Some argue that this necessity stems from the anarchic nature of international politics and the need for a single power to establish rules and punish any transgressors. In essence, the economic and political stability of the entire international system depends on the presence of a powerful actor who can dictate operations. This is known as the Hegemonic Stability

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[10] Salvador Santino F. Regilme Jr. and James Parisot, "Debating American Hegemony: Global Cooperationa and Conflict. In American Hegemony and the Rise of Emerging Powers and Cooperation and Conflict, edited by Salvador Santino F. Regilme Jr. and James Parisot. London: Routledge (2017):1
[11] Mark Beeson ,"The Rise of the 'Neocons' and the Evolution of American Foreign Policy." In: Hadiz VR (ed.) Empire and Neo-liberalism (2004):1

Theory (HST). Yazid has provided a number of examples that demonstrate the need for a hegemon in order to maintain stability, which include the failure of the League of Nations as well as the subsequent occurrence of World War II. These occurrences are attributed by Yazid to the failure of the US to assume the role of a hegemon after the First World War.[12] In any case, when viewed from a Realist perspective, the race for security and survival amongst states would eventually produce a leader, making the emergence of a hegemon an inevitable entity. What then, contributes to the downfall or the change of a hegemon?

Within her analysis on the HST mentioned above, Yazid has laid down five broad areas in which a hegemon must be the most powerful in order to remain in control, namely military, economic, political, institutional and ideological. Weakness in any one of these departments, with a special emphasis on the economic or political areas, could contribute to the downfall of hegemonic power according to Yazid. Robert Keohane appears to take Yazid's emphasis on economic superiority even further when he states that:

> ...to be considered hegemonic in the world political economy…a country must have access to crucial raw materials, control major sources of capital, maintain a large market for imports, and hold comparative advantages in goods with high value added, yielding relatively high wages and profits.[13]

It is no surprise, therefore, that the position of the US as a hegemon has come under scrutiny in academia over the last few years, especially since the GFC of 2008. Since the crisis, scholars have increasingly begun to write about the decline of US hegemony. Regilme and Parisot, for example, have provided analysis on how the original rise of the neo-liberal order was deflated by a lack of economic growth in North America, thereby dispersing the power in IR amongst other emerging economies.[14] Todd illustrates a manifestation of this decline in hegemonic power when he states that the US,

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[12] Noor Mat Yazid, " The theory of Hegemonic Stability, Hegemonic Power and International Political Economic Stability," *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration,* 3 No. 6 (2015): 69
[13] Ibid.
[14] Regilme and Parisot, " Debating American hegemony," 1

>...is battling to maintain its status as the world's financial center by making a symbolic show of its military might in the heart of Eurasia, thereby hoping to forget and, have others ignore, America's industrial weakness, its financial need, and its predatory character. [15]

The striking feature of Todd's analysis is the fact that it directly de-legitimises the military campaigns of the US in the Middle-East. Aside from the decline in economic supremacy, the discrepancies between the official rhetoric of American military campaigns across the world and the actions of the US military have led to what Kagan has called a "crisis of legitimacy" for the US. Francis Shor, for instance, claims that the protracted war in Afghanistan has little to do with the location of Osama Bin Laden or the defeat of the Taliban, but in fact is, what he calls "punitive imperialism" as retribution for disagreement over a major oil pipeline that was to run across the country.[16] Shor cites the numerous reports of bombings in hospitals and at weddings as testament to this assertion. Similarly, Douglas Kellner has criticised the military 'unilateralism' carried out by the US in the Afghanistan war as well as the subsequent Iraq War, claiming that the US has acted purely out of its own best interests despite propagating a rhetoric of global security.[17] Consequently, the US has also lost credibility with other powerful nations in Europe and across the world that have openly opposed the campaigns.[18]

Such a dip in legitimacy amongst its peers can prove highly detrimental to the US as a hegemon. According to T.J. Mackeown, when a hegemon begins to impose its will on others–as is the case with the US– a coalition of other powerful countries begins the process of resisting the hegemon's arbitrary actions. These countries rally in order to remove the hegemon from its position of superiority.[19] In his work on reciprocal socialisation, Maximillian Terhalle has described the BASICS (Brazil, South Africa,

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[15] Emmanuel Todd, C. Delogu, and Geoffrey McNicoll. "After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order." *Population and Development Review* 31, no. 1 (2005): 178.
[16] Francis Shor. "War in the Era of Declining U.S. Global Hegemony." *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies* 1, no. 2 (2010): 72.
[17] Douglas Kellner, "The Media and the Crisis of Democracy in the Age of Bush-2." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (2004): 32.
[18] G. John Ickenberry, "Is American Multilateralism in Decline," *Perspectives on Politics,* 1, No.3 (2003): 539
[19] T J. Mackeown, "Hegemony in International Relations", *International Relations,* vol.2 (2015): 2

India and China) coalition, which thwarted the US agenda at the 2009 Copenhagen Summit, to be a coalition of this precise nature.[20]

Therefore, it would appear that the US has faltered in each of the departments put forth by Yazid. Scholars such as Chomsky have been quick to declare that the era of US hegemony is in steady decline. On the other hand, academics such as Tamara Wittes claim that the US is currently more powerful than it has ever been in history.[21] All that has changed, according to her, is "our perceptions of what the power can do". In essence, she attributes the failures of the US in the Middle-East to the complexities of the region itself and not to any economic or military vulnerability on the part of the US. Similarly, Robert Kagan has argued against the notion that a single failed military campaign or a lone financial crisis are enough to diminish hegemonic power.[22] Kagan argues that the decline of a hegemon ususally takes decades, citing the example of British hegemony, which took over three decades to fall despite initial indications of decline. In a sense, these scholars raise valid points considering the fact that the failure of military campaigns does not diminish the relative economic or military capability of the US. However, as mentioned above, the ideological dimension of hegemonic power, i.e., the legitimacy held by the hegemon is crucial. There is no doubt about the fact that failed military campaigns, based on faulty rhetoric, have been damaging to the credibility of the US. Moreover, Kagan and Witte's arguments rest on the belief that the relative power of the US remains steady, which may not be the case for very long either. While the US continues to be perceived as an economic and military powerhouse, other countries, especially China, are fast catching up. According to Forbes, China is set to overtake the US economy as early as 2018.[23] The dispersion of economic power has been cited by other commentators such as Kupchan and Hadar to counter the assertions made by Kagan, arguing that the US tactic of "picking diplomatic fights" in order to bolster its defense budget has grown obselete in light of the decline in its legitimacy and economic power.[24]

Robert Gilpin's differentiation between the concepts of power and prestige is ideal to explain the relative decline in power of the US in IR. In his words, prestige is the

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[20]Maximillian Terhalle, "Reciprocal Socialization: Rising Powers and the West." *International Studies Perspectives* 12, no. 4 (2011): 342.
[21] Tamara Cofman Wittes,. "American Hegemony: Myth and Reality (Article)." *The Brookings Institution*, No.4. (2007)
[22] Robert Kagan, "Not Fade Away." *The New Republic* 243, no. 1 (2012): 19
[23] Mike Patton, "China's Economy Will Overtake the US by 2018," *Forbes* (2016)
[24] Leon T. Hadar, "The Reality of American Power: Why Robert kagan is Wrong," *Huffpost,* (2012)

"reputation for power, or the credibility and perceived resolve of a State, in the eyes of other states."[25] Additionally, prestige always "lags behind power" in the sense that it develops after power has accumulated and remains for an extended period of time afterwards. Due to an unequal rate of growth amongst countries, the relative power of a hegemon might decline much quicker than the prestige does. The fact that the US continues to be considered at the peak of its hegemony by scholars such as Kagan, despite the issues described above, suggests that the US currently commands residual prestige while its relative power has declined. The question, then, becomes one of who will challenge the position of the US as a hegemon. In 2001, the RAND corporation devised a "Framework for Analysis" to address the emergence of competitors in a hegemonic scenario. According to this study, a challenger is any actor who "attempts to change the basic rules of the international system without consulting the hegemon." The framework states that upon the emergence of a challenger,

> The hegemon has little leeway, since failing to respond to a challenger that openly violates the rules amounts to an admission that it cannot enforce the rules, leading to a loss of relative power between it and the challenger. Not surprisingly, empirical studies show that challenges to the hegemon generally occur when the challenger has about as much power as the hegemon.[26]

Based on both the rule breaking criteria as well as the power parity, this paper argues that the "challenger" in the contemporary international scenario is China.

3.2 The Rise of China

As mentioned in the previous section, the economy of China is projected to overtake that of the US by 2018. This rapid rate of growth has raised debates amongst academics around the intentions of China once it hits the peak of its international power. The doubt about China's intentions is accentuated by its ambiguous behaviour in the international scenario, which has made it challenging for academics to club its behaviour within the existing theories of IR. For example, certain aspects of China's foreign policy such as

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[25] Robert Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 591.
[26] Thomas S. Szayna,, Daniel Byman, Steven C. Bankes, Derek Eaton, Seth G. Jones, Robert Mullins, Ian O. Lesser and William Rosenau, "The Emergence of Peer Competitors: A Framework for Analysis" *RAND Corporation*, Santa Monica, CA (2001): 48.

the bolstering of its military in the South China Sea could be viewed as highly passive-aggressive in its approach, which defensive Realists have touted as an example for their explanation of events. Other aspects, such as the efforts to increase economic ties with, and the subsequent inter-dependence with the US appear to fall under the Liberalists/Liberal-institutionalist interpretations. In essence, it is still not certain how the international scenario will shape up with an increasingly powerful China in the picture. This paper provides one possible explanation for China's recent behaviour, particularly since 2005. However, before providing an interpretation of Chinese foreign policy, it is important to examine the evolution of China's economic growth story.

3.2.1 Historical Background

This section will focus on the development of China since the introduction of economic reforms in 1979. Following the death of Chairman Mao Tse Tung in 1979, Deng Xiaoping introduced a number of liberal reforms that brought about a major transformation in China. Prior to this, the Chinese economy was modelled around centralised government planning, in which agriculture was collectivised and a majority of industrial investments were undertaken by the government.[27] However, the pitfalls of pivotal economic developments such as the Great Leap Forward as well as the Cultural Revolution caused a significant drop in the per-capita purchasing power in China. Deng's reforms, which included partial privatisation of agriculture, decentralisation of industry to be run on free market principles, and the establishment of free economic zones across the country, were all targeted specifically at increasing the purchasing power of Chinese citizens.[28] Since the reforms of 1979, the Chinese economy has grown at an average of 10% annually, despite the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 and the subsequent economic slowdown after 2010.[29]

Alongside the rapid economic development, the post-reform period has also been characterised by a major shift in the foreign policy of China. According to Wang, the debates amongst IR scholarship in post-reform China reversed their focus from the "overthrowing the old international order" to seeking the "most efficient methods of

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[27] Wayne M. Morrison, "China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States." *Congressional Research Service,* (2015): 2
[28] Ibid., 4
[29] Ibid.,4

increased international integration."[30] The new era was said to be characterised by "rationalism and national interest" rather than by the class sentiments that were so prevalent previously. Since then, despite principle disagreements with the US over a number of aspects of IR such as the Democratic Peace Theory or the invasion of Kosovo, China has continued its integration into the current international order, particularly since becoming a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001. The increase in integrative efforts has been accompanied by efforts to debunk myths of a 'China threat' that had entered the academic rhetoric in the West.

Therefore, it would appear as if the economic boost experienced by China, as a result of Deng's reforms, has given it the confidence to look outward and become an active member of the international community. Certain issues, however, have emerged as major points of contention between China and the US in particular and the international community as a whole. These issues primarily deal with territories such as the South China Sea, Taiwan, Tibet, etc., upon which China exerts historical claims, and for control of which it continues to lock heads with a number of countries. On occasion, where its internal cultural principles are challenged, China has taken a defensive stand irrespective of the unpopularity of its decision. This complex nature of China's foreign policy has provided extensive material for debate amongst academics in IR.

3.2.2 The Realist Explanation

The Realist paradigm exists in a pessimistic world where individual actors act purely out of self-interest. The international scenario is, according to Realists, characterised by anarchy, where the primary goals of each actor are survival and security. Laurence Vincent provides a comprehensive analysis of Realism by dividing it into two of its key features. Firstly, it assumes the inherent selfishness of human beings, "which manifests in actions leading to the best possible outcome for the actor."[31] Secondly, Realists portray the nation-state as a macro-level manifestation of an individual in an anarchic society, naturally resulting in a "Zero-Sum Game", where each nation-state constantly competes for comparative advantage.[32] An important example of the Realist vision is the concept of a security dilemma. In essence, when two actors hold a relatively equal

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[30] Yiwei Wang, "China: Between Copying and Constructing" in *International Relations Scholarship around the World. Worlding beyond the West*, edited by Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Wæver, London: Routledge (2009): 105
[31] Laurence Vincent, "Mearsheimer's Realism and the Rise of China," *E-International Relations,*(2013)
[32] Ibid.

amount of power and one of them decides to increase its power for any reason, the other actor is faced with the dilemma of whether such a boost of power was carried out with offensive intentions or defensive ones.

As an extension of this outlook, Realists consider a conflict between China and the US inevitable. As China accumulates power, it will attempt to overthrow the US at the apex of IR. The primary indication of a potential conflict observed by most Realists is China's increasing military expenditure. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China's military expenditure rose by more than a hundred billion from 2008 and 2010.[33] At this rate, The Economist estimates, that China's military expenditure could overtake that of the US by 2035.[34] John Mearsheimer, one of the most prominent commentators on Realism, has stated that "Anyone looking to determine China's future intentions by observing its military is likely to conclude that Beijing is bent on aggression."[35] It is evident, therefore, that Realists do not buy into the 'peaceful rise' rhetoric of China. Moreover, they also reject the idea that China is increasingly integrating into the international community through increased cooperation. With respect to soft-power, Realists add that China will not accept the norms that currently exist in the international system, but will make use of "social creativity" in order to formulate its own normative structure.[36] In essence, Realists believe that China continues to be motivated by sentiments of class struggle.

3.2.3 The Liberalist Explanation

The Liberalists differ from the Realists in their fundamental assumptions about human nature. Where Realists assume that human nature is aggressive and competitive, Liberalists believe that human beings have an inherent desire for peace, in the pursuit of which they are willing to cooperate and devise mechanisms to maintain stability. An ideal explanation of Liberalist theory is the Democratic Peace Theory (DPT). According to the DPT, individuals in a democratic society are liberal by nature, and, therefore, desire peace and stability to exist and actualise. Therefore, unlike with violent

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[33] "SIPRI Yearbook 2013" Stockholm International Peace Research Institute,"
www.sipri.org/yearbook/2013
[34] "The Dragon's New teeth: A Rare Look Inside the World's Biggest Military Expansion" *The Economist* (2012)
[35] John J. Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, vol. 3 (2010): 384
[36] James Reilly, "A Norm-Taker or a Norm-Maker? Chinese Aid in Southeast Asia." *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 73 (2012): 72

authoritarian regimes, when interacting with another democracy, an actor can be certain of peaceful intentions due to a similar desire for peace amongst the citizens of the other country. The DPT is backed empirically by the fact that two democracies have never been to war with each other throughout history.

Liberalists, therefore, celebrate the outward turn in Chinese foreign policy over the last few decades. According to them, an increase in the inter-dependence between China and other countries is insurance against disruption of the international order. For example, Hudda suggests that China's increased contributions to institutions such as the World Bank or the IMF reduces the likelihood for it to actively challenge the system in which such institutions operate.[37] Reports suggest that the US currently owes China upwards of US $1 trillion, which makes an attack of any sort on China by the US, equally unlikely.[38] As Steven Pinker suggests, "though the relationship between America and China is far from warm, we are unlikely to declare war on them or vice-versa. Morality aside, they make too much of our stuff and we owe them too much money."[39] Therefore, it would appear that Liberalists largely buy into the Chinese rhetoric of an increasingly cooperative outlook in International Relations, including its proclamation of a 'peaceful rise' through increased economic interaction.

3.2.4 The Constructivist Explanation

It is very important to note the role played by perceptions in both the Realist and Liberalist paradigms. The perception of a State, based on the shared identity, constructed irrationally, may alter the manner in which its behaviour is interpreted in IR. Using this framework of understanding, a Constructivist approach would allow us to comment on both the Realist and the Liberalist explanations of China's growth in stature. For example, Realist concerns of China's military threat stem from two social constructs. The first is a scenario where the international system is characterised by a race for power and hegemony. The second is a mistrust of Chinese intentions due to its previous identity as an isolationist, revolutionary actor that is now hoping to reform the international order. Most importantly, Realists also comment on the ability of China to re-create international norms, a notion that is inherently constructivist. Similarly, Liberalists place their trust in

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[37] Nabil Hudda, "Interpreting the Rise of China: Realist and Liberalist Perspectives," *E-International Relations* (2015)
[38] Tim Worstall, "America Owes China $1 Trillion – And That's Not a Problem for Anyone," *Forbes* (April 2017)
[39] Steven Pinker, " Violence vanquished," *The Wall Street Journal* (September 2011)

equally abstract social constructions, i.e., the ability of international organisations to transform the aloof Chinese identity into a cooperative one. Therefore, the entire Liberalist argument relies on the dynamic nature of norms and identities.

The Constructivist theory exists within its own flexible paradigm that allows for radical change of human behaviour. It is no surprise, therefore, that Constructivist scholars are divided on their opinion on China's interaction with the current normative structure. The common denominator remains the ability of norms to change. However, while some argue that China has the power to change international norms, others place their faith in the strength of the international normative structure to transform China's internal norms. Johnston, for instance, argues that while the initial decisions of China will be shaped by internal principles, eventually the mimicking and interaction, based on existing norms, will lead to adoption of these norms.[40] However, this paper argues from a Constructivist point of view to demonstrate that Johnston's prediction has not been realised completely.

While China has been forced to accept certain norms such as membership of international organisations out of sheer necessity, it has remained strongly rooted in its identity. This ideological integrity has manifested itself in a number of ways, which will be examined in detail at a later point in this paper. At any rate, It can be derived from the analysis above that the normative structure of the US no longer remains in a position to transform the identity of a country as powerful and determined as China. As a result, China is now in a position to take advantage of a faltering normative structure to exert an influence of its own on international norms. This paper seeks to provide evidence of the fact that China has begun to decisively exert such an influence.

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[40] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980–2000,": *Princeton University Press*, Princeton, NJ (2008): 45

4. Analysis and Argumentation

4.1 The Chinese Identity

In order to gain a comprehensive grasp of what could be perceived as China's identity, it is important to understand the historical roots from which Chinese culture, society and politics have emerged. In their work titled, "Chinese Traditional World Order," Li and Zhaojie have provided an intricate picture of the worldview in ancient China. Drawing from historical texts, as well as from religious philosophies such as Confucianism and Taoism, Li explains the ideological evolution of ancient Chinese society right from 139 BC. The following section explains the salient features of Chinese ideology, and highlights the manner in which they diverge from the fundamental concepts in the current world order.

4.1.1 Unity and Cultural Supremacy

The western norms that shape the world today employ the geographical units of States as the foundation of a world order. Conceptualised in the Treaty of Westphalia, contemporary States interact with each other on an egalitarian basis, each with a unique identity that stems from sovereignty and the absence of a centralised international authority.[41]In contrast, ancient Chinese civilisation perceived the world as a unified entity, where the only divisions lay in the social realm and not in the geographical.[42]In fact, any internal divisions that emerged in Chinese society as a result of territorial battles between emperors were considered a reflection of weakness. Rather than the conventional divisive factors such as race, origin, language or religion, the only distinction in Chinese society existed between those who had adopted the norms and values of Chinese civilisation and those who hadn't. The former were accepted as civilised members of society and the latter were relegated as barbarians.[43] The absence of other distinctions is apparent from ancient China's receptiveness to religions, ideas and beliefs from across the world, including the proliferation of Buddhism and Christianity that were both introduced from foreign civilisations. The underlying belief, however, was that China embodied the most evolved civilisation and anyone was

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[41] Henry Kissinger, "*World Order,*" (2014): *3*
[42] Li Zhaojie and James Li "Traditional Chinese World Order", *Chinese Journal of International Law* 1 (2002): 29
[43] Ibid.

welcome to assimilate themselves into Chinese culture by adopting its virtuous norms and values.

Stemming from this perception of cultural supremacy was a sense of stable security, which nullified the need to actively expand the empire and convert foreign people. As described by Li, the general attitude towards foreign civilisations was one of "Passive Laissez-faire," according to which foreign civilisations could exist in their own right but had to adapt to Chinese civilisation if they wished to integrate.[44] The belief in cultural supremacy suggested that most civilisations would eventually want to integrate into the highly evolved Chinese one.[45]Such a worldview directly contradicts the expansionist policies that have been so predominant in the West throughout history, and also explains why China has few stories of colonial expansion in its history. One can see, therefore, how the traditional horizontal divisions between nations, religions or disciplines that we operate within today, did not exist in the Chinese worldview. What did exist was a vertical division that is described in the next section.

4.1.2 The Hierarchy of Tianxia

As described in the previous section, there was a strong sentiment of cultural supremacy in ancient China, which extended to the point where the world was seen as a Universal State, at the apex of lay the Chinese civilisation. This Universal State was known locally as Tianxia, which literally translates to "All-under-Heaven."[46]As described by Wang:

> 'All-under-Heaven' has a triple meaning – as the land of the world; as all peoples in the world; and as a world institution – combined in the single term, indicating a theoretical project of the necessary and inseparable connections among these three elements.[47]

In essence, Tianxia represents a union of sorts of the physical, psychological as well as the political. However, while ancient China was largely free of horizontal divisions, it was highly stratified vertically, with clear hierarchical boundaries established within the philosophy itself. As mentioned above, the world was viewed as Tianxia and China lay at

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[44]Ibid., 31
[45] Ibid., 30
[46] Ibid., 25
[47]Wang, "China," 111

the top and in the centre. Tianxia was ruled by the Emperor, known as the Tianzi or the 'Son of Heaven', who was supposedly endowed with what Li terms as divine "omni-competence," thus making him capable of disseminating virtuous principles and administering justice throughout society.[48] In fact, the Emperor was believed to radiate with such divine virtue that he was the primary source of attraction for foreign civilisations that wished to assimilate into Tianxia. As an extension of this belief, the notion of questioning any decision of the Emperor or the legitimacy of his power was severely punishable and, therefore, did not manifest itself.

> ...the state as a whole was conceived of as an extended family,
> and the importance of filial piety in the family corresponded to
> the emphasis on the duty of absolute loyalty and obedience on the
> part of subjects to the ruler.[49]

This hierarchy further perpetuated throughout the rest of Tianxia, especially with respect to other civilisations. The rest of the world, as described by Fairbank, was divided into three zones of varying importance.[50] The first and most important was the Sinic Zone, which included countries that were culturally the most similar to China such as Korea, Vietnam and Japan. These countries were given preferential treatment during trade. The second and less important zone was the Inner Asian Zone, which consisted of the people within China who had migrated from other regions and were not completely assimilated into Chinese culture. The third zone was the Outer Zone, which consisted of the civilisations such as those in Europe, who had not assimilated themselves into Chinese culture. These civilisations were viewed as barbaric and were forced to pay tribute when trading with China.[51] Therefore, the whole world lay below China in the hierarchy of Tianxia. One can imagine, therefore, how any of the contemporary concepts such as sovereignty, democracy or egalitarianism would lack any foundation in such a clearly hierarchical set up.

4.1.3 Confucianism and the Absence of Self-Interest

A notion that is absent from worldview in ancient China, and one that distinguishes it from the western world is the concept of duality. Where the western world is divided

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[48] Ibid., 27
[49] Zhaojie and Li, "*ChineseWorldOrder*"., 30
[50] John King Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," in: John King Fairbank (ed.)," The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations. Harvard University Press (1968): 5.
[51] Ibid., 5

into good and bad, right and wrong, etc., the world from China's perspective is characterised by monism, where each entity has a value that contributes to overall harmony and equilibrium.[52] From this perspective, it was unthinkable to interfere with the natural course of events, for each action, irrespective of how negatively it might be perceived from a western perspective, served a larger purpose. For the same reason, the natural sciences were not a major field of interest in ancient China, owing to the fact that nature was considered sacred and lay above human understanding or manipulation.[53] Notions of 'growth' or 'development,' therefore were absent, for the only legitimate actions were those that contributed to social equilibrium. One of the most comprehensive doctrines of monistic philosophy comes from Confucianist teachings. As described by Li, Confucianism was not merely a religion, but an ethical and political philosophy.[54] In Confucianist terms, the world was seen as "being" rather than "becoming," where the ultimate goal was not to maximise gains or power, but to maintain equilibrium and harmony.[55] The maintenance of harmony, further, had to do with the hierarchical structure of society discussed in the previous section. In Confucianist terms,

> If a society follows the order in which subjects serve their ruler,
> son serves his father, and wife serves her husband, society will be
> in peace and harmony, otherwise, the society will be in chaos.
> This principle will perpetuate forever.[56]

Therefore, the hierarchy was established in order to keep individual elements in motion and establish overall harmony. The striking feature of such a form of social organisation is the fact that individuals function not out of self-interest but out of the sense of duty and loyalty to the overall structure of society. It was in the best interest of each individual to perform his duty and maintain harmony. The absence of self-interest was further accentuated by the negative perception of law as a concept in ancient China. Individuals in China were socialised into the delicate hierarchical structure and were taught to maintain social harmony.[57] In such a scenario, conflict between two individuals was considered a failure of the socialising and educative agencies in society, as conflict

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[52] Wang, "China," 111
[53] Ibid.
[54] Zhaojie and Li, "*ChineseWorldOrder,*" 36
[55] Ibid., 37
[56] Zhang Guohua and Rao Xixian (eds.) "Zhongguo Falu Sixiang Shi Gang (History of Chinese Legal Philosophy)," Vol. 1, 86 (in Chinese 1984): 331
[57] Li, "*Chinese World Order*"., 40

not only disrupted equilibrium, but also usually stemmed from personal motivations.[58] Nevertheless, in the case of a conflict, it was the duty of the parties involved to bilaterally resolve it in accordance with general principles. The necessity of a third agency such as the law to solve a conflict was perceived as a major failure of Chinese values, not only due to the manifestation of self-interest but also due to the fact that it represented an external intervention in the natural course of events.

4.2 Manifestations of Chinese Identity in IR

Therefore, one could argue that the fundamental principles around which Chinese society and ideology has been formed do not entirely fit within the normative structure in the contemporary international scenario. It must come as no surprise, therefore, that this normative disparity has manifested itself in a number of ways throughout history, particularly in an increasingly integrated global system.

4.2.1 The Political System

Perhaps the most prominent manifestation of China's unique ideology remains its political organisation. The establishment of a Communist regime in China was a long process that began in the early 20th Century after thousands were killed in the Boxer Rebellion.[59] The rule of warlords that was subsequently established was ridden with poverty, starvation and indiscriminate killing. As a result, revolutionary Marxist ideas began to gather momentum across the country. Marxist – Leninist ideas grew even stronger in popularity after China's defeat at the Versailles Peace Conference, which bred a strong anti-west sentiment amongst the populace[60] culminating in the establishment of the Communist Party of China in 1921 under the leadership of Li Ta-Chao and his protégé Mao Tse Tung.[61] Over time, Mao gained popularity and eventually came to power, later staging a revolution to establish the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949.[62] Essentially, in a world where there were two clear paths open to newly developing nations, China naturally gravitated towards the Communist form of organisation.

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[58] Ibid.
[59] James C. Hsiung, "The Puzzle of the Rise of Communism: Maoist China in Retrospect." In *China Into Its Second Rise. World Scientific Publishing* Pte., (2012): 95
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 96
[62] Ibid.

Upon closer examination, the salient principles of Chinese society, described in the previous section, reveal an overlap with the principles that dominate the Communist form of social organisation. For example, the relative lack of horizontal divisions juxtaposed with the distinct hierarchical divisions is characteristic of both forms of societies. In both scenarios, the ruler is considered the superior benefactor of the people and the wealth and goods are distributed equally amongst the people. Further, a Communist society relies on the loyal contribution of their members without the more liberal sentiments of competition, surplus or profit. Such a social etiquette bears a close resemblance to the Confucianist principle that places duty in a crucial position for the maintenance of social harmony. A comparison can further be drawn between the divine power attributed to the Tianzi (Son of Heaven) described above, and the omni-competence attributed to the Chairman of the Communist Party of China, who is believed to be the ultimate embodiment of justice and virtue. Therefore, the adoption and consolidation of a Communist regime may be interpreted as one powerful manifestation of Chinese social values.

4.2.2 Territorial Integrity

As has been described in section 4.1.1, any divisions within ancient Chinese society were perceived as a sign of weakness. All efforts were made throughout history to ensure unity and strength within the Chinese kingdom. This point of view persists in contemporary times, which is evident from the determination with which China has pursued its One China Principle (OCP). The OCP involves efforts to ensure reunification with territories that have seceded from the original Kingdom.[63] Take, for example, the case of Taiwan. Taiwan is a tribal island that first showed up in Chinese historical records in AD239, after being discovered by a group of contracted explorers from Beijing.[64] Taiwan was first separated from China after the first Sino–Japanese war, when a Japanese victory forced China to concede the province. When Japan was defeated in the Second World War, decades later, China regained control over the island.

During the revolution of 1949 when Mao's troops defeated the Kuomintang (KMT) forces across the country, the KMT leader Chiang and his forces fled to Taiwan where

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[63] Eleanor Albert, "China-Taiwan Relations," *Council on Foreign Relations, Foreign Affairs,* 7th December 2016
[64] Ibid.

they established control over the region. Once again, China had lost the territory of Taiwan, setting in motion a long line of strategic attempts to regain control, some of which were aggressive, and others that were extraordinarily concessionary. For example, in 1971, the PRC successfully ousted Taiwan from the United Nations (UN), thereby refusing to recognise it as a separate State and convincing the international community to do the same. On the other hand, in the 1980s the PRC extended an olive branch in the form of a special arrangement.[65] The arrangement, known as 'one country, two systems,'[66] would grant Taiwan a significant amount of political and economic autonomy provided it agreed to unification. The special arrangement was rejected by Taiwan and the situation remains unresolved till date.

The example of Taiwan demonstrates the extent to which China is willing to go in order to protect its territorial integrity. China was willing to accept a politically and economically detrimental situation, i.e.,'the one country, two systems' approach, purely out of the need to reclaim a territory that it once controlled. The case of Taiwan is not the only example of the strong devotion to a unified China. Tibet, India, as well as the Philippines have had to face the brunt of the China's determination. Due to a desire for independence, Tibet has had a long history of violence with China, the peak of which came in 1959, when over 300,000 Tibetans were killed by Chinese troops in response to an uprising for independence.[67]

With respect to India, the trouble arose at the Simla Convention of 1914 where Britain, China and Tibet met in India to construct the boundaries between India and its neighbouring countries.[68] At the time, a province by the name of Tawang (Now Arunachal Pradesh, in India) situated in the South of Tibet was placed within the Indian Territory.[69] China refused to sign the treaty and immediately exited the negotiations to express its dissent. Decades later, in 1962, China launched a surprise invasion on India with the primary objective of regaining control over the Tawang region.[70] These attacks came despite the recently preceding diplomatic developments between the two countries

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[65] Ibid

[66] Ibid.

[67] Elliot Sperling, " Tibet and China: The interpretation of History since 1950," *China Perspectives* (2009): 3

[68] Sheikh Mohd. Arif, "A History of Sino-Indian Relations: From Conflict to Cooperation," *Academic Research Journals,* 1 No.4 (2013): 131

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

in which agreements were signed to foster a friendly and mutually beneficial relationship.

Lastly, the issue between the China and the Philippines revolves around a portion of territory in the South China Sea over which China exerts a historical claim, despite its location near the coast of the Philippines. China's claim to the territory is backed by the island's location within The Nine-Dash Line, which is ostensibly a historical demarcation of Chinese territory in the sea that extends over an area of over 2,000 Kilometres outside of Mainland China and covers a group of islands.[71] Within this region, China has denied or controlled the navigation rights of other countries, including the Philippines, deploying substantial military force and bolstering it periodically. Despite the ambiguity of the origins of this line, as well as a ruling from the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague against the occupation, China has refused to relinquish control over its territory.[72]

In each of the above situations, China has put key diplomatic ties, major economic relationships, as well as its overall reputation in the international community on the line, purely in pursuit of territories that it exerts a historical claim over. While the South China Sea and even the island of Taiwan are economically lucrative regions to control, one could argue that the small provinces of Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet lack the same economic value. One might conclude, therefore, that the desire for control over these territories stems from something other than purely economic considerations. The loss of control over these territories represents weakness and a descent from former glory, something that has seldom been tolerated in Chinese society.

4.2.3 Non-Interference

Historically, China has rarely been associated with extensive colonial expeditions. As described in section 4.1.1, Chinas's policy of expansionism relied on the attractiveness of its civilisation and the resultant assimilation of other civilisations. Furthermore, the philosophy of 'Passive Laissez-faire' was elaborated upon above to describe China's attitude towards foreign civilisations. Perhaps the most appropriate manifestation of this philosophy in recent times is the concept of 'Five-Principles of Peaceful Co-existence,'

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[71] Shirley V Scott. "China's Nine-dash Line, International Law, and the Monroe Doctrine Analogy." *China Information* 30, no. 3 (2016): 298.
[72] Ibid., 299

formulated by China in the 1950s during an attempt to foster friendly relations with other countries in Asia. These principles include: "mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence."[73] Since the 1950s, China has continued to exert these principles in most international fora that it has participated in. Despite the increasingly inter-connected nature of global politics and the corresponding spike in interventionist policies, China has repeatedly asserted the importance of preserving the sanctity of sovereignty. These assertions appear to run in tandem with the philosophy of allowing nature to take its course without external interference as well as the Confucianist ideal of the world as 'being, not becoming'. To put this philosophy in State terms:

> China's alternative design for the world stresses the equal,
> uninfringeable sovereignty of all states, large and small, Western
> and non-Western, rich and poor, democratic and authoritarian,
> each to run its own system as it sees fit, whether its methods suit
> Western standards or not.[74]

Even during international trade, China refrains from discriminating on the basis of the type of regime, dealing with authoritarian and democratic regimes alike in an equitable manner. It is clear from this summary of China's overall foreign policy that it remains devoted to this principle of non-interference. However, alongside the positive assertions of this philosophy such as the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,'there have also been some more controversial manifestations. For example, China has been opposed to any form of partial surrender of sovereignty in order to bolster the power of international organisations. As a result, any decision inflicted upon them by such institutions, an example of which is The Hague ruling on the South China Sea described above, usually remains unheeded . China's disregard for The Hague ruling is also in resonance with the negative perception of law in Chinese society. In keeping with the philosophy that conflicts must be settled bilaterally between the parties involved – portraying the law as a regrettable necessity for extreme situations – China has repeatedly asserted that issues between any two States must be settled bilaterally without intervention by international organisations.

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[73] Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross," The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security," *Asia for Educators, Co,umbia University* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).
[74] Ibid.

Lastly, China often abstains from voting in the UN when issues of intervention are being discussed. By abstaining, China manages to remain devoted to its principles, without clashing with the interests of the international community. On the whole, this is the attitude that represents China's foreign policy. Evidently, acting in accordance with its cultural principles and identity is consistently China's utmost priority. In some situations such as voting in the UN, these principles can be prioritised without causing disruptions. In other cases where such a win-win position cannot be attained, there is no demonstration of a willingness to negotiate. Even after adopting an increasingly cooperative foreign policy over the last few decades, China has made it sufficiently clear that it is not willing to compromise when it comes to ideological considerations.

4.3 The Peaceful Rise

However, over time, the steadfast devotion to cultural values diminished in feasibility. As the global circumstances have demanded it, China has had to somewhat revise its positions accordingly. A striking example of this is the liberal nature of reforms introduced by Den Xiaoping in 1979. The privatisation of industry and agriculture represented a major compromise in China's anti-profit philosophy. These reforms were a reaction to the economic stagnation and the decline in purchasing power, which can largely be attributed to the isolationist nature of China in an increasingly inter-connected global economy. A free-market economy and the invitation of foreign investment had become the path to development for several countries at the time, including China's immediate neighbours such as Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore.[75]

The relatively slow rate of growth in China bred restlessness amongst the people who were now exposed to the perks of a free market.[76] Therefore, China began to adapt its policies to the emerging trends in the global economy. The economic reforms were not the only manifestation of China's adaptive policies. As noted above, a historically isolationist China has become an active and integral member in the international community in recent decades. Having begun in 1971, when China was officially accepted into the UN, its involvement progressively increased until it was a part of the 50 Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) and 1,275 International Non-

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[75] Gregory C. Chow, "Economic Reform and Growth in China," *Annals of Economics and Finance,* 5 (2004):128
[76] Ibid., 129

Governmental Organisations (INGOs) by the year 2000. [77] Not only has China chosen to participate, but it has done so in a highly responsible manner, taking the initiative in key institutions such as the IMF and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). [78] Strikingly, these institutions have mandates with which China may disagree with vehemently at times.

On the other hand, China has maintained a strong grip over the market through regulations and has resisted the international pressure to democratise, which had become a major trend amongst developing countries at the time of the reforms. Moreover, China has maintained a cautious attitude, wherever possible, during its operations with international organisations, primarily due to concerns over the infringement of sovereignty. As elucidated by Kent,

> While China's leaders appreciate that membership of international
> organisations enhances China's power and status and is essential
> to participation in globalisation and modernisation, they are also
> alive to the problems posed by international citizenship. [79]

On several occasions, China has expressed concerns that these organisations represent instruments of US hegemony. This assertion, combined with the cautious yet active involvement in the international community reveals a deeper struggle that China might have been grappling with. Essentially, China is caught between the necessity of cooperation and the danger of being caught in the normative web of US hegemony. To the best of its ability, China has attempted to maintain its ideological integrity, much to the dissatisfaction of the US at times. Kent argues that China shifted from a "'system-reforming' approach in the 1970s, to a 'system-maintaining and system-exploiting' approach in the 1980s and 1990s." [80] This opinion has been validated by the fact that China continues to seek the benefits from international organisations on the grounds of being a developing country, despite having emerged as an economic powerhouse. Reilly describes this as a "pragmatic 'mini–max' approach in international institutions, seeking

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[77] Gerald Chan, "China's Compliance In Global Affairs Trade, Arms Control, Environmental Protection, Human Rights." *Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company,* (2005): 46
[78] Lim, Cl, and Wang, Jy. "China and the Doha Development Agenda." *General Marshal Fund,* 44, no. 6 (2010): 1310
[79] Ann Kent. "China's Participation in International Organisations." In *Power and Responsibility in Chinese Foreign Policy*, edited by Zhang Yongjin and Austin Greg, ANU Press, (2013): 133
[80] Ibid.,135

to maximise China's benefits while minimizing costly obligations or constraints."[81] Therefore, in addition to enjoying the economic benefits of liberalisation, China has also managed to attain a balance between engaging with the international community and preserving its identity. As a result, the 21st Century has witnessed the phenomenal rise of the Chinese economy, as well as its consolidation as a stalwart of authoritarian state-control.

This paper uses a Constructivist lens to interpret the strategy of China in IR. The sections above have already described China's weariness of the US hegemonic structure, primarily due to its ideological divergence from the Chinese identity. To the best of its abilities, China tried to fend off the hegemonic advances of the US throughout the 20th Century and succeeded to a large extent. However, the gradual decline in US hegemony and the increase in China's power, allows an opportunity for China to make its position more comfortable. Wang asserted that the rhetoric within China had shifted in the 1980s from one of a revolutionary overthrow of the international system to the rhetoric of increased integration. This paper argues that the year 2004 marks a reversal of this rhetoric back to the overthrow of the international normative structure. Over the past few decades, China has appeared to employ a two-pronged strategy to bring about this transformation. Firstly, China has utilised a combination of carefully devised rhetoric and exertion of soft-power to project a strong identity, making sure to elucidate and portray the merits of its principles. Secondly, it has attempted to systematically de-legitimise the normative structures that have been established by the US. The following is an elaboration on each of these strategies.

4.4 Identity Projection

With respect to the projection and legitimisation of a Chinese identity, the flagship endeavour for China has been the 'Peaceful Rise' rhetoric, which entails that the growth of China will be achieved through reciprocal interaction with the international community resulting in mutual benefit.. The strategy, put forth in 2004, was brought about to debunk the Realist assertions of a hostile China that might resort to military measures to topple US hegemony. A year later, China changed the name of the strategy from 'Peaceful Rise' to 'Peaceful Development' in order to eliminate any connotations

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[81]Reilly, "Norm Taker," 72

of power that accompany the word 'rise'.[82]

Substantial evidence of the projection of Chinese identity and values emerged in 2005. On the 60th anniversary of the UN, the Chinese President Hu Jintao proclaimed his vision for a new world order that could be achieved through a number of measures:[83] Firstly, the introduction of a 'New Security Concept,' based on "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and collaboration and the establishment of a fair and effective collective security mechanism." Secondly, an attempt to make the 21st Century an era of inclusive development, primarily through efforts to realise the Millennium Development Goals of the UN, which are designed to eradicate major issues in poorer countries. Thirdly, to have the utmost respect for a country's individual 'social system' and path to development based on its unique 'national conditions'." Each of these principles correlates strongly with the principles that constitute the Chinese identity. The striking aspect of this proclamation was that these principles were no longer expressed under the garb of dissent, but were openly declared as new principles, irrespective of their inherent contradictions with the existing normative structure. This would demonstrate a historic shift, from the passive position that China has always held to a more confident stance.

This confidence has since been reflected in other areas of China's foreign policy. An example of this is the BASICS coalition that was formed prior to the Copenhagen Summit in 2009. As described by Maximillian Terhalle, each of the countries in this coalition possessed and advocated hard notions of sovereignty, which placed them in opposition to the partial delegation of sovereignty to an international institution.[84] These countries felt that it was their right to protect their path to economic development from the inequitable climate regulations imposed by developed countries. Aware of the fact that the developed countries would present a draft with the agenda for the Summit, the BASICS coalition presented its own counter-agenda, threatening to disrupt the Convention if their demands were not met.[85] The relevance of this example is that the coalition was formed at the initiative of, and rallied by, China. In fact, the meeting, at which the counter-agenda was drafted, was held in Beijing.

This represented the first time that China had expressed its dissatisfaction through more than just an abstention, regarding something other than territorial intervention. This issue represented the protection of another core Chinese principle, i.e., the sanctity of

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[82]Wang, "China" 114
[83] Ibid., 113
[84]Terhalle, "Reciprocal Socialisation," 342
[85] Ibid., 341

sovereignty and the principle of non-interference. According to Terhalle, this initiative marked a turning point in IR as it was the first time that the 'Western' agenda was opposed in such a pro-active manner. This is not the only example, since 2005, of China openly opposing the agenda of an international organisation. In the 2009 periodic review of China conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council, China denied the allegations of human rights violations placed by the Council and refused to support the recommendations of the member states, calling them 'politicised'.[86] Therefore, not only has China demonstrated the confidence to proclaim its agenda for a new world order, it has also begun to actively propagate its principles and oppose the western agenda in international organisations. Terhalle has provided an adept explanation of these events, describing them as part of a process of "Reciprocal Socialisation." In essence, rather than socialising themselves into the normative structure put forth by the US, China has reciprocated the process by changing the very nature of the norms.

Aside from confidently projecting its identity, China has also bolstered its efforts to garner support amongst the international community by building its soft-power, labeled by Kurlantzick as China's "Charm Offensive."[87] Despite a conflictual relationship with a number of South-East Asian countries, China has made concerted efforts in recent times to win back the support of these countries, increasingly to great success. According to Kurlantzick, "This growing attractiveness is conveyed through various means, including culture, diplomacy, participation in multi-national organisations, businesses' actions abroad, and the gravitational pull of China's economic strength."[88]

The primary attraction, however, is the exponential increase in the amount of aid that China has been distributing within the region. This surge in aid is not only limited to the region of South-East Asia. In 2004, Chinese President Hu Jintao visited four developing countries, namely Cuba, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina and signed 39 different cooperation agreements.[89] The same year marked the first celebration of the South-South Co-operation Day, following which China's support to developing countries has grown by 12% annually.[90] On the African continent, China is currently funding approximately 2,650 development projects in nearly 51 countries, amounting to nearly US $100

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[86]Ibid., 343
[87]Kurlantzick, "Charm Offensive,"271
[88] Ibid.
[89]Agi Veres, "China's Helping Role in Developing Nations Growth" *UNDP Press Center* (2015)
[90] Ibid.

billion.[91] These projects were also established between 2004 and 2005.[92] Regarding the Aid provided by China to Africa, SouthEast Asia and Latin America, a study conducted by the Wagner School in New York University reported that "… Chinese aid activities to the three regions grew from $1.5 billion in 2003 to $27.5 billion in 2006 and $25 billion in 2007."[93]

The period since 2004, therefore, has been characterised by the exertion of soft-power coupled with strong projections of Chinese identity, both of which have begun to pay dividends. China's reputation is fast gaining popularity across the world, and its principles are gaining mass appeal. In Africa, China has not only engaged in major development projects worth billions, but has also forged media relationships in order to improve its public perception. The media in both regions have increased coverage of each other, thereby, fostering familiarity between the cultures. A study conducted by the Washington Post in a number of African countries concluded that 63% of the people in these countries believed that China had a positive political and economic influence in the region.[94] This represents a reversal of the historically negative perception of China in the region, stemming from its isolationist and inequitable policies.

Alongside a positive shift in perceptions, China has also begun to have a political impact in the regions where it has nurtured relations. According to Reilly, there are only four African countries that currently recognise Taiwan as a country.[95] Moreover, Rowan Callick states that "from Vietnam to Syria, from Burma to Venezuela, and all across Africa, leaders of developing countries are admiring and emulating what might be called the China Model."[96] The 'model', alluded to by Callick, refers to the combination of a free-market economy and an authoritarian political regime that China has fostered since 1979. This model has gained popularity in some sections of the academic world, with some scholars stating that it combines the merits of liberalisations Foreign Direct Investment with the security of maintaining strict government control over the army, the

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[91]Brad Parks, "10 Essential Facts About Chinese Aid in Africa," *National Interest* (2016)
[92] Ibid.
[93] Thomas Lum, Hannah Fischer, Julissa Gomez-Granger, and Anne Leland. "China's Foreign Aid Activities in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia." *Congressional Research Service* (2009):5
[94] Kim Yi Donne, "Here's What Africans Think About China's Influence in Their Countries," *The Washington Post* (2016)
[95] Reilly, "Norm Taker," 73
[96]Rowan Callick, 'How long can economic freedom and political repression coexist? Rowan Callick examines Beijing's sinister policy formulation', *The American, The Journal of American Enterprise Institute*, (November/December 2007)

media and the justice system.[97] Other principles such as the resistance to surrendering partial sovereignty have also gained traction amongst a number of developing countries that have rallied behind China to oppose the agenda set by developed countries.

4.5 From the Other Perspective

Analysis was provided earlier on the importance of a normative structure in the establishment of hegemonic power. Similar to the core values upon which China has based its identity, the US has risen to prominence based on certain core values that it has espoused, propagated and defended at every turn. This section will examine some of those core values, their manifestations, and the manner in which China has (intentionally or not) undermined them with its behaviour in International Relations.

4.5.1 Economic Liberalisation

Perhaps the most prominent aspect of US hegemony in IR is the Bretton Woods (BW) System. The System is named after the place where the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference took place in 1944, at which the foundations of the BW System were laid down. Three major developments took place at the BW conference that represent the three major pillars of the economic hegemony that the US holds today. These are: the establishment of the IMF, the establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), and the agreement for the establishment of fixed exchange rates at the centre of which lay the US currency, i.e., the dollar. [98] The following is an assessment of how these pillars contribute to US hegemony and how China has attacked them individually.

Firstly, the IMF and World Bank were established as mechanisms to promote and facilitate international trade for the "maintenance of high levels of employment and real income."[99] The primary method of achieving these goals is by minimising the domestic restrictions on international trade to the greatest possible extent. In the latter half of the 19th Century, many countries were emerging from the economically crippling era of colonialism and, therefore, required assistance to re-establish economic stability. The

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[97]Suisheng Zhao, "The China Model: Can it Replace the Western Model of Modernization?" *Journal of Contemporary China* 19 (2010): 419
[98]Stephen G.Hall, George Hondroyiannis, P.A.V.B. Swamy, George Tavlas, "Bretton Woods Systems, Old and New, and the Rotation of Exchange Rate Regimes," *Manchester School* 79, no. 2 (2011): 8
[99] Ibid., 9

BW Institutions (IMF and WB) provide loans to these countries at exceedingly relaxed terms such as allowing a period of up to 50 years to return the loan.[100] However, the lending is not void of conditions. According to research conducted by Eurodad, these agencies lend to some of the poorest countries in the world, and attach an average of 67 conditions to each of their loans.[101] These conditions primarily include guidelines for economic liberalisation such as the removal of trade tariffs and import duties, as well as the demand for privatisation of essential services within these countries.

The US holds an effective right of veto over key IMF and World Bank decisions. Essentially, the liberalisation of these economies allows Multinational Corporations from the US to flood these economies with investment and subsequently, seize control over a large portion of their natural resources. In this manner, a large number of developing countries were drawn into an economic framework that was conducive to US interests. These institutions are a fitting representation of the liberal economic values that the US espouses, i.e., free-markets and liberalised economies.

This system worked to reinforce the hegemonic structure as long as the BW Institutions were the only source of borrowing for developing countries. However, there has recently been a spike in aid efforts from other actors, which include the European Union (EU) and China.[102] What differentiates Chinese aid from the aid provided by the EU, as well as the BW Institutions, is the fact that it is provided without any attached conditionality. Part of the approval that China is receiving from recipient countries, stems from the fact that China provides this aid in direct terms in the form of investment of which it reaps the economic benefits without changing the economic policies of the country involved. As phrased by Kurlantzick, "foreign nations benefit because China will not make demands on other nations' sovereignty, economic models, governance, or political culture."[103] This model of aid has been described by Beijing as a 'win-win' model of aid, which it has directly juxtaposed with the aid provided by international agencies that infringes on sovereignty.[104]

The aid provided by China is primarily through bilateral arrangements. Furthermore, China has shown itself willing to "sign these agreements en masse, leaving details to be

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[100] Ibid., 9
[101]"World Bank and IMF Conditionality: A Development Injustice," *Eurodad* (June 2006)
[102] Eurodad Report, 5
[103] Kurlantzick, "Charm Offensive," 272
[104] Ibid.

hammered out later."[105] This approach has provided dividends as well, with the Chinese lending in Africa now surpassing three times the total aid provided by the Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which is a group of bilateral donor countries that includes the US.[106] In essence, the model of aid in China represents an attractive alternative for countries in need, thereby, diminishing the previously powerful influence of the Bretton Woods Institutions, which no longer have a monopoly over the aid market. As phrased by Su,

> As Chinese influence grows, Beijing is presenting itself as an alternative to the imperialist West and interventionist United States: a great power exporting highways instead of values, and fostering stability and peace through economic development, infrastructure, and trade.[107]

The values of economic liberalisation that were espoused by the BW Institutions, once perceived as superior, have now become a burden on weak economies. The new popular rhetoric for aid, even amongst European countries such as Britain and Norway, is to provide aid without tying it to conditions, thereby, allowing countries to develop their own economic and political policies. This highlights the normative impact of China even amongst developed countries. Lastly, China has also been involved in efforts to diminish the supremacy of the dollar. Recent reports suggest that China has formed an economic alliance with Russia in order to attempt bypassing the dollar in the international monetary system,[108] which would effectively displace the US from its position as the centre of the world economy.

4.5.2 Democracy

One of the most prominent norms that the US has vehemently attached to its identity is that of democracy. In the words of Mark Beeson,

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Wang, Xiaobing, Adam Ozanne, and Xin Hao. "The West's Aid Dilemma and the Chinese Solution?" *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies* 12, no. 1 (2014): 51.
[107] Alice Su, "The Limits of Chinese Isolationism," *The Atlantic*, 2016
[108] Wendy Wu, "Moscow and Beijing Join Forces to Bypass the Dollar in World Money Market, *South China Morning Post* (2017)

> National identity and foreign policy exist in a mutually
> constitutive, dialectical relationship in which – in American, at
> least - the discursive privileging of democracy occupies a central
> place, something which helps to account for the powerful
> continuities in American foreign policy from the Truman policy
> of containment to the Bush doctrine of pre-emption.[109]

In essence, Beeson describes how the value of democracy has acted as both, a source of national cohesion within the US, as well as a solid justification for its foreign policy. The determination to "make the world a better place by defending the liberal ideals of democracy,"[110] and the attachment of the concept of human rights with democratic values has been the rhetoric propagated by the US since its ascension to hegemonic power.[111] These domestic values of the US have come to be perceived as superior, a perception that has been extensively exploited by the US in its foreign policy in both, an active as well as a passive manner. In an active sense, the US has used the perceived superiority of democratic values to justify a number of invasions such as those in Vietnam, Iraq, Libya and others. The passive method of democracy promotion, on the other hand, has come in the form of isolationism. In order to incentivise democratisation, the US has restricted the amount of aid and bilateral trade agreements with non-democratic regimes, especially economically backward countries that require it the most. In a global economy dominated by the US, such isolation can prove catastrophic for poor countries.

This passive strategy has come under attack from the Chinese model of developmental aid. As described above, China does not attach criteria or conditions to its provision of aid. As a result, a number of bilateral trade agreements that China has signed have been with authoritarian and non-democratic regimes. Alongside a number of non-democratic countries, China has also formed bilateral agreements with sanctioned regimes that the US has previously declared as 'rogue states' such as Iran, Syria and Sudan.[112] Furthermore, China has also openly accused the US of double standards, referencing its funding of notoriously authoritarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia, as well as b y pointing out the number of human rights violations that the US itself has been accused of.

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[109] Beeson, "Rise of Neocons," 9
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Jianyong Yue, "Peaceful Rise of China: Myth or Reality?" *International Politics,* Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. 45 (2008): 440

In addition to funding sanctioned regimes in general, Kurlantzick has pointed out situations when China has been funding specifically those States with whom US diplomatic relations are under pressure, an example of which is the Philippines. In 2004, the Philippines withdrew its troops from Iraq in order to secure the release of a hostage, which led the US to sever diplomatic ties with Manila. China, subsequently, invited President Macapagal-Arroyo for a state visit and immediately offered agreements for cooperation and aid.[113]

The aid provided by China presents an exit policy to sanctioned regimes that can now bypass the US to integrate with the world economy. This has arrested, to some extent, the wave of democratisation that was enforced by the passive policies of the US. China has even gone beyond creating a bypass to democratisation by portraying the benefits of its political system to the countries that it provides aid to. According to Kurlantzick:

> China emphasizes top-down control of development and poverty reduction and the sidelining of political reform for economic reform. China's model, particularly appeals to rulers in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian nations. With the Chinese model, the regime has time to think of ways to co-opt businesspeople and other elites that it needs to keep on its side to remain in power.[114]

While maintaining its ideological integrity by pursuing non-interference, China has simultaneously managed to dismantle the US values of democracy as well as projected and garnered attraction towards its own political system and identity.

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[113]Kurlantzick, "Charm offensive" 272
[114] Ibid.

5. Conclusion

In response to the questions this paper set out to answer, China would appear to have a strong identity, rooted in culture and history, which it has thus far protected and is now projecting to exploit the faltering normative structure of the US. However, it is challenging to determine the true intentions of an actor in IR. A number of interpretations could exist of the evidence provided, of which this paper presents only one. Some would argue that the behaviour of China is purely economic in nature, with no ideological connotations whatsoever. From this point of view, the attempt to alter the normative framework is just another hegemonic attempt to consolidate economic interests. However, the Chinese identity is a powerful one. It has evolved over centuries, outside the realm of any particular religion or philosophy, formed on the historical evolution of a civilisation that has believed itself to be supreme. One of the key features of the philosophy described in this paper is that people in ancient China considered themselves to be the centre of the entire universe and the epitome of civilisation. These are not notions that can be dispelled easily. Moreover, the philosophy harboured in China rejects the rationalist nature of Western rhetoric entirely, believing in the sanctity of the natural world. In that sense, it would be impossible to deconstruct a philosophy using concepts that are entirely formed in the West, primarily because of their radically different nature at a fundamental level. Therefore, it is possible to assume that society in China continues to function around the philosophy that it has subscribed to for thousands of years, primarily because it would see no reason to believe otherwise.

At any rate, the dynamics of hegemony suggest that the vacuum left by the US will inevitably be filled by another major power. Currently, the administration in the US has dealt a major blow to its legitimacy in IR. Simultaneously, China continues to assert itself in IR under Xi Jinping. Alongside declaring China as a 'Great Power,' Jinping has also caught the attention of the international community with his 'One Belt- One Road' (OBOR) initiative.[115] The OBOR project includes plans for a single economic belt linking China with central Asia, the Middle East and all of Europe, as well as a maritime route linking it with with South and SouthEast Asia. Alongside the significant boost that such an initiative would give to China's soft power, it would also strategically diminish

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[115] Peter Ferdinand, "Westward Ho—the China Dream and 'one Belt, One Road': Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping." *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 949

the economic inter-dependence between Europe and the US.[116] However, it remains too early to comment on the outcomes of recent initiatives such as the OBOR. On the other hand, such initiatives indicate that, irrespective of its intentions, China appears to be in the best position to fill the power vacuum left by the US in the years to come.

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[116] Ibid., 955

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