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China and World Politics in Transition

How China Transforms the World Political Order

Springer

Global Power Shift

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Ample empirical evidence points to recent power shifts in multiple areas of international relations taking place between industrialized countries and emerging powers, as well as between states and non-state actors. However, there is a dearth of theoretical interpretation and synthesis of these findings, and a growing need for coherent approaches to understand and measure the transformation. The central issues to be addressed include theoretical questions and empirical puzzles: How can studies of global power shift and the rise of 'emerging powers' benefit from existing theories, and which alternative aspects and theoretical approaches might be suitable? How can the meanings, perceptions, dynamics, and consequences of global power shift be determined and assessed? This edited series will include highly innovative research on these topics. It aims to bring together scholars from all major world regions as well as different disciplines, including political science, economics and human geography. The overall aim is to discuss and possibly blend their different approaches and provide new frameworks for understanding global affairs and the governance of global power shifts.

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Editors

China and World Politics in Transition

How China Transforms the World Political Order

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China's World Policy at the Time of the War in Ukraine

Fulvio Attinà and Yi Feng

Abstract The chapters in this book provide knowledge of the conditions that are at the heart of understanding how China is influencing changes in today's world politics and how ready it is to perform the task of rebuilding the world order. The chapters of the first part focused both on the philosophical and ideological roots of China's worldview and on China's power resources and political goals which have substantial implications in contemporary global affairs. The chapters of the second part examined China's engagement with the main problems of today's world politics. They bring to the surface the ever-changing participation of Chinese leaders in decision making towards such issues over the past decades. Generally, and understandably, such participation has been characterized by a willingness to act as a responsible power without failing to defend its interests and objectives. The chapters of the third part provided knowledge on China's management of intergovernmental relations with the countries of Europe and Asia which are at the centre of China's projection of power at today's stage of world politics.

Experts agree that over the past three decades China has pursued its peaceful rise in world politics conforming to the established standards of the world political order. The mass media, for their part, cannot fail to report that the rise of China generates opposite feelings and reactions from people from different areas of the world, mostly smug reactions from the Global South and anxious reactions from the Global North. Studies and research by scholars testify that China's rise in the governance of world affairs is constant and seemingly unhindered and unstoppable. Overall, the answers of experts, journalists, and scholars converge on China's exceptional rise but where it is headed and where it will lead the world are questions that do not receive equally

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convergent answers. Understanding China's policy toward continuity and change in world politics is also intriguing because macroscopic inconsistencies emerge here and there between what Chinese leaders say and what they do. China's leaders say they aim to build the multipolar world because in such a world sovereignty is assured to all states, be they small, medium, or large and powerful. At the same time, Chinese political leaders are respectful of the current world governance that includes the rules of international institutions that give a few great powers—China is one of them—roles, and positions that openly institutionalize the exercise of hierarchical political authority, thus benefiting China as well. The most prominent examples are the well-known decision-making rules of the United Nations Security Council and the International Monetary Fund, the position of nuclear countries in the world nuclear non-proliferation policy, and China's developing country status in organizations such as the World Trade Organizations and the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change.

Finally, sinologists explain that Chinese values and norms underlie a peculiar worldview and that Chinese leaders want to promote these values and norms internationally and are confident that they can achieve this goal. They believe their design is well received by the political class of the Global South and the Rest of the world in contrast to the West which has dominated world politics for the past 70 years. What is perceived as low coherence between statements and actions of Chinese leaders is an approach inspired by the perspective of progressive change with which Chinese leaders want to transform world politics through the gradual revision of institutions, rules, and policies.

Over the past 40 years, China has socialized with the institutions, rules, and policies of world governance and order. China's foreign policymakers have focused on the permanent problems of trade, finance, and security, as well as new problems of global scope such as development cooperation and environmental protection. At the same time, Chinese leaders never accept their country being treated as a subordinate player and, less so, a status quo actor of world politics. On the contrary, they put the country at the forefront of the group of dissatisfied countries. China's response to the transition situation of the world order that Russian aggression on Ukraine has begun clearly confirms China's firmness in asserting the country's dissatisfaction with the current order in accordance with other dissatisfied states.

Chinese leaders share the claim of many developing countries to break out of the existing world order and let in the multipolar world which they imagine as the world that ensures each country from outside interference in internal affairs and gives equal voice to all states in rule-based multilateral cooperation addressing common issues. The leaders of China, along with those of India, Brazil, and many countries of the Rest of the world diffuse the image of the future world order as the order based on multipolarity and multilateralism, which, in their opinion, are at the heart of today's embodiment of the Westphalian rule of sovereignty that protects independent countries from interference in domestic and foreign affairs. To China and the Rest, Westphalian sovereignty is tantamount to giving the state rulers a free hand regarding their responsibilities to their own citizens and the outside world. It is not surprising that humanitarian intervention to protect people who are not protected

by their own government is considered a serious threat from leaders who support the fundamentalist conception of Westphalian sovereignty, that is, without limits and adaptations to the circumstances created by the evolution of the global social context. However, the most critical aspect of such position is that multipolarity as the condition in which groups of countries gather around few poles, that is, powerful countries with leadership skills, is a major obstacle to multilateralism. The actual results of multilateralism, in fact, depend on the autonomy of each state in the formation of policies in the multilateral institution and in their implementation with internal policies without the constraints of multipolar politics, that is, without the need to demonstrate loyalty to a pole country. In fact, such loyalty to a pole country is a fundamental obstacle to reaching the multilateral agreement.

In truth, China faces the challenge of balancing the goal of changing the current order that has fuelled China's economic growth to date and the goal of bringing together revisionist countries that oppose existing world institutions and policies. Chinese leaders want to keep multilateralism alive, especially in venues where China enjoys institutional power such as the UN Security Council. China's considerable participation in UN peacekeeping operations is a clear demonstration of such a policy. The commitment to reduce global warming and environmental pollution while respecting the UNFCCC policy is another case in point. When financial policy is considered, China wants to increase its role in the Bretton-Woods institutions and also support financial institutions under its leadership, as it did with the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

On the other hand, many developing countries are fond of the Chinese model that improves the standard of living and provides aid without conditional clauses in contrast to the Western model of development cooperation that conditions economic aid to the democratic reforms of the receiving country. The Chinese model of economy and society is perceived by the ruling class of some developing countries as close to the model of society and economy of their countries in accordance with the Westphalian principle of inviolable sovereignty.

Incidentally, such a model of sovereignty plus development that China proposes to countries in need of aid has the effect of de-legitimizing the principles of the existing world order. The Ukrainian war further demonstrated the attraction of the Chinese model. In the vast Indo-Pacific area, which today receives the attention of the United States and Western states of the area, most governments are close to Beijing's position because China is the largest trading partner of Asian countries. By the way, China's economic presence is also growing in sub-Saharan Africa, counteracting the long-standing influence of Western European countries.

As a result, while some analysts warn that it is premature to worry about China's rise due to the relative asymmetric vulnerability of China and the West, many experts and politicians say that it is necessary to counter China's economic might through hardening trade relations, export rules, and investment in information technology.

Meeting in Beijing on February 2, 2022, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin stated that they share a mission to fulfil in the current times. The Joint Statement of the meeting begins as such

> Today, the world is going through momentous changes, and humanity is entering a new era of rapid development and profound transformation. It sees the development of such processes and phenomena as multipolarity, economic globalization, the advent of information society, cultural diversity, transformation of the global governance architecture and world order; there is increasing interrelation and interdependence between the States; a trend has emerged towards redistribution of power in the world; and the international community is showing a growing demand for the leadership aiming at peaceful and gradual development. At the same time, as the pandemic of the new coronavirus infection continues, the international and regional security situation is complicating and the number of global challenges and threats is growing from day to day. Some actors representing but the minority on the international scale continue to advocate unilateral approaches to addressing international issues and resort to force; they interfere in the internal affairs of other states, infringing their legitimate rights and interests, and incite contradictions, differences and confrontation, thus hampering the development and progress of mankind, against the opposition from the international community (see Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development, http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770).

Three weeks later, China celebrated the end of the Winter Olympics and the Russian army invaded Ukraine claiming to pursue legitimate national rights and the high political duty of protecting democracy in Europe from Nazism. Even if one credits the officially stated objectives of the invasion, no one can claim that the Joint Declaration is causally coincident with the invasion. By default, the war in Ukraine set in motion the transitional phase of the world order in the wake of the Joint Statement of the leaders of China and Russia. However, the two parties may give a different meaning to the link between the war event and the unfolding of *the era of rapid development and profound transformation* that the Joint Statement emphasized. In other terms, the war in Ukraine began the transition phase of the world order but the two leaders are divided in views of how to deal with the *process of transforming the global governance architecture and world order* that they indicated in the Joint Statement.

On the one hand, the way of conducting the Ukrainian war establishes certain boundaries to the relationship between China and Russia. Beijing does not want to fall victim to Western sanctions and refrains from supplying or selling weapons to Russia. For reasons related to its own goals and projects in domestic and foreign policy, China does not want to pay a high price for supporting Russia. Beijing's dependence on energy imports could have an influence on the purchase of Russian oil and gas diverted from Europe and sold at a reduced price due to Western sanctions. In addition, Russian consumer products are of little significance to China which fears damaging the huge trade with European countries. Finally, Russia's lucrative trade with India, especially in the arms sector, is a major obstacle for China.

On the other hand, as mentioned, China's vision, unlike the Russian strategy towards changing the world order, is inspired by a long-range perspective aimed at progressively transforming the existing framework of institutions and policies rather than subverting it suddenly and with disruptive actions. Accordingly, the chapters of this book analyse how China participates in the governance of significant areas of world politics to understand how China is changing world politics. This book

recognizes that Chinese leaders are far from agreeing to undergo a process of homogenizing the country to the status quo and, at the same time, investigates whether China has a clear vision of change and where the revisionist process will end.

On this premise, this book deals with the subject through the system-oriented and actor-oriented research methodology. In other words, to understand how, in the current transitional stage of the order, China is changing the politics and government of the world, the authors of the chapters of this book carried out research on the main global issues and problems and, based on such knowledge, analyse the response and actions that Chinese leaders are taking in accordance with the values, goals, and resources of their country. It is in this sense that the dual methodological perspective is useful for building knowledge of world issues and problems that are crucial to understanding China's action towards world politics, and knowledge of China's values, goals and means that are crucial to the future of world politics.

The two chapters of the first part of the book provide the knowledge necessary to frame the theme of the book and appreciate the contribution of the knowledge that the other chapters of the book provide to the understanding of the change that China marks on world politics. The chapter by Song and Ai deals mainly with the ideologies underlying the Chinese worldview. The chapter by Kugler, Tammen, and Zeng, on the other hand, builds knowledge about the material power of China and other world powers. Jointly, the two chapters draw the scenario for future relations between these powers and China, the world's leading dissatisfied power. Based on the stressful impact of the authoritarian version of communitarianism that informs China's worldview, Song and Ai's analysis comes to conclusions that converge with the findings of Kugler, Tammen, and Zeng, that is, the significance of the different levels of satisfaction as the element that complicates efforts towards China's coordination and mutual understanding with the United States and the European Union. However, they have advanced the analysis of several factors - both national, such as population greying, and international, such as shared responsibility for responding to climate warming - that can reduce the tension of the confrontation between world powers.

China's involvement in making and implementing world policies is the subject of the second part of this book. It is generally recognized that the interconnected states of today's globalized world are not effective at addressing global problems if they do not coordinate their policy response. The post-World War II world was reorganized by the coalition of Western countries resorting to a new approach to dealing with these kinds of problems. Post-war conferences, working by the method that was called multilateral negotiation, formed the world policies of finance, trade, and security in the event of military aggression. Today, such multilateral policy at the world level is alive but contested, in some cases because of decision-making rules considered illegitimate and in other cases because of rules that world policies have put in place. However, multilateral policymaking remains the appropriate form of producing the response to problems on a global scale. The four chapters deal with multilateral policies that address the new global problems that have entered the agenda of world politics. Further global problems await to be addressed through

real-world policies rather than international treaties that impose obligations on states but do not control their implementation. Issues such as international crime, mass migration, and the fight against hunger are assigned to international organizations with the consent of all countries but consensus on the formation of effective policy responses has not been reached. This part of the book deals with four of these problems, namely climate warming, weapons of mass destruction, development cooperation, and communicable diseases. The chapters analyse both the state of the policymaking that has achieved different results and China's conduct and strategy towards the multilateral formation of the world policy response to such problems.

The response to the problem of climate warming has a prominent place because, as demonstrated by the analysis of the chapter by Fulvio Attinà, it was formed through a model of policymaking that satisfies the essential conditions to make legitimate and effective policy response to the problem. Such conditions are the respect for the equal decision-making rights of all states, the implementation process based on dialogue and interaction between national governments and the policy institution, and assistance to countries in need of capability-building for the policy implementation. The achievement of such conditions, which came in 2015 with the Paris Agreement, ended a negotiation that had lasted since 1992 when the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC, was signed and transformed into the policy institution legitimized to manage the policy to de-carbonize the world. The war in Ukraine raised problems and doubts about the implementation of the policy. On the one hand, the agreed deadlines for de-carbonization will suffer. On the other, the use of renewable energy sources can be promoted by the goal of making countries less dependent on the use of imported fossil energy, an achievement that Chinese leaders have already espoused.

The arms race is a problem that has taken on a new meaning as nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction have changed relations between the great powers. The chapter by Jan Karlas deals with the analysis of the response to this problem, which is the primary responsibility of the great powers that produce and store huge quantities of such weapons, and the concern of all states. The chapter analyses multilateral negotiations aimed at establishing rules and mechanisms for the control of such weapons. It emphasizes the policy of the great powers to make the world a little safer from the use of weapons of mass destruction and addresses the evolution of China's approach to the related negotiations. In a rather similar way to the process of policymaking on climate warming, China's approach has changed from abstaining from exercising leadership to an active and leadership role, especially in negotiations on conventional weapons of mass destruction. Karlas explains that China's concern for security in its regional area and interest in promoting the image of national foreign policy as that of a developing country determine the Chinese approach in accordance with the strategy of the country's progressive rise in the world hierarchy.

China's commitment to development cooperation aid is another aspect of the role Beijing wants to play in world politics. The country's status as a developing country is highly regarded by the Chinese elite as the building block of action in world

politics and a key card of the ascending role in the world political order. This is the interpretative key of the analysis of Silvia Menegazzi's chapter on China's development cooperation policy. The analysis underlines the dual and asymmetric strategy of Chinese leaders towards this area of a crucial world problem. In fact, the Chinese strategy is both bilateral and multilateral. Initially, it was more a policy of bilateral cooperation. Later, while continuing to be bilateral, it also turned towards multilateralism, but focusing on the multilateral cooperation of Chinese-led financial institutions that add to and compete with existing financial institutions that are under the leadership of Western countries.

The chapter by Francesca Cerutti addresses the problem of infectious diseases that have spread beyond national borders in recent decades. Addressing such a problem worldwide was assigned to the World Health Organization which carried out the task primarily through the issuance of International Health Regulations. Covid-19 has raised concern about the effectiveness of such a rules-based response in view of many countries' traditional aversion to accepting formal instruments of international governance. The social, political, and also cultural and demographic specifics of each country are the cause of such an outcome. On the contrary, today's global interconnection imposes on states the imperative to accept the multilateral policymaking model as the appropriate form to address problems on a global scale. China, due to the specifics of the country, represents a lot for the outcome of the world health policy. The chapter explores China's participation in such policy responses in recent decades and at the present time. It highlights the double standard of Chinese leaders that came to public prominence with the Covid-19 experience. On the one hand, they recognize the WHO's authority in world health governance. On the other hand, they defend national priorities that clash with the world policy response.

The chapters of the third part of this book analyse the relations of China with the countries of Europe and Asia. These chapters recognize that for all great powers and China entry into the circle of states in the leading position of world politics is achieved both through intergovernmental dialogue and economic exchange with advanced and emerging states and through the construction of significant relations with the countries of the surrounding region. Unlike relations with the countries of Central and South America, the Middle East, and Africa, with which China prefers to establish bilateral relations, relations with the states of Europe and Asia have a significant multilateral dimension. Bilateral relations with EU and non-EU member states are significantly accompanied by relations between China and the EU. Similarly, China's bilateral relations with the countries of Asia, especially Southeast Asia, are complemented by China's relations with poorly organized and well-organized networks of states cooperating in political and economic affairs. The chapters by Feng and Gao, Yan, and Lišanin deal with China's approach to European countries and the European Union. They show that this approach is a still undecided process due to various reasons. The chapter by van der Zwan analyses China's relations with Asian countries that are shaped by the Belt and Road Initiative.

The chapter by Feng and Gao analyses the strength of China-Europe relations through opinion poll data processed with multivariate statistical analysis. As relations between international actors depend on their own images of the other, Feng and Gao assess the present and future potential of Chinese policy towards Europe by investigating the impact of a sudden fact, namely the COVID-19 shock originating in China, and of established economic exchanges, namely trade, contracted projects, and FDI existing between China and European countries. The analysis shows that external shocks such as the blow of the virus born in China cause a change in the image of the other for the worse while the influence of economic exchange on the image of the other is significant but nuanced for various reasons. The trade surplus against the other country, for example, does not necessarily improve the well-being of respondents, although it still contributes to the positive image of the other country.

Building vital and intense mutual relations is the primary goal of the leaders of China and the European Union. Although such a relationship has not always been smooth, the leaders have always shared the goal of developing complementarity and cooperation. The chapter by Yan explores this shared vision through an in-depth analysis of the concept of strategic autonomy that has taken over the EU foreign policy scene in recent years. The chapter highlights China's expectation for the advancement of European strategic autonomy because it could advance China's goal of promoting the multipolar world and give the European Union a balancing role in U.S.-China relations. China's support for European strategic autonomy, however, cannot hide the fact that European strategic autonomy has such significant implications for world politics that make it an opportunity and a challenge for both parties and also a work in progress constantly influenced by the changing circumstances of international relations.

The Lišanin chapter analyses China's policy towards an area of Europe, namely the Western Balkans, that has not yet stabilized, through the case of Serbia, a country that harbours resentment towards the EU because of the conditions created in the recent past of European international politics. The chapter highlights the impact of the unfinished EU enlargement policy on the countries of the Western Balkans. Lišanin points out that it has created great uncertainties for the governments of the area and a vacuum that represents an opportunity for countries, such as China, who want to expand their presence in competition with the European Union and Western countries, with the United States in the lead. The chapter traces the growing presence of China based on economic partnership, infrastructure investment, and political cooperation. It also explains the orientation of the Serbian policymakers towards the uncertain situation in the area. The willingness of Serbian leaders to overcome such uncertainty by navigating the middle and waiting for changes for the better, however, was frustrated by the war in Ukraine that brought back the confrontation between the great powers.

China's potential for coalition power has grown over the past decade thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative, BRI. Investments in infrastructure and trade facilitation are among the main aspects of this programme, which is mainly, but not only, implemented by state- owned enterprises and which benefits from public procurement and grants. It raises the question of whether Chinese leaders are pursuing the

growth of the country's GDP through the expansion of economic relations with countries around the world with a view to promoting a new world order centred on China. The chapter by Gul-i-Hina van der Zwan focuses on several cases of China's engagement within the Belt and Road Initiative in Asia through a new conceptual framework aimed at discovering China's link and leverage towards countries in Asian sub-regions such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. Various dimensions of Chinese linkage along economic, social, cultural, communication, and intergovernmental ties for the BRI partner countries are analysed. In addition, the chapter examines Chinese leverage under BRI to unpack the dynamics and influence of Chinese involvement and bilateral relations with BRI partner countries. The van der Zwan's analysis fills the gap existing in the academic debate about China's influence by studying the mechanism of China's potential political influence in partner countries along various dimensions. Finally, the chapter shows the importance of the social, cultural, and communication aspects of the BRI thanks to the engagement with various actors such as Chinese firms, state-owned enterprises, private-public partnerships, and joint ventures which play a key role in determining the link with China in partner countries.

It is our purpose to present the readers with a coherent analysis of the some of the most important issues that China engages and their implications to the rest of the world. We hope that each chapter of the book is of clear relevance to both scientists and world policy professionals. In recent decades, scientific research on China's action in world politics has primarily concerned itself with the country's growing power and the impact of such an increase on the configuration of the world political system. Starting from the current situation, political science research on China is called upon to investigate how China is behaving as a top player of world politics in transition. The specifics of the country's political culture matter as much as the actual actions of Chinese leaders at such a transitional stage. This book fits into this policy research orientation. The authors are aware of the need to follow such a research direction by developing further studies on China's ideological roots, power resources, involvement in world politics towards the problems of world range, and bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. Making such scientific research useful to politicians and professionals in world politics is of the utmost importance. The experience they have gained in recent decades may not be sufficient to address the current challenges of reforming international relations and aligning the world political system with the institutional and political structure that current times require for a viable world.

Part I
China on the World Stage

China's Vision for a Future World Order and Its Implications for Global Governance

Weiqing Song (iD) **and Weining Ai** (iD)

Abstract This analytical essay addresses authoritarian communitarianism as the normative and ideological underpinnings of the current Chinese foreign policy. In recent years, China has exhibited its ambition in bidding for its preferred world order, through both its rhetoric and behavior. Being well aware of this new development, people are debating about what is exactly China's world vision and its approach to a future world order. Driven by the puzzle in contemporary global affairs, this chapter focuses on the philosophical and ideological roots of China's world vision, rather than investigating its foreign policies directly. It is argued that China's world view today and its ensuing policy approach are substantially informed by the authoritarian version of communitarianism, deriving largely from the traditional Chinese thoughts of Confucianism. Inspired by authoritarian communitarianism as the main international ideology, China is envisaging a world order, based on values of international stability and communal harmony, emphasizing the role of nation states and vertical hierarchical order. This argument is further assessed with China's role and policy in the crisis of the on-going Covid-19 pandemic. Through this specific case, strength and limitation of China's world vision are better illuminated, with reference to global governance. It is concluded that the ideological struggle between China and mostly the West tends to generate substantial policy implications in contemporary global affairs.

In recent years, China has been highly proactive, or even "assertive" as criticized in the West, in its foreign policies, in terms of both rhetoric and behavior. The top Chinese leadership has declared on important international occasions time and again its determination on going out to the center stage of world affairs. Policymakers and analysts around the world are baffled about what China exactly aims to achieve in

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such high-profile discourses as the "Community of Common Destiny" (CCD) as well as flagship measures such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In particular, this happens in the time when the West has been facing various tremendous challenges, including global financial crisis, refugee and migration crisis, rise of political populism, the Covid-19 pandemic, and mostly recently the Russo-Ukrainian War.

The world is indeed attentive to China's big turn in foreign behavior from the traditional low-profile strategy, known as "*Tao Guang Yang Hui*." Much of the Chinese rhetoric is dismissed in the West simply as China's exercise of propaganda or alleged as "sharp power" to project its influence internationally, through manipulation and disinformation in democracies (Walker & Ludwig, 2017). The ambitious Chinese initiatives centering around the BRI are, on the other hand, described in the West as China's exploitation of weakness of other states for its own favor of interest maximization and power expansion. Overall, China's policies and initiatives are being seriously suspected and challenged by the Western countries generally as its malicious ambition to conquer the world.

It is worth mentioning that this rise of China's assertiveness and its self-confidence is accompanied by its narrative of conceptual framework of world visions, culminating in the "Community of Common Destiny" (which is also translated as "Community of Shared Future for All Humankind") in the current Xi Jinping era. The Chinese government claimed it as an accolade when its concept of "Community of Shared Future" was officially cited in the United Nations context (CMFA, 2017). However, it is dismissed or even largely neglected in the West. Is a political concept such as the CCD presented by the Chinese leadership just a cheap slogan or does it represent its real strategic world vision? What is really China's vision for a global order? How can we understand China's world vision and its ensuing policies? How can we understand the incoherent and sometimes contradictory nature in Chinese rhetoric and behavior, relating to its global vision?

This essay argues that authoritarian communitarianism, originating from the Confucian thoughts, serves as the ideological basis of China's world vision. Authoritarian communitarianism emphasizes social harmony as the paramount value of human societies. To this end, methods of centralized authority and hierarchical governance are necessary and often required. As a principle, therefore, pursuit of common goods precedes and dominates the right of individual freedom. This political ideology has defined China's world view and its ensuing international behaviors as well as its domestic governance. It is essential to delve into the underlying political ideology as a good understanding of its normative basis, which can illuminate the logic of China's foreign policy. "Community of shared future" defines the common goals of all humankind, regardless of races, ethnicities, history, culture, and tradition. In pursuit of social harmony at the global level, each state must, first of all, take care of its own internal affairs as the most essential contribution to global governance. As a specific case, China's effort in controlling the Covid-19 pandemic within the country is a direct contribution to the world, despite its huge cost.

The essay proceeds as follows. It first conceptualizes authoritarian communitarianism as a philosophical and ideological tradition in China, by comparing different types of communitarianism and relating it to Confucian thoughts. It then elaborates the Chinese scholarly literature and Chinese leadership's narrative on world vision, inspired by the ideological basis of authoritarian communitarianism. It further goes on to discuss the Chinese world visions' implications for global governance, in relation to its potential conflicts with other international ideologies. The theoretical discussion is complemented with some brief discussion of China's behavior in the ongoing crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic.

1 Authoritarian Communitarianism in China

1.1 Communitarianism and Confucianism

In the West, communitarianism is a relatively newly coined term of political philosophy and ideology. It first emerged and established itself in the 1980s when there was a scholarly debate between the dominant political liberalism and a minority group of American and British scholars who disagree on several major liberal tenets. They argued for the importance of the common good in opposition to contemporary liberals and libertarians, who categorically emphasized the good for individuals, particularly including personal autonomy and individual rights. Despite several notable differences between the two schools of thoughts (Bell, 2016), Western communitarian thinkers unanimously agree that communitarianism at least in its Western version has no fundamental difference from liberalism. Some leading scholars of the school are even reluctant with the term due to its authoritarian connotations. Western communitarian thinkers went on to elaborate the internal differences within the school of thought. Varieties of communitarianism may thus exist due to the internal differences within the school and local philosophical and historical traditions (Etzioni, 2013). Apart from those found in the West, communitarianism is popular in more authoritarian East Asian countries, long influenced by Confucianism, particularly China and Singapore. It is argued that Confucianism is without doubt communitarian and the real question is how classical Confucianism can support a particular style of communitarianism (Fox, 1997, p. 565).

Notably, the Western literature of communitarianism has attracted strong scholarly interests in the Chinese academia. In contrast to the liberal value of individualism, communitarianism's emphasis on common good is more in alignment with dominant values within the Chinese society. While in favor of some of Western communitarian arguments, Chinese scholars endeavor to define communitarianism of the Chinese kind. They do this mainly by drawing on traditional Confucian thoughts. Social harmony (*he*) is asserted as the core value of Confucian communitarianism. As a primary virtue, harmony is more important than any other values such as justice in building and strengthening a community. According to classic Confucianism, harmony is not merely about absence of disagreements and conflicts,

but also about unconditional conformity to established social norms (Li, 2018, p. 8). In comparison with Western communitarianism, Confucianism is the "thick" type of communitarianism which attaches paramount importance to the common good in order to sustain a robust communitarian society. Social harmony is to be realized by its members through mutual transformation for the common good.

To achieve social harmony, Confucian communitarianism upholds two underlying tenets of its worldview. First, social community is more than the aggregation of the individuals that compose it. And in turn the order and stability of a community must be sustained at any cost. Confucian thinkers assert that human existence depends far more on traditional, communally inherited meanings than individualistic ones. Confucian perspective cannot accommodate an atomistic worldview but embraces a world of social interdependence (Fox, 1997, p. 586). All human relationships involve a set of defined roles and mutual obligations; each participant should understand and conform to his/her proper role. Indeed, individuals depend on each other to "carry out their responsibilities appropriately according to their particular places in the social structure" (Fox, 1997, p. 575). The exercise of authority, in other words, required the cooperation of all (Fox, 1997, p. 575). In a nutshell, Western communitarianism accords to two major sources of normativity, that of the common good and that of autonomy and rights. In this sense, people often face difficult choices, as neither in principle should take precedence over the other. Confucian communitarianism extolls the importance of the common good and the corresponding necessity of social obligations, if deemed necessary, at the cost of individual autonomy and rights.

Second, social relationship is fundamentally hierarchical. As a well-known doctrine, Confucius advocates in his *Book of Rites: Great Learning* for a strictly ordered hierarchy of social institutions, starting from the individual up to the universe: cultivating oneself (*Xiushen*), regulating the family (*Qijia*), governing the state (*Zhiguo*), and maintaining peace in the world *(Pingtianxia)*. It is a stepwise process: only when individual personal character is duly cultivated, can human families be properly regulated; only when families are regulated, can the states be well governed; only when the states are well governed, can there be peace in the world. In the Confucian view, individuals are the basic elements of human communities at various vertical levels, from the family, to the state, and up to the world.

In this hierarchy, the state is the core of Confucian communitarianism which can be called as "state communitarianism" (W. Hu, 2007, p. 478). This is because the social and political thought of Confucianism is a social and political philosophy focusing on how to administer and rule a state (W. Hu, 2007, p. 477). "Confucianism never takes the individual, but it takes the community (the state) as the starting point for studying social and political problems. In other words, in Confucian social and political theory, the community but not the individual is always emphasized in political problems" (W. Hu, 2007, p. 483). The individual rights and freedoms are neglected, whereas the collective interests of the community (national interests) are valued. "Therefore, the primary goal of Confucianism is to increase the power of the state the most it can. It presupposes that the more powerful a state is, the more likely

it can guarantee that an individual will achieve his interests" (W. Hu, 2007, p. 484). Only when the national interests are achieved can individuals accomplish their goals.

1.2 Authoritarian Communitarianism as a Political Ideology

Confucian communitarianism has served as the dominant political ideology in China for about two millennia since its adoption as the sole state ideology in the Han Dynasty. Its modern version—authoritarian communitarianism—is the core political ideology of Chinese government that guides its domestic and foreign policies. Although historically Confucian communitarianism has primarily served for the internal governance of the Chinese state and society, it nonetheless has significant implications for contemporary China's foreign strategy. In this chapter, we focus on the tenets of authoritarian communitarianism as a political ideology and how it guides China's vision for the world and the ensuing foreign policy.

We adopt the analytical framework of political ideologies from Ball and Dagger (Ball & Dagger, 2006, pp. 4–7) that incorporates four key elements of a political ideology. They define a political ideology as "a fair coherent and comprehensive set of ideas that explains and evaluates social conditions, helps people understand their place in society, and provides a program for social and political action" (Ball & Dagger, 2006, p. 5). Confucian communitarianism and its modern version of authoritarian communitarianism have these four functions—explanatory, evaluative, orientative, and programmatic.

Confucian communitarianism and authoritarian communitarianism point out the problems that the world faces and why those problems occur as they are. Because Confucian communitarianism values social harmony the most, it sees political and social instability and conflict as the major problems of ancient China. Such social harmony is based on the individual respect of social norms, conformity to authority, and acceptance of social obligations. Without these conditions, individuals who pursue self-interests would disrupt social harmony and conflict with each other in a society. Inheriting these core tenets from Confucian thoughts, authoritarian communitarianism regards wars, conflicts, and regional turbulences as the major troubles of the contemporary world. The causes of these troubles are norm violation, disobedience to authority, and dereliction of duty in the international community. The authoritarian connotations are that the state's normative preferences and sources of domestic and international authority can be authoritarian. For example, for the collective interests of maintaining regional stability, the needs of civil society, opposition groups, and other non-state actors may succumb to state interests. States may establish their authority based on its capability of bringing peace and stability, but not necessarily on democratic legitimacy.

Confucian communitarianism and authoritarian communitarianism provide a set of criteria for evaluating what is good and bad for the prosperity of the world. Confucian communitarianism depicts the ideal human society as a state of great unity (*tianxia datong*). In such a utopian world, peace and prosperity are enjoyed by

everyone. As Confucius notes in the *Book of Rites*: "The greatest ideal is to create a world truly shared by all" (*dadao zhi xingye, tianxia weigong*), an ideal world should provide peace and prosperity to everyone. And the opposite world is a fragmented one, fraught with conflict and instability and unable to bring peace and affluence to the whole population. Likewise, authoritarian communitarianism evaluates domestic and foreign policies, regimes, and institutions based on whether these policies and organizations can bring peace, stability, harmony, and prosperity to states, regions, and the whole world. The authoritarian element of this standard is that it does not stipulate the ways to reach the goal of harmony and prosperity. Therefore, democratic means of communication and coordination, as well as authoritarian means of coercion and use of force can both meet the standard, as long as the policies and organizations can bring social harmony and prosperity.

Confucian communitarianism and authoritarian communitarianism supply the state with an orientation—an identity of who the state is and how it socially positions itself in the world. As Confucianism ignores individual autonomy and freedom, it emphasizes social relationships that are constituted through interactions with others in the social hierarchy. That is why Confucianism specifies five virtues of a man (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity) and five ideal social relationships of a man in a social hierarchy (with his parents, monarch, spouse, seniors, and friends), all relevant to social communities and interactions. Therefore, in terms of national identity formation, Confucian communitarianism downplays the agency of a state but emphasizes its interactions with the hierarchical community. Authoritarian communitarianism follows this precept, maintaining that national identity is constructed through interactions with other states in the hierarchical world. For example, China's identity of a non-interventionist state in conflict resolution is constructed in its history of humiliation (invasion by Japan and other Western powers) and rivalry with superpowers (the Soviet Union and the United States). The authoritarian connotations are that identities are strongly state-centric and sovereignty-relevant, in contrast to liberal international national identities.

Confucian communitarianism and authoritarian communitarianism prescribe a political program for achieving political ideals. Confucian communitarianism believes the idealist regime is one where the ruling elites/monarchs embody sagelihood at home and kingliness abroad (*neisheng waiwang*). Domestically, this requires meritocracy that presents a reign by virtue and wisdom and that rules through persuasion and social shame (Fox, 1997, p. 572). Internationally, this needs leadership and authority that can unite all others towards peace, harmony, and prosperity. Authoritarian communitarianism inherits the prescription of *neisheng waiwang*. It pursues domestic meritocracy and good governance, and it seeks international leadership and authority that can bring peace and stability as well as foster development. Meritocracy and international leadership often lead to centralized authority and hierarchical governance. The authoritarian elements are: domestically meritocrats do not necessarily rule by virtue and persuasion, and internationally the means of promoting peace and prosperity may be biased against some non-state actors. Meritocrats can suppress citizens as long as harmony is

maintained, and non-state actors' concerns can be ignored so long as aggregate national development is achieved.

2 Authoritarian Communitarianism and China's World Vision

2.1 Chinese Scholarly Debate on World Vision[1]

In recent years, contemporary scholarly debates and interpretations arise with regard to Confucianism and other ancient Chinese thoughts, with explicit reference to world vision and international relations. The concept of *Tianxia* is a key term in traditional Confucian political thoughts. It literally means "all under heaven," referring to the political sovereignty of the imperial authority. The world is all under the Chinese imperial authority which is situated in the very center of the system, with all its officials, subjects, tributary states, and finally barbarians lying outward concentrically. The *Tianxia* concept has now been adopted by Chinese scholars to apply to the contemporary world (Zhao, 2006). It is argued that the world should be itself a single-unit community where different nations coexist peacefully. This renewed adoption of ancient Chinese concepts has sparked a wave of enthusiasm among Chinese scholars in search of intellectual inspiration from their ancestors.

In this light, a group of Chinese scholars took bold steps in developing the so-called Chinese school of international relations. Qin Yaqing's relational theory emphasizes the primacy of relationality derived from the indigenous Chinese traditions, such as Confucianism and other sets of the Chinese cultural components. Qin believes that the mainstream IR theories share a similar metaphysical and theoretical "hardcore" of individualistic rationality drawn from the background knowledge of Western communities. It reflects the understanding and interpretation of Western academics about nature, society, and human life. Hence, rationality is a concept refined from the practice of western communities and determining Western scholarships' approaches to observe, understand, and conceptualize the world around them. In the counterpart, Qin stresses the relationality as the key concept to shape the Chinese community as a world composed of complex relations (Qin, 2018). Therefore, Qin's relational theory contains a distinct ontological assumption that human action is based on relations, differing from the mainstream IR theories with the theoretical core of individuality and rationality (Qin, 2016). This is a major contribution of relational theory by highlighting the role of non-Western cultures in providing ontological understandings and interpretations to social science theory construction.

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[1]The authors thank Mengdie Zhou for research assistance in scholarly literature on Chinese school of international relations.

The symbiosis theory, introduced by a group of Shanghai-based scholars, is enlightened by research into symbiosis as an explanatory framework in the Chinese sociological community, especially sociologist Hu Shoujun's theory on social symbiosis. The symbiosis theorists lay its ontological foundation on the very plural and multiple nature of existence of the individual actors in the world. According to Hu, a symbiosis system has three characteristics: endogenous, mutualistic, and symbiotic (S. Hu, 2002). That is, all aspects of society are the products of agents, and individuals are the major form of agents. The relations among agents and those between agents and structures are conditioned and intersected. Agents have to cooperate and reciprocate to ensure their survival in the struggle for existence and serve their diverse interests. Hence, conflict and competition do not eliminate but rather promote the coexistence of agents. Hu's perspective has caught the attention of Shanghai-based IR scholars who believe that the international society is also a system of symbiosis similar with the human society. They highlight the applicability of symbiosis theory to an international system with different types of political systems, cultures, religions, and modes of development. Hence, contributors to the Shanghai School are not limited to IR specialists, but also include sociologists, economists, and historians.

Yan Xuetong puts moral realism as an approach to understand a major power's behavior when morality is a contributing factor to its leadership's strategic preference. The central question he attempts to figure out is: how do rising powers or hegemony-aspiring states achieve their goal of becoming a hegemon and why may hegemony sustain or decline? The core explanation raised by Yan is that it rests with the transition of political leadership (Yan, 2015, p. 3). Drawing on insights from history, especially the pre-Qin philosophical thoughts and practices, a key element of moral realism is the notion of "kingly way" (*wangdao*) "which stresses the Chinese values of righteousness and benevolence over the Western notions of equality and democracy (Acharya, 2019). Such ideological factor is attributed as the key element of political strength which is more essential than resource elements such as economic, military, and cultural powers. In moral realists' view, political strength can strengthen political leadership, and thus, accelerate and allocate the dynamics of resource strengths, and enable the hegemon to utilize more resources in favor of their interests (Yan, 2016). Hence, political leadership is an operational element of national comprehensive strength in redistribution of international power. Stronger capability of political leadership owned by rising states enables them to challenge the hegemon and facilitate power reconfiguration and transition of hegemony in the international arena.

This group of leading Chinese IR scholars owes a great deal of their intellectual inspirations to their domestic, Chinese historical-cultural forces such as values, norms, institutions, and practices. They try to apply their conceptual constructs to the international/global level of interactions where China now operates as a major rising power (Acharya, 2019, p. 480). We build authoritarian communitarianism on these scholars' conceptualization and theorization, analyzing China's world vision through Ball and Dagger's framework of political ideologies (Ball & Dagger, 2006, pp. 4–7). Relational theory and symbiosis theory are both inspired by Confucian and

other ancient Chinese thoughts which emphasize social interdependence and coexistence of members of the same community. Although claimed to be a more universal IR theory, moral realism also draws heavily on the idea of "kingly way" (*wangdao*) or benevolence governance in ancient Chinese thoughts. Moral realism argues that it is key for a rising power to project power of "kingly way" as well as power of force (*badao*). This is reminiscent of the Confucian teaching of benevolent rule or rule by virtues.

2.2 Official Narrative on Chinese World Vision

People's Republic of China has its tradition to present officially its world vision. In the Cold War time, Mao Zedong famously introduced the "three worlds" theory, according to which the vast number of developing countries compose the third world and China has the destiny and obligation to take the lead in fighting the two superpowers of the Soviet Union and the United States in the world of oppression and exploitation. The "three worlds theory" is heavily influenced by Marxist and Lenin thoughts of social inequality and the global movement of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. A dramatic shift was made to highlight "peace" and "development" as the two major themes of the international system, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping when the CPC adopted its reform and opening-up policy in late 1970s. This was largely followed for the next two decades. After the turn of the new century, the Chinese leadership has searched for new sources for their vision of the dramatically changed world. This time, they turn to traditional Chinese philosophy. The concept of "harmonious world" was officially outlined in 2005 by then Chinese top leader Hu Jintao.[2] The concept of "harmonious world" is a typical Confucian vision or utopia for the better world, which extends from its domestic ideal of "harmonious society." Both these international and domestic ideals ultimately derive from the Confucian notion of "*he*."

Because authoritarian communitarianism regards wars, conflicts, and regional turbulences as the major troubles of the contemporary world, China has often pointed out the challenges of conflicts to human society. In Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech at the United Nations office in Geneva, he indicated that economic sluggishness, financial crises, widening development gap, and wars are among the major challenges to human beings.[3] In the report delivered at the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC)—the party's current guidebook of governance—Xi indicated that frequent regional conflicts and instability are among the complex situations that the world was undergoing.[4] China thinks that the causes of wars and conflicts are the violation of sovereignty norms, disrespect of

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[2]https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/cena//eng/xwdt/t410254.htm.

[3]https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201701/19/WS5b20d22ba31001b82572148f.html.

[4]http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/interface/flipboard/1142846/2017-11-06/cd_34188086.html.

the authority of international law and the UN, and the failure of dialogue and consultation in conflict resolution.

Authoritarian communitarianism evaluates policies and institutions based on their ability to bring peace, prosperity, and harmony to the world. Beijing has always emphasized that peace and development are the call of contemporary world. For example, in his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2015, Xi quoted Confucius, "The greatest ideal is to create a world truly shared by all." Xi stressed that "Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom are the common values of all mankind and the lofty goals of the United Nations."[5] This clearly shows the utopia of an equal, peaceful, and prosperous world that China visions for the mankind. In the report to the 19th CPC congress, Xi reiterated that "the world is undergoing major developments, transformation, and adjustment, but peace and development remain the call of our day."[6] China's constant emphasis on peace and development exhibits the significance that China attaches to these common goods. It also demonstrates China's criterion of assessing policies, regimes, and institutions—whether they can provide peace and development to people.

China sees the United Nations as the key institution that can provide such common goods to the world. In President Xi's speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2021, he stated that "In the world, there is only one international system, i.e. the international system with the UN at its core. There is only one international order, i.e. the international order underpinned by international law. And there is only one set of rules, i.e. the basic norms governing international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter."[7] China's insistence on the UN-centered international order and system implies its emphasis on state sovereignty and multilateralism. Beijing believes states are of primary responsibility in maintaining domestic and international peace and providing prosperity. The internal affairs of states, including choices of development model, political institutions, and security, should stay outside of foreign interventions. Such statist approach does not contradict with multilateralism. China thinks international crises and conflicts should be resolved multilaterally, through coordination of states and multilateral organizations. But the premise of multilateral conflict resolution is that all parties should be involved in the resolution process and the targets' sovereignty should be respected.

Authoritarian communitarianism thus supplies China with an identity of a strong protector of state sovereignty. The hundred years of humiliation (1830-1949) caused by colonial powers in modern Chinese history have shaped China's identity of a strong protector of state sovereignty. Rivalries between China and the United States since 1949 and between China and the USSR since Sino-Soviet split have fortified China's tenacious hold on sovereignty. Foreign-imposed regime changes, the aftermath of interventions in civil conflicts, territorial disputes with neighboring

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[5] https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/2015-09/30/content_22023360_2.htm.

[6] http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/interface/flipboard/1142846/2017-11-06/cd_34188086.html.

[7] https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202109/22/WS614a82b1a310cdd39bc6a948.html.

countries, and disputes over domestic human rights practices with Western countries have further strengthened China's identity of a sovereignty protector. China's interactions with the international community therefore constitute and enhance this identity. In President Xi's speech at the United Nations office in Geneva, he illustrates that "sovereign equality is the most important norm governing state-to-state relations over the past centuries and the cardinal principle observed by the United Nations and all other international organizations."[8] Understanding China's identity as a strong protector of state sovereignty and sovereign equality is foundational for analyzing China's foreign policy. This is because China's international behaviors in conflict resolution, aid and investment, trade and other issue areas are all aimed to protect its own sovereignty and uphold the international norm of sovereignty.

Finally, authoritarian communitarianism prescribes a political program that can bring peace, harmony, and prosperity for the world. Domestically, China prefers its current meritocracy, despite critiques of its authoritarian nature. This is evident that Chinese leaders have emphasized on many occasions the confidence in the country's political system and the freedom of all countries to choose their own development model. For example, in the report to the 19th Congress of the CPC, Xi said that "our whole Party must strengthen our confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics."[9] In President Xi's speech at the United Nations office in Geneva, he reiterated that "the essence of sovereign equality is that the sovereignty and dignity of all countries. . .must be respected. Their internal affairs allow no interference, and they have the right to independently choose their social system and development path."[10]

2.3 Implications for China's Participation in Global Governance

The explanations, evaluations, identities, and domestic political programs elaborated by authoritarian communitarianism have provided implications for China's approach to global governance. Internationally, China presents a vision for international system that provides an alternative to the current liberal international order. The US-led liberal international order is at the crossroads, with emergence of various alternatives on the horizon. Among them, the Chinese concept of Community of Common Destiny (CCD) shows itself as a major contender. Xi elaborated the idea of the Community of Common Destiny (or the Community with a Shared Future, CSF) for mankind in his speech at the UN office in Geneva, in 2017. He stated that the foundation of the CCD/CSF is sovereignty equality among all states and the

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[8]https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201701/19/WS5b20d22ba31001b82572148f.html.

[9]http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/interface/flipboard/1142846/2017-11-06/cd_34188086.html.

[10]https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201701/19/WS5b20d22ba31001b82572148f.html.

UN-centered international rules. Xi listed five aspects of the CCD/CSF, including building a world of lasting peace through dialogue and consultation, a world of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security for all, a world of common prosperity through win-win cooperation, a world of openness and inclusiveness through exchanges and mutual learning, a world that pursues green and low-carbon development.[11]

The way of building the CCD/CSF is seeking leadership and authority in global economic system and international security. Economically, China has put forward the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a long-term and ambitious regional and interregional development program that covers financial services, infrastructure connectivity, trade liberalization and investment facilitation, innovation, sustainable development, and cultural exchanges.[12] China also founded the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank, the New Development Bank, and the Silk Road Fund to fund the BRI. Through providing money, expertise, personnel, and technology for various projects under the BRI, China is establishing leadership and authority in the global economic landscape. Ideally, Beijing hopes the China-led, one-sided development projects can boost local economy and bring peace and prosperity to the participating states, many of which are developing and conflict-stricken countries. However, China's leadership and authority-seeking efforts have aroused political and security concerns from the West and some opposition groups in the targeted countries. To some Western countries and opposition leaders in countries participating the BRI, they suspect China is using debts and loans in the BRI projects for geopolitical gains. They doubt that China is implementing a "debt-trap diplomacy" to exploit natural resources and influence the domestic politics and foreign policy of the targeted countries.

In terms of international security, China has substantially increased its contribution to global security governance since President Xi assumed office, and there is evidence that China is seeking leadership and authority in security affairs. On global security governance, China is becoming a leader in safeguarding international security, hoping its leadership can bring peace and harmony in conflict-laden areas. China has now become the largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.[13] In Xi's speech at the 70th UN General Assembly in September 2015, he announced China's decision to establish a one-billion China-UN peace and development fund in US dollars and provide free military aid in one hundred million US dollars to the African Union.[14] China has also worked closely with the European Union, the United States, and other major powers in multilateral conflict resolution and crisis management in Iranian nuclear crisis, the North Korean nuclear crisis, and the Syrian civil conflict. However, on security issues related to China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and

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[11] https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201701/19/WS5b20d22ba31001b82572148f.html.

[12] http://www.china.org.cn/chinese/catl/2017-05/15/content_41501866.html.

[13] https://www.un.org/zh/events/peacekeepersday/service/china.shtml.

[14] https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/2015-09/30/content_22023360_3.html.

national security, China is quickly establishing authority. Beijing's assertiveness in the South China Sea, military buildup, and territorial disputes with neighbors demonstrate China's resolve in protecting the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. China is planning to be at the top of a regional security hierarchy in Asia so that its security is guaranteed from the threat of US Indo-Pacific balancing strategy. Multilateral security is by no means a solution to China's security concerns in its immediate neighborhood because China prefers bilateral negotiation and prevents others' interventions in its own security affairs.

3 Authoritarian Communitarianism and China's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

China's response to the Covid-19 pandemic offers a typical case to analyze how authoritarian communitarianism shapes China's domestic public policy in emergency management and its foreign policy, with regard to participation in global governance of the same domain. Despite the controversy over its real origin, the first reported cases of the Covid-19 pandemic were found in Wuhan in Central China's Hubei Province. After initially covering up the existence of the virus in Wuhan by local officials, China quickly imposed strict lockdown in Wuhan for 76 days in early 2020 and mobilized nationwide resources to contain the spread of the virus. Although individual freedoms were tightly controlled and social and economic activities were restricted, the successful fight against the pandemic has shored up citizens' support and confidence in the government's ability to maintain safety and stability of the Chinese society. Especially when other countries (particularly the Western countries) took a less authoritarian path in combating the pandemic but suffered more Covid-19 cases and deaths, this contrast highlighted by the mainstream media in China has bolstered Chinese exceptionalism and enhanced Chinese people's confidence in the government.

China's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic evidently displays how authoritarian communitarianism directs public policy making and implementation. The problem facing the Chinese society during the pandemic is possible medical system collapse, social instability, and civil disobedience against lockdown. Decision makers regard social stability and conformity to rules as the primary goal. Chinese government also rejects "coexistence" with the virus—a more liberal mindset in handling the pandemic. As a result, the policy in fighting against the virus since early 2020 had largely remained the same before the sudden reopening in December 2022: strict lockdown, surveillance and tracing, mass testing, border closure, vaccination, and nationwide mobilization to aid epicenters of Covid-19 outbreak. One of the most serious restrictive lockdowns was in Shanghai in the first half of 2022, China's largest city of about 26 million people. Despite huge controversy of the issue and the chaos of the city, the Chinese authority was determined to implement its so-called "zero-Covid" policy forcefully. In December 2022, due to the difficulty in sustaining

the zero-Covid policy, economic hardships, and possibly public discontent over lockdowns, China suddenly ended the policy after almost three years. This swift shift in policy left hospitals and Chinese citizens unprepared for the surge of Covid cases, causing confusions and chaos.

Truly, the government plays a dominant role in every aspect of this policy, with very little participation from civil society. The policy has won tremendous support of the citizens across the country, who are disciplined to obey these rules and compromise individual freedom for the safety of the whole community. The authority of the government has been strengthened, with freedom of speech further limited online and everything becoming secondary to "zero-Covid" policy. The positive side of the authoritarian communitarianist policy is that numerous people volunteered to help each other in online group shopping, delivery, and covid tests during the pandemic. This helped the formation and control of communities that authorities need to discipline citizens while keeping the society safe and stable. That said, the negative side cannot be ignored as enormous social, economic, and even political costs are incurred. For example, grievances and complaints are expressed by various means, against vigilance of the government.

China's foreign policy in handling the Covid-19 pandemic also demonstrates authoritarian communitarianism, and particularly its contradictions between authoritarianism and communitarianism. On the one hand, China has taken an authoritarian approach to manage borders and information. Since March 28, 2020, China closed its borders and substantially curbed the number of international flights. In the past three years, the prices of international flights to China have skyrocketed, and it has become more complicated and difficult for passengers to get aboard a flight to China. Tens of thousands of Chinese citizens are stranded overseas. Many international students and foreigners who study and work in China have also been unable to enter China. Beijing has also engaged in disputes with the United States, Australia, and other Western countries regarding whether it delayed reports to the World Health Organization (WHO) about the Covid-19 and whether the virus originated from China or elsewhere. Negative information about China's authoritarian measures against Covid-19 at home, the origin of the virus, and China's cooperation with the WHO in investigation has been strictly censored and detested.

On the other hand, China has conducted a communitarianist diplomacy in helping other countries in their fight against the Covid-19. Ever since the start of the pandemic, China has donated and exported personal protective equipment (PPE), Covid-19 testing kits, ventilators, and other medical equipment to the world. For example, as of November 2021, China provided over 350 billion masks, 4 billion protective suits, and 6 billion testing kits to the world.[15] Chinese medical teams have also been dispatched to Azerbaijan, Malaysia, Serbia, Italy, the Republic of Congo, Laos, South Sudan, and many other countries to assist local combat against the Covid-19. By the end of 2021, China had delivered 2 billion doses of Covid-19

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[15] http://cn.chinadiplomacy.org.cn/2021-12/10/content_77923082.shtml.

vaccines to more than 120 countries and international organizations.[16] China's medical aid has especially helped developing countries during the pandemic, despite the West's intended or unintended ignorance. In January 2022, China pledged to provide another 1 billion doses of vaccines to African countries, in which 600 million of them will be donated. China also promised to offer 150 million doses of vaccines to the ASEAN countries for free.[17] China's mask and vaccine diplomacies during the pandemic have helped build a good reputation for China as a responsible major power from the recipient countries. This positive reputation has contrasted vaccine nationalism—countries that hoard the life-saving vaccines for their own populations. This communitarianist diplomacy shows China is willing and able to provide public goods to the international community.

China's domestic and foreign policies in handling the Covid-19 pandemic evidently show authoritarian communitarianism as the governing political ideology. The contradictions between authoritarianism and communitarianism exhibited in these policies demonstrate Beijing's logic in its approach to global governance—a China-centered, statist multilateralism. Each national government should take the primary responsibility of caring for its own people under the principle of non-interventionism. At the global scale, international cooperation relies predominantly on intergovernmental method, either bilaterally between individual states or multilaterally via state-sponsored organizations. Non-state actors can be incorporated into the network to play the subordinate roles when it is necessary and possible. China selects multilateral institutions and regimes where it can seek leadership and authority to influence and control their policy agenda. For multilateral regimes where China is not able to gain leadership and authority and where China is criticized, China is likely to detest them and build alternative ones.

4   Conclusion

China's world vision today is inherited, but different from the one in ancient time, although its attachment to authoritarianism largely remains. It is easy and convenient to infer China's vision of world order, based on its historical conceptions. Quite a few literatures on China's vision of global order draw historical inspiration from China's past (e.g. Callahan, 2008). However, there is a big pitfall in this approach as there is a qualitative difference between ancient China and China today. The ancient China was a self-centered civilizational entity and its world concept was conceived of on this basis, but China today is facing coexistence of other civilizations. In particular, the Western civilization is much more dominant worldwide. Therefore, the Chinese understanding of the world today is very different and its vision of world order is based on renewed understanding.

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[16]http://views.ce.cn/view/ent/202202/22/t20220222_37346335.shtml.

[17]http://views.ce.cn/view/ent/202202/22/t20220222_37346335.shtml.

Embedded within its historical and ideological tradition, this renewed world vision has informed its approach to global governance, namely, the statist/state-centric multilateralism. This type of multilateralism can be summarized as emphasizing central authority internally within the state and prioritizing coleadership externally with other major states and institutions. It does not exclude vertical process of governance, but it relies more on the top-down method of hierarchical order. The whole process is officially controlled, with varying access to various kinds of actors, including societal forces. China's state-centric multilateralism has generated its policy implications at both conceptual and practical dimensions. Its positive and negative effects are both unleashed, culminating in a situation of "contested multilateralism" (Morse & Keohane, 2014). In other words, the rules, practices, and missions of existing multilateral institutions are being challenged by a group of rising actors such as China in their pursuit of their favored multilateral norms, institutions, rules, and practices.

The debate and struggle over the current global order is triggered by reconfiguration of great power relations and various transnational forces, unleashed by globalization. In this context, the US dominance has been challenged by a group of rising powers, in particular, China. Meanwhile, China is most concerned about how to ensure a smooth and peaceful power redistribution and transformation of the global order as a whole. The CCD/CSF is China's conceptualization of its global vision for a workable order in such a changing global landscape. By focusing on "Community" and "Common Destiny/Shared Future," China indicates that it intends not to become a hegemonic power, but that it respects the different national political, economic, and social systems, which do not stand in the way of achieving a common future acceptable to all. That said, it does not hide its interest to take some international leadership when it is necessary and possible. China's bid for its preferred world order tends to be tough as it has been traditionally an inward-looking nation. Big challenges thus emerge for both China and the West in this encounter between different ideologically informed approaches to global governance.

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A Chinese Century: A Stable or Unstable World?

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Abstract China's interactions with the West are undergoing major power shifts. We show that increasing congruence of values leads to international and domestic cooperation while dissent generates the preconditions for domestic and international confrontation. Using value congruence between China, India, and United States we explore the likely path of international interactions among these three giants. China will become the preeminent nation in the next half-century. If current value trends hold, confrontation between these two giants will rise. Partial accommodation of values can lead to stable competition and a less likely reconciliation of values could lead to cooperation. If confrontation persists, India will be the key power that determines the shape of the future status quo.

How powerful is China compared to the United States? Will China become the preeminent power in world politics? What are the challenges that this rising nation faces in the near future? Preliminary assessments of current and likely future assets held by China provide a window into these issues.

1 Territory, Population and Power

In Asia, China (6.3% of global landmass) is second only to Russia (11% of landmass) and almost three times the size of India (2% of the landmass). The United States and Canada (both hold 6.1% of landmass) are similar in size while the European Union (EU) accounts for slightly more than one-half of US territory.

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China has 11% arable land. Despite its larger geographic size, this is only 70% of India's arable land or that of the United States.

China's food production is insufficient to sustain its large population. China is the largest global importer of food and has become increasingly reliant on food imports that grew tenfold in the last two decades. The growing food trade deficit is unlikely to be reversed prompting Beijing to reframe the previous self-sufficiency strategy. The United States and Russia (but for fruit) are both large food exporters while India and the EU are self-sufficient.

Despite geographic constraints, China's inherent and potential power flows from its population.

International relation analysts focus on the power relations among nations because it provides summary insights about the relative influence of global competitors. The critical components of power used in complex assessment that incorporate population and economic performance.

China has the largest global population of 1.4 billion. China's population is unusually homogeneous for its size. Han Chinese represents over 90% of this massive demographic capital. The remaining 10% is divided between Uyghurs and Hui – historically Muslim communities – that along with Tibetan, Manchu, and Mongols are the largest among the 56 ethnic minorities officially recognized. India has a far more diverse population that will be even greater than China. The European Union with 450 million, the United States with 330, and Russia with 145 million lag far behind. Figure 1 shows the very different growth path of these populations:
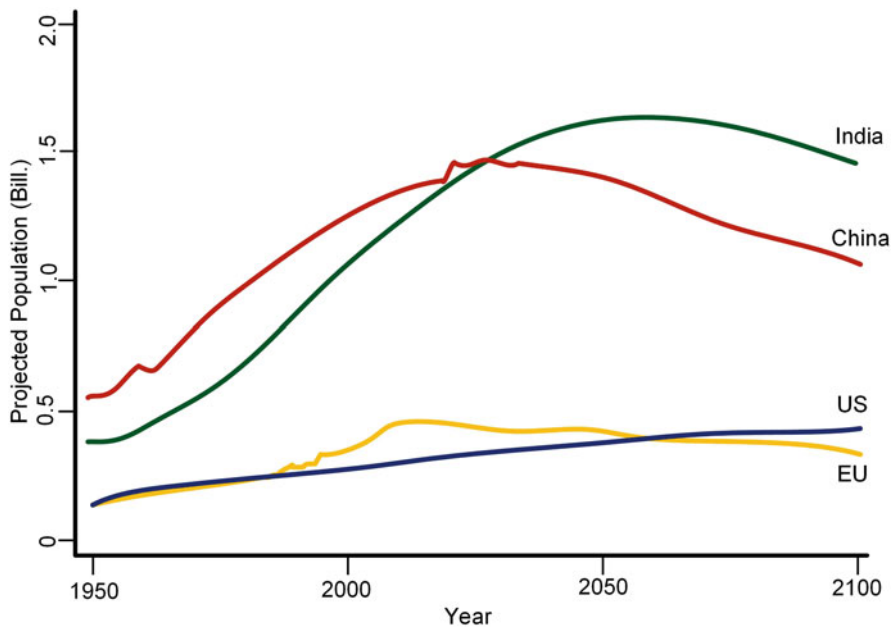

Fig. 1 Population Projection 1950–2100

Consistent with the demographic transition paths China and India are growing at faster rates than the rather stable United States (enhanced only by migration) and the declining EU. The Asian giants have a three-to-one advantage in population size.

The cohort structure of these global giants is very diverse. China's population is unusual because the one-child policy pursued between the late 1980 and 2021 altered the natural pattern. Cohort distribution in China has two distinct persistent effects. It generated an artificial gap between the number of men and women in the population that usually favors slightly females. The one-child policy generated an explosion of the active population that fueled economic growth. This process is now at its end. India will be the next potential beneficiary of a very large active population and a relatively small dependent population.

The more established EU and, to a much lesser degree, the United States, provided migration remains in place, will have increasingly large aging populations. Age cohort will approximate those of Japan where over 50% falls in the dependent category with the vast majority over sixty-five years. China will suffer this age tsunami much earlier than the most advanced societies because of the one-child policy. Indeed, as China's current population ages and is not replaced by shrinking youth cohorts, China's population will decline from the current 1.4 billion to an estimated 800 million by 2100.

Breaking a long-term pattern, Nigeria's population, in the later part of this century, will overtake China's and then overtake India sometime after 2100, becoming the largest global demographic unit. Further, given the current fertility patterns, Africa's population will overtake that of Asia with the sub-Saharan region holding the largest global population (Fig. 2).
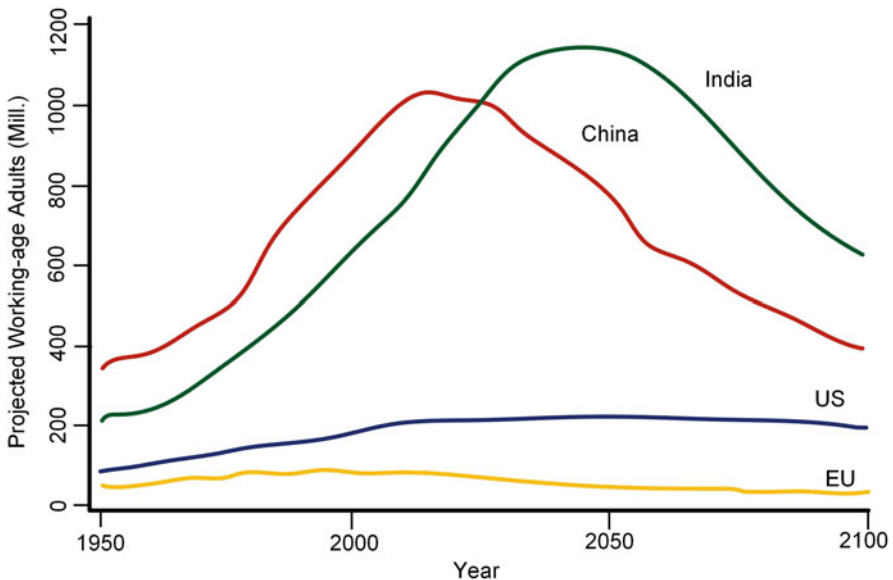

Fig. 2 Working Age Population Projections 1950–2100. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022)
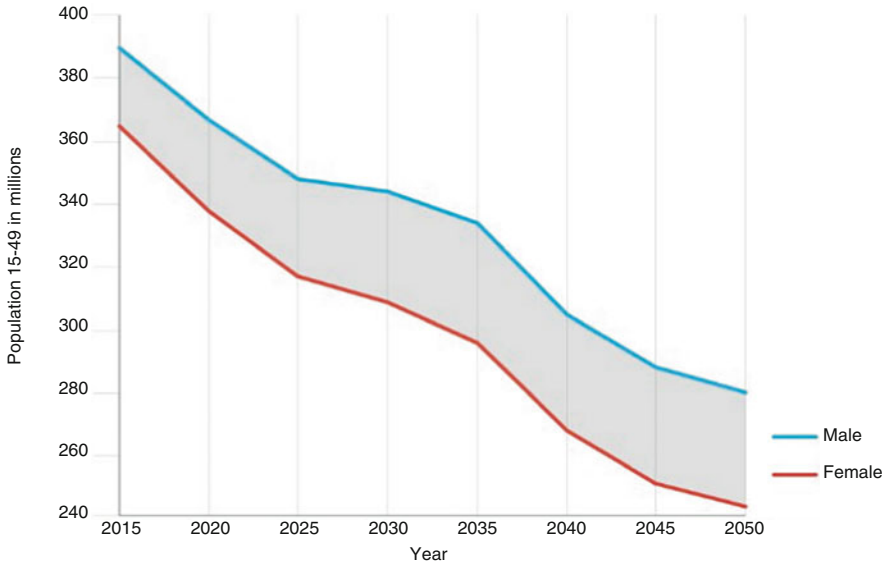
Fig. 3 Population Age 15–49 by Gender 2015–2050. Source: World Population Prospects (United Nation, 2019)

The broad comparison that emerges when we consider the working age population of the main potential future competitors suggests that in the next decades, India will surpass the labor force of China and Nigeria will reach the level of China by 2080. Such transformations are very unusual. The United States, Brazil, and the EU have a far less volatile profile than that of China, India, or Nigeria.

The societies experience provides great labor advantages during the "window of opportunity" when the active population expands and will far serious challenges when the active population dramatically declines.

In addition to natural cohort changes driven by aging, China faces a serious gender gap generated by the preference for males over female offsprings during the one-child policy period. The preference for male offspring led to substantial femicide (also in India) and resulted in an artificially generated and persistent expanding gap between male and female offspring. The sex ratio of the total population in China is approximately 105 males to 100 females while the average ratio in humans tends to favor females over males by 1 or 2%. The current forecast is that the ratio will increase further (Fig. 3).

Over time, this imbalance generates a reduction in the number of possible children. A second unexpected effect is that reversing the trend in a population that has now adapted to a one-child structure is difficult. Attempts to increase fertility from two to three children has confounded more advanced societies such as France, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, or Russia. Many already provide substantial educational and financial incentives in attempt to increase fertility, but such efforts have seldom achieved an increased fertility above the 2.1 minimum required to maintain a

stable population size. Moreover, none among the most advanced seem to have increased reproduction above this level. It is for this reason that the population of China is expected to diminish from its current 1.4 billion to as low as 800 million by 2100.

The massive active population between the ages of 25 and 64 that China enjoyed after 1990 propelled the enormous economic growth experienced in the last three decades. This engine is now reversing, and growth rates are now likely to decline in part because of population and in part because of rising economic sophistication that requires higher salaries and increased investment. Thus, the rapid aging of the current workforce will continue until the end of this century generating serious problems for the future development of China.

2   Economic Performance

King (1936) was the first to estimate a nation's gross output in a successful effort to forecast the ability of England to overcome an expected challenge from France.[1] After much debate, national output is now measured by GDP. Unlike GNP, GDP approximates the total economic activity of a society but excludes profits from foreign investments.[2]

Using their total output, only a handful of nations qualify as global or potential global powers. In this century, these are China, India, the United States, and the European Union—if this block of nations continues to integrate and act as a unified political entity. The relative standings and anticipated performance of these four global competitors is depicted in Fig. 4.

Note that Russia or the newly emergent United Kingdom is no longer included as potential competitor. These major powers along with Japan no longer have the population or output potential of the global powers. Even though they frequently are still defined as global powers, their role is now restricted to regional activities or support for their allies in global affairs.

Fig. 4 shows that the United States emerged as the preeminent nation in the international economic arena after World War II. After integration, the European

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[1] King, G., Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions upon the State and Condition of England, 1696, in G.E.Barnett, ed., Two Tracts by Gregory King, Johns Hopkins (1936).

[2] Several indicators have been proposed to approximate global power or influence. A frequently used measure is the CINC index originally proposed by Singer et al. (1972). This index aggregates three relative components: population military and economic capabilities. Each component is estimated by two equally weighted indicators. Previous work by Kugler and Arbetman (1989) argues that CINC and total outputs are highly correlated. They differ when societies perceive threats or engage in conflict. The CINC presents these as far more powerful than GDP. When threats diminish, the CINC capabilities of such societies drop disproportionally while GDP reflects reality far more accurately. Alternate measures based on military capabilities alone reflect power preparedness. For an extended discussion lease see Kugler and Arbetman (1989); Kugler and Domke (1986); Tammen et al., 2018)
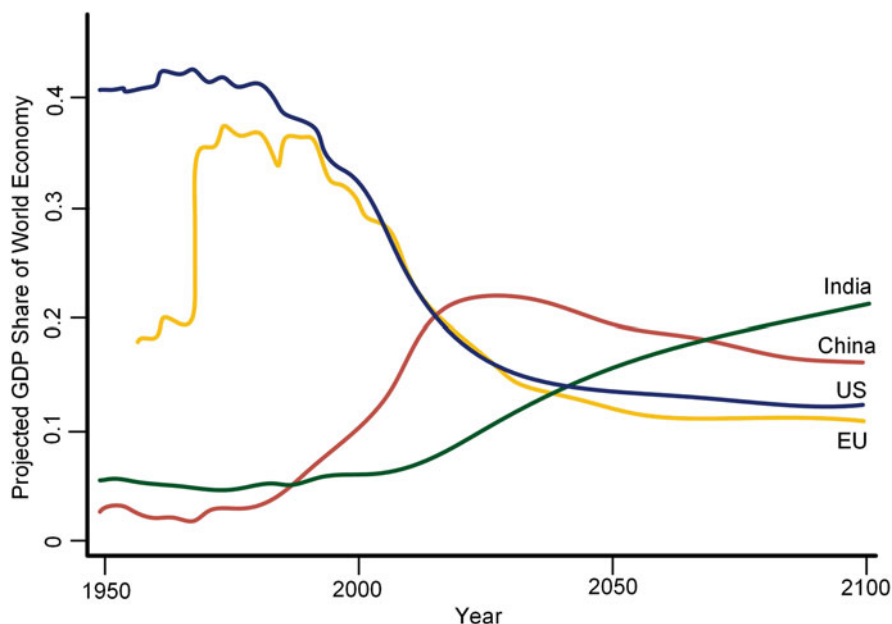
Fig. 4 GDP (PPP) Projections 1950–2100

Union emerged as the second most economically endowed power. An economic transition is now taking place. China is overtaking the United States and will emerge as the largest economic power until the later part of this century, when India will likely contest for the top economic contender.

Such changes have taken place in the past, but the current overtaking is unusual. For the first time since the Mongol expansion in the twelfth century, developing societies with less productive working forces and presumably endowed with less technological endowment, will have access to larger total output than the most advanced societies.[3] This turn of events indicates that confrontations among nations may emerge from very different sources than before. Key sources of conflict may emerge because of pressure by the less advanced societies to increase transfer of technologies, reduce patent lengths, or from demands for increasing redistributive policies.

GDP does not reflect preferences, nor does it indicate the choice to allocate revenues to military capabilities. It is, however, a valid first cut approximation of financial strength that approximates the capacity of nations to pursue their preferences. Money is fungible. Nations under stress will emphasize security; nations at peace will focus on growth, education, and health. Stability prompts different policy decisions. GDP remains a popular first approximating of power because unlike most

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[3]Britain maintained a higher per capita income than the United States during their transition in the mid 1970s (Broadberry, 2003)
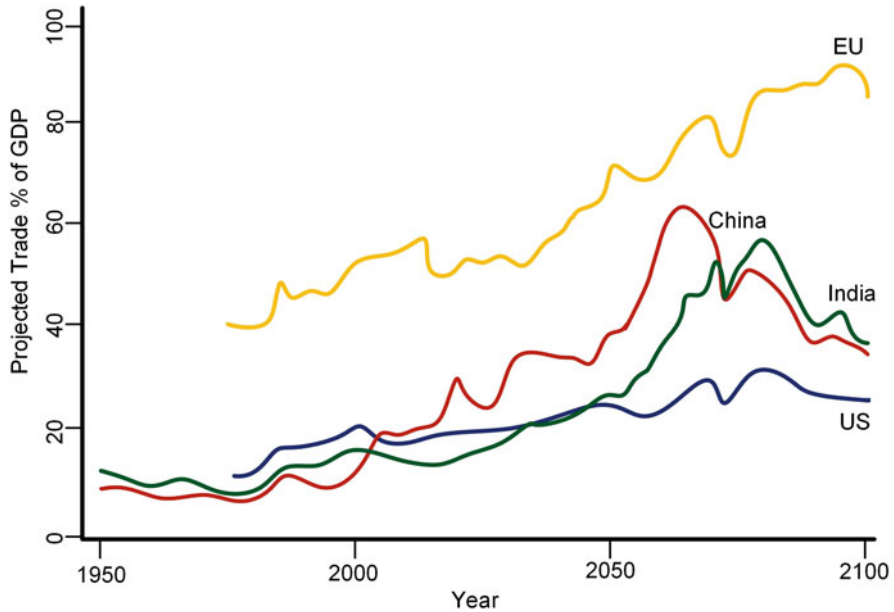
Fig. 5 Trade Openness 1960–2020 Trade % of GDP. EU trendline includes the trade within the Union World Bank (2021)

competing power indicators, it incorporates population and output and can be forecasted with relative accuracy.[4]

Growth in GDP depends in large part on interaction with other societies. The economic openness of global powers provides an effective indication of their international involvement. Fig. 5 shows the relative trade openness—measured by a combination of imports and exports as a per cent of GDP—of the four leading powers:

The European Union is by far the most open global economy depending on trade for a substantial portion of the total output. China and India were domestically oriented until 2000 but have since relied for about 50% of their total output on trade. The United States is the largest exporter and importer of goods but is far less open than either China or India.

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[4] A widely used alternative is the Correlates of War Composite Indicator of National Capability (CINC) composed of six equally weighted indicators—military expenditure, military personnel, energy consumption, iron and steel production, urban population, and total population (Singer et al., 1972). In Bruce Russett (ed) Peace, War, and Numbers (McVicar, 1975), and Singer (1987). Previous work shows that this index is less reliable than GDP particularly when political controls are imposed in assessing outcomes of conflict (Kugler & Arbetman, 1989; Tammen & Kugler, 2012)

3 Environmental Challenges Impact Performance and Power

The effects of global warming will affect all regions but Asian societies will likely take the brunt of flooding and its collateral effects. The more advanced global powers will all face complex future challenges if cooperative measures are not taken now.

Current estimates for China suggest that by 2100 the main area affected will be the advanced and heavily populated areas of Shanghai and Beijing where water levels will likely disrupt economic productivity.

More than India, the EU, or the United States, China will be seriously affected by the rise of sea levels due to global warming. Current estimates suggest that by 2100 the main area affected will be the advanced and heavily populated areas of Shanghai and Beijing where water levels will disrupt economic productivity (Fig. 6 and 7).

The anticipated flooding in Shanghai could directly affect the core developed region in China. Compounding problems may emerge because China's main partners, particularly Vietnam, Thailand, and Bangladesh, will be even more severely affected by rising seas (See Fig. 8).

Fig. 6 China Sea-Level Rise Projection: Shanghai 2100. Note: The Maps Use Local Sea-Level Rise projections from the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021) and from earlier Scientific Research (Legacy Projections from Kopp et al., 2014. Climate Central (n.d.)

Fig. 7 China Sea-Level Rise Projection: Beijing 2100 China, Beijing by 2100. Note: The Maps Use Local Sea-Level Rise projections from the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021) and from earlier Scientific Research (Legacy Projections from Kopp et al., 2014. Climate Central (n.d.)
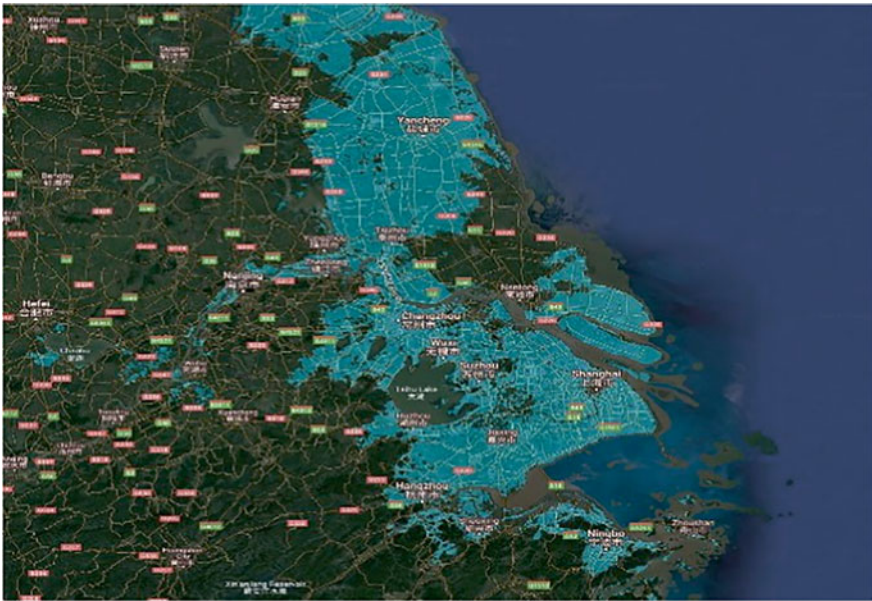

Fig. 8 Asia Sea-Level Rise Projections 2100. Note: The Maps Use Local Sea-Level Rise Projections from the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021) and from earlier Scientific Research (Legacy Projections from Kopp et al., 2014. Climate Central (n.d.)

It is expected that by 2100 large portions of Bangladesh will be underwater along with coastal regions in Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The large, displaced populations may seek refuge in China, such migration would increase population pressures there but concurrently compensate for China declining active cohort population described earlier.

4 Power

Power is the ability of one nation to persuade or impose desired changes on another. Preponderant nations seldom require confrontation to attain their goals against far weaker opponents unless constrained by cross-cutting alliances.

In international politics, power is used as a currency because it reflects demographic, economic, and political capabilities. Unlike some analysts, we do not include military capabilities in long-term forecasts of power. Nations that seek to expand or are under pressure by competitors will allocate more to their military. In peacetime, defense allocations will decline as governments reallocate to accelerate economic growth, build infrastructure, or expand social services. Military allocation, therefore, is a shorter-term decision driven in large part by the political environment at any point in time.[5]

In dyadic interactions, confrontation leads to larger military allocations, competition generates lesser allocation and cooperation reduces such expenses even further. Indeed, massive and temporary reductions in military allocations by Russia and the United States followed the collapse of the USSR. These trends now are reversing as China and Russia seek to reassert roles in Asia and Eurasia. And the United States seeks to keep stable status quo (Fig. 9).

5 Power Comparisons

We show a series of power comparisons above. The USSR was included to demonstrate that despite arguments to the contrary, the Soviet Union never approached the power level of the United States. Indeed, before 1998 the United States and the EU that formed NATO were twice as large as the Warsaw Pact even adding China to that

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[5]Unlike practitioners concerned with current decision options and a short window to determine options usually after a crisis has emerged, we are interested in long-term measures of power. Knorr (1970) differentiated between actual and potential power. We are interested in potential power potential that is not responsive to short term crisis but can be mobilized in response to government demands. For this reason we exclude measures largely based on military capabilities as they can be actualized just prior or during conflict distorting relations between societies that at peace choose to minimize such resources (i.e EU or Japan). For that reason, we exclude measures that are based solely on military preparedness (Treverton & Jones, 2005).
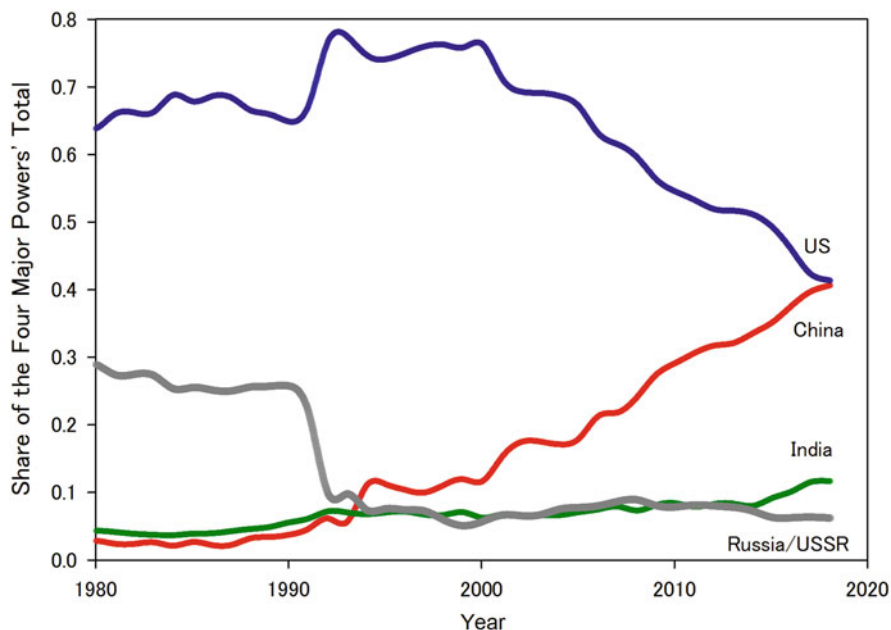
Fig. 9 Power Estimates 1980–2020 (Kang et al., 2021)

mix. Stability was sustained not because a balance of power was in place but rather because the United States emerged as the preponderant nation after World War II and was able to build a massive coalition of support.[6]

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[6]The number of ways proposed to operationally measure power are still evolving. After a systematic review we rejected the frequently used Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) proposed by David Singer et al. (1972). This index combines demographic, military, and economic components into a single indicator. Assessments show that China overtakes the United States in the mid-1990s. In 2015, the last year available, the United States power was only 60% of that of China. This index further suggests that in the 1980–1990 decade, prior to the USSR's collapse, the United States had only 80% of USSR's power. We find such assessments not credible. A second indicator recently proposed by Anders et al. (2020) approximates the Surplus Domestic Product (SDP) of a society by GDP purchasing-power parity but excluding marginal populations whose income falls below the poverty line defined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Members of society fully marginalized do not contribute to economic status or presumably add to the ability of nations facing conflict (on this point we differ as marginalized groups constitute most civil war participants). SDP estimate indicates that China overtakes the United States in 2016. Very similar results and overtaking point are obtained using GDP measured by purchasing- power parity to correct for international differences in the price of similar goods. Both SDP and GDP correctly show that the United States towered over the USSR for the USSR had only 75% of US power in the 1980–1990 decade. Arvind Subramanian (2011) proposed a new way to evaluate the economic power of nations. His power measure combines the share of share of world trade, net capital exports and global GDP measured at both market exchange rates and purchasing-power parity. Subramanian assessments show that China overtakes the United States in 2018—2 years later than SDP and GDP. The final assessment that we favor is proposes that national power is an interaction between

The global stability experienced after 1950, despite ideological differences, was due in large part to the overwhelming preponderance of the democratic coalition led by the United States over the Communist alliance led by the USSR. This situation is now changing. China is overtaking the United States, but the NATO alliance dominates the combined China-Russia coalition. The West preponderance can be sustained provided India and China do not find a common cause.

6 Threats to Global Stability Involving China

Territorial integrity remains a flash point among nations. With the incorporation of Hong Kong, modern China still has numerous territorial disputes (See Fig. 10) of which two could set the preconditions for a global confrontation. Taiwan is of course the most prominent with China pressing for full unification by increasingly challenging the "one country two systems" arrangement. The ongoing support for the now second-tier power Russia in Ukraine may well be linked to China's future ambitions in the Taiwan straits. The second increasingly active dispute is over the border with India in the inhospitable Himalayan border. If this dispute remains unsolved, as India reaches power parity with China in the later part of this century the likelihood of a massive regional conflict cannot be dismissed. China also claims control over the China Sea and has ongoing disputes with Korea and Japan, among others, over maritime borders. Resolving these confrontations in terms acceptable to China's southeast Asia neighbors would substantively increase regional stability and long-term prosperity.

Recall our previous assessment shows that the United States will not be the preponderant nation in the next half decade. But stability can be sustained by preserving the existing NATO coalition reinforced in an emerging Quad alliance between the United States-Japan-Australia and India now in its infancy. A dissatisfied China and Russia would remain turbulent but resemble stable "Cold War" interactions.

This insight is not novel. Power transition (PTT) suggests that a rising, dissatisfied challenger that reaches parity may seek to use force to overturn existing

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economic output – reflected by GDP purchasing-power parity and political performance measured by Absolute Political Capacity (APC). This newly developed political performance indicator advanced by Fisunoglu et al. (2020) more effectively reflects the absolute rather than relative political performance of nations (Organski & Kugler, 1980; Kugler & Arbetman, 2018; Tammen & Kugler, 2012) comprising two key subcomponents, (1) political extraction capacity and (2) life expectancy. The former is related to the mobilization of governmental inputs, while the latter is to the value governments return to society through the provision of public goods. As such, APC is intended to capture the product of the interplay between governmental inputs and outputs to assess the political capacity of governments to achieve desired goals. Assessments based on this power indicator; China reaches parity with the United States in 2020. The gap between the US and the USSR during the 1980 and 1990 decade is the largest as the USSR only achieves 48 percent of United States power. Political performance of governments drives these results.
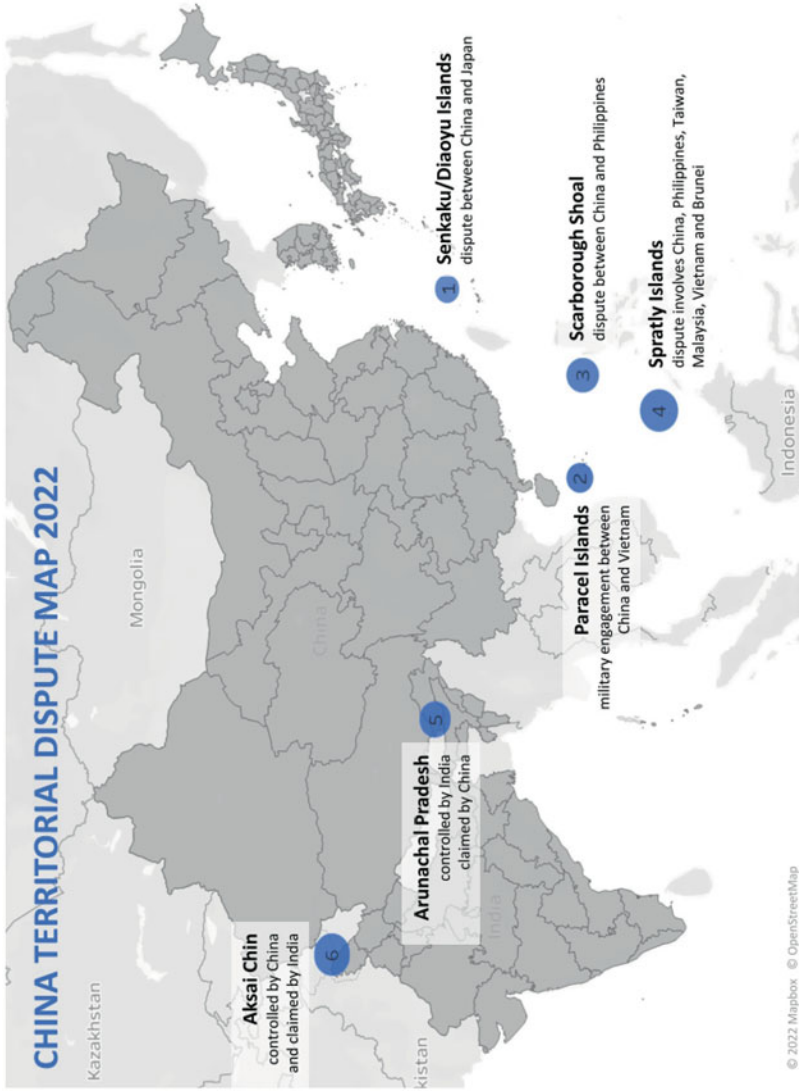
Fig. 10 Territorial Disputes. Territorial dispute between South Korea and China is the Socotra Rock. It is a submerged rock outside of a country's territorial sea. However, the rock is the subject of a maritime dispute between China and South Korea, which consider it to lie within their respective exclusive economic zones (Wikipedia, 2022)

international norms. Current challenges by China over Taiwan, the China Sea along with increasing disputes with Japan and South Korea, and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia confirm these expectations that China along with Russia are dissatisfied contenders.[7] In this chapter, we adopt the power transition perspective because many political and academic observers today are alarmed about the possibility of a direct conflict between China and the United States particularly over the status of Taiwan.

Confrontation is, however, not the single or even dominant potential outcome of a power transition (PTT) between China and the United States. PTT suggests that at parity nations can choose confrontation when they do not share common values and dispute the existing status quo (US-USSR during the "Cold War"), a sustained competitive interaction (Britain and the United States plots 1970) or cooperation and partial integration resolving disputes by negotiation when both agree on common norms (Germany and France in the EU). Of interest is therefore the distribution of power and the commitment of contending parties to the status quo.

Figure 11 provides a simplified summary of our expectations:

To understand the global implications of a rising China it is imperative to determine the behavioral posture that global competitors will adopt during the impending overstating. Based on previous assessments we can now locate China rising above the United States in the next half-century. To determine likely outcomes we will now evaluate the level of satisfaction and trust among the top contenders to determine the likelihood of confrontational, competitive, or cooperative future.

Recall from Fig. 4. that our data summary supports the growing consensus that China is in the process of overtaking the United States. In this chapter, we consider PTT-derived interaction between relative power and satisfaction to assess the likely long-term behavior of global powers. We believe that these relationships will determine global stability in this century.

7   Satisfaction Among Global Powers

Power transition advocates contend that only a limited number of international interactions are executed under anarchy conditions. Levy and Thompson (2011) report that the percentage of years in which global powers fought each other has steadily declined since 1500 from a high in nine of 10 years to until 1700, to seven of 10 years in the next century, to three of 10 years during the World Wars, and to no conflict in the post-World War II period. Similar patterns detected by Charles McClelland et al. (1965) who was interested in quantitatively mapping behavioral

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[7]Balance of Power (BP) theorists that assume persistent anarchy in all international interactions suggest that parity ensures peace (Waltz, 1979). This argument does not fit with the empirical evidence provided above about power distributions. Indeed, modern "offensive" realists now contend that a conflict between the US and China is "inevitable" depleting the fact that a balance of power between these two contenders has now emerged.
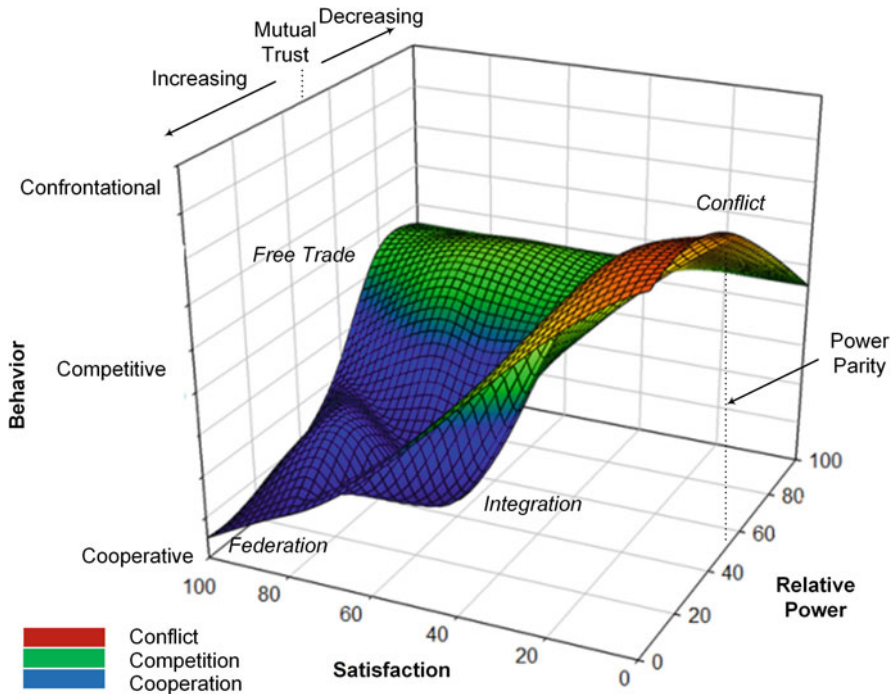
Fig. 11 Power Transition Structure. Note. Color Indicates the Behavioral Relations among Parties

events between states show that crises and confrontations are rare events. Based on event coding system for tracking the tempo and magnitude of cooperative and conflictful events, the Global Peace Index (2021) shows that confrontation and conflict are indeed rare events. Cooperation rather than confrontation is the coin of international interactions. To account for this outcome that is inconsistent with the concept of anarchy, Organski (1958) introduced the notion of satisfaction with the norms of the international system. This measure reflects the degree of agreement among countries regarding existing international norms. PTT contends that such rules are in large part determined and supported by the preeminent global power that succeeds when an overwhelming majority of major powers are satisfied with these rules.

Multiple measures of satisfaction have been proposed to approximate the status quo. Among these are correlations of alliance,[8] socio-economic and military agreements, arms buildups, and more recently network structures reflecting the strength of

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[8] Bueno de Mesquita (1983) proposed the widely used correlation of alliances as a measure of satisfaction. Signorino and Ritter (1999) extended this work by developing the widely used S index compensating for differences and the size of alliances.

links between states.[9] In this analysis, we present a new measure of satisfaction derived from recent research on integration in the European Union (Yeşilada et al., 2017). Satisfaction among international actors is derived from common values held by societies.[10] We argue that regardless of levels of trade interactions, security commitments, or strength of network structures that may follow economic priorities, nations coalesce to support others when they share similar socio-economic, religious, and political values.

This argument emerges from the long-term work by Welzel and Inglehart (2005) who show that religion-secular and materialist-postmaterialist dimensions account for most of the cross-national value variation. In addition, preferences for authoritarian and democratic domestic regimes affect the level of international exchanges among nations. Dyads that hold similar values are relatively satisfied with each other and produce stable long-term structures that generate common norms. Behaviorally satisfaction and trust increase cooperation and reduce the likelihood of confrontations.[11] When common norms are not respoected, global interactions approach anarchy.[12]

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[9] A number of scholars focused on security arrangements reflected in alliances (Bueno de Mesquita, 1983; Morrow, 1991), others stress economic interactions that generate "interdependence" reflected by reciprocal effects among international actors produced by international transactions that include money, goods, reduces the likelihood of conflict (Keohane and Nye, 1998). Still others focused on military buildups that foreshadow the possibility of dyadic confrontations (Werner & Kugler, 1996). Others argue that both the security and the economic dimension need to be considered to anticipate levels of cooperation among competing nations (Benson and Jacek 1998) From a different perspective compilation initiated by Eduard Azar's COBDAB data and his many followers use event data to account for the level of cooperation among nations.

[10] Value measures of satisfaction unlike alliance correlations, still the most widely used measure of satisfaction, frequently comingle robust alliances with fragile ones. Alliances like those between the United States and Britain are robust and built on long-term common values. Value differences also detect changes within alliances like NATO where changing values show that the Turkey-USA alliance is seemingly dissolving, but such changes are not reflected in alliance structures. Likewise, alliances like those between Saudi Arabia and the United States that hold antithetical values are fragile reflect only temporal economic and security concerns.

[11] Yeşilada et al. (2017) show that Brexit resulted from persistent difference in values between the UK and the rest of the EU members. As integration in the EU community strengthened and most large members were moving strongly towards Post-Materialist and Secular values now held by Scandinavian. British values shifted towards the Traditional—Post Materialist prior to Brexit generating a gap in values. China and Russia fall in the Materialist-Secular quadrant and are moving closer.

[12] We agree with Realist scholars that anarchy can be present in international interactions but reject the notion that it is the prevalent norm. Competition and even cooperation account for far more interactions than does confrontation. Moreover, political interactions at the domestic and international level are similar but only the frequency of behaviors vary. Interactions in failed states or those undergoing a civil war approach anarchy a behavior not different from that Germany and the United Kingdom engaged prior to World War II or the United States and the USSR during much of the long Cold War.

To reflect satisfaction among the great powers we generated several detailed country portraits that incorporate materialist-postmaterialist values weighted by democratic-authoritarian regime type. The values plots also reflect the relative power of each country. The horizontal axis reflects the distance between global powers along the materialist-postmaterialist dimension adjusted for democratic and authoritarian regime types. The vertical axis reflects the power of contenders. All available waves of data were used from the World Values Surveys that incorporated USSR-Russia, China, the United States, and the EU.[13] Satisfied dyads hold similar values. The distance among dyads reflects the level of dissatisfaction.

The first available cut includes the USSR before its collapse. Note that the distance between the Soviet Union and the United States is very large (five of a maximum of ten units) indicating severe dissatisfaction even after the rapprochement in the later years of the Cold War. The EU and the United States are within one unit of each other. China favors the Western powers a bit more than the USSR. India is neutral, leaning towards the less developed nations. This pattern reflects rather accurately the interaction among the global powers in the 1980s (Fig. 12). The following Figs are constructed using the full series of World Value Survey indicators from which the Materialist-Post Materialist scale is constructed (Foe details see Yeşilada et al., 2017).

Two portraits are available for the period surrounding the collapse of the USSR. Russia moves a bit closer to the West and is overtaken by China. The value between Russia and China prevents conflict. The overall distance among the global powers is now reduced. Note that India hovers between the East and West coalition.

In 1989, a window of opportunity opened for the West to coordinate with Russia. Gorbachev proposed a massive reduction in nuclear weapons at the Iceland Summit in 1986 but President Reagan rejected this option in favor of continued development of an ABM system. The USSR was in the process of dissolving while the leadership continued to look towards the West with a Perestroika policy of increased economic openness and democratic values. These Russian shifting values are detected in the 1989 values comparison (Fig. 13).

Gorbachev falls in 1991 and is replaced by Yeltsin. This regime does not implement reforms and over time contracts and weakens. There is little change in the relative values of the competing global powers, but an increasingly assertive China is now a bit less supportive of Western values than Russia (Fig. 14).

With the rise of Putin in 1999, Russia distance from the West increases, as the EU-US and China-Russia coalitions converge. The potential for long term

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[13]To construct the satisfaction series the indicator distance from the US is used. The Secular-Postmaterialist index is weighted for democratic and authoritarian values using Polity V index. The distance between countries is calculated as

Weight $= 1 + |$distance from US$|/($max distance from US$)$

Adjusted value distance $= ($value distance$)*($weight$)$

Polity V indicates that on a scale of 1–10, USA is 10 but in wave 7 it becomes 8 (more authoritarian) The EU is represented by Germany or France for the period.
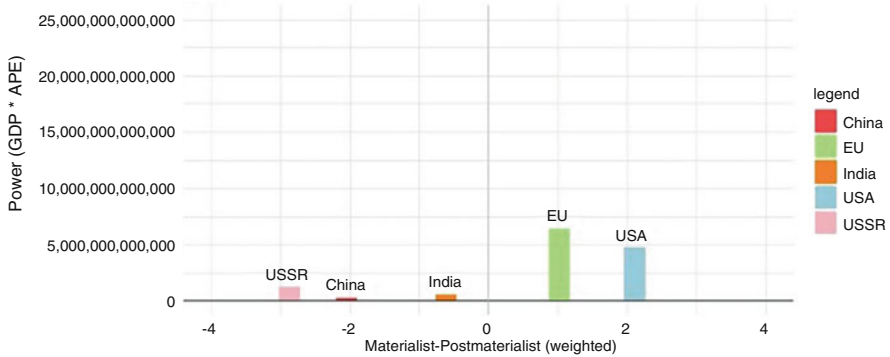
Fig. 12 Satisfaction Comparison 1984, use world value survey (Yeşilada et al., 2017)
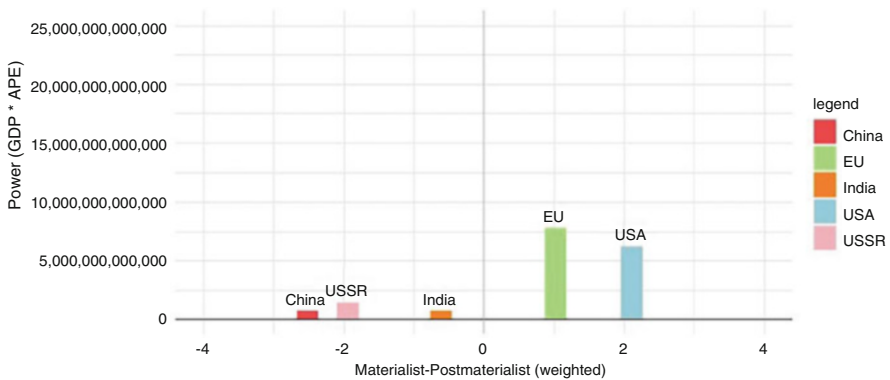
Fig. 13 Satisfaction Comparison 1989, use world value survey (Yeşilada et al., 2017)

reconciliation between Russia and the West dissipates. India is the critical neutral actor havering between East and West (Fig. 15).

Satisfaction comparisons for 2007 and 2013 show further consolidation of the China-Russia and the US-EU coalitions. Only a slight shift by India towards China and Russia is detected. The opportunities for change posed by the collapse of the USSR are no longer in play as Russia's Putin and China's Xi restore control over their own economic and political future (Figs. 16 and 17).

The last glimpse at satisfaction changes is available for 2019. Some distance is added to the United States and the EU reflecting the intercontinental debate that Trump generated over the value of NATO. Russia is once more the most aggressive challenger to Western positions (Fig. 18).

Note that satisfaction shifts are glacially slow. The value comparisons above show that a consolidation of the global western and eastern powers is under way.
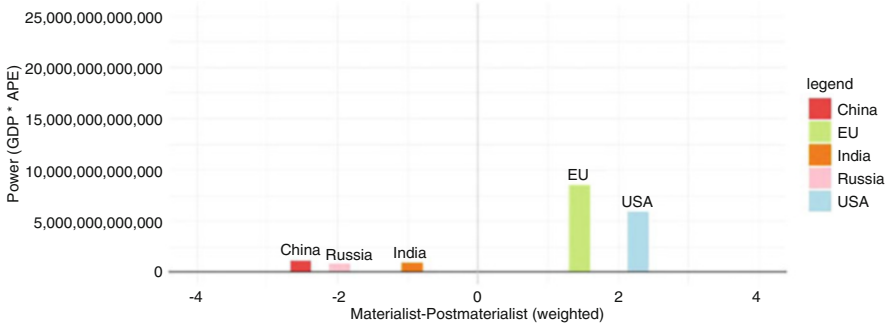
Fig. 14 Satisfaction Comparison 1995, use world value survey (Yeşilada et al., 2017)
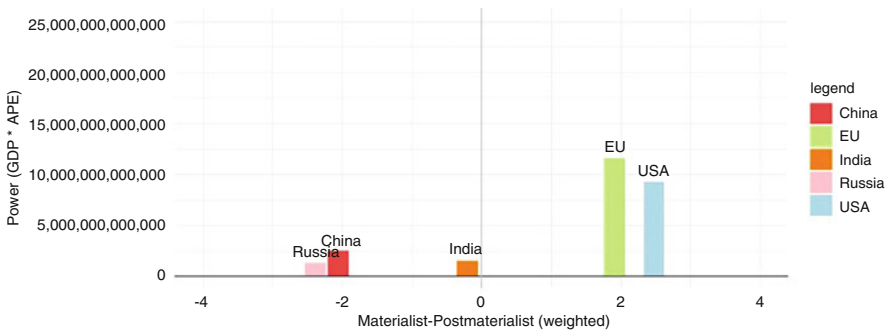
Fig. 15 Satisfaction Comparison 2001, use world value survey (Yeşilada et al., 2017)
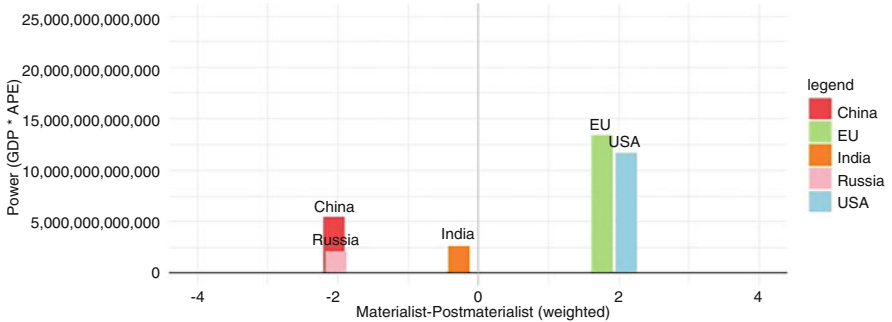
Fig. 16 Satisfaction Comparison 2007, use world value survey (Yeşilada et al., 2017)
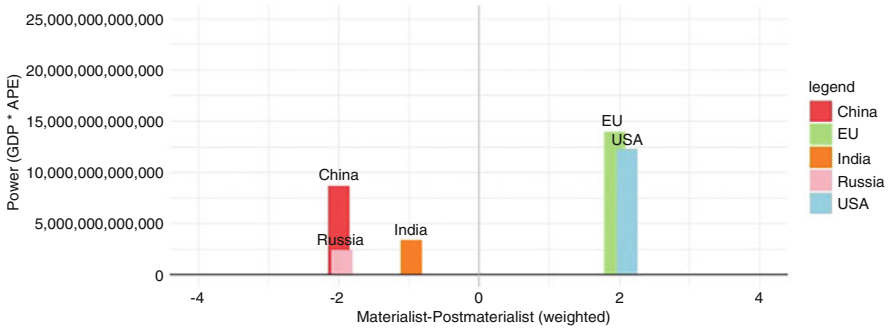
Fig. 17 Satisfaction Comparison 2013, use world value survey (Yeşilada et al., 2017)
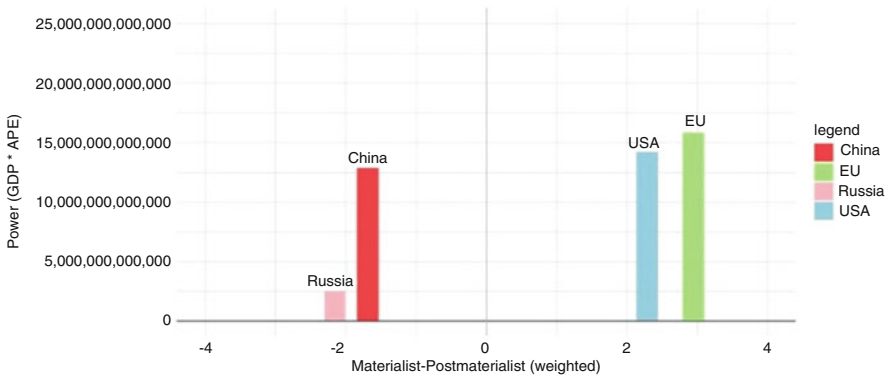
Fig. 18 Satisfaction Comparison, use world value survey (Yeşilada et al., 2017). Note: India Not Available

Based on population size, if India continues to grow on a path similar to that of China, India will be the preeminent nation in global politics at the end of this century. At that point, an alliance with either the East or West will determine the level of global hegemony.

India can determine whether the Western pro-democratic regimes will continue to dominate world interactions or whether the Eastern pro-authoritarian alternative will prevail. The global implications of such a massive shift towards less developed societies suggested large future of status quo. Not since the Mongols invaded Eurasia, has a less advanced society controlled the norms of the international system. In the event that India, China, and Russia would coalesce around shared norms, they would dominate Eurasia and the international system. We explore and assess that profound implication elsewhere (Kugler & Tammen, 2023).

8   Glimpse of the Future

Our review of the available evidence strongly suggests that China will become the preeminent nation in the next half-century, challenging to the international status quo given persistent differences in levels of satisfaction. In the long-term, the much larger Western alliance of the US-EU and allies in Asia can preserve the current international norms when challenged by the weaker China-Russia coalition, partly undermined by the Ukraine war. In the nuclear era, any of the global powers (currently except the EU) are individually capable of assuring the destruction of any global powers or combination thereof. Because there are no likely gains to be had, we consider that such a conflict is unlikely but possible. This does not rule out serious confrontations over disputed regions including Taiwan, the China Sea, or Ukraine.

While Taiwan looms like the Berlin of yesterday, let us recall that Russia and China settled their protracted border disputes peacefully. Quite possibly this diplomatic solution was arrived at because China and Russia shared common values. A solution for the remaining territorial disputes is more difficult to achieve, but if the result would ensure through the preponderance of regional and even global stability.

On the positive ledger, several factors may reduce tensions among the global powers. All the great powers except for India are graying fast. The cohort distributions in China, the EU, and Russia, even EU and US suggest that over half of the population in these societies will fall in the dependent category, which puts pressure on central governments. The gray tsunami will be the challenge.

A second factor suggesting the need for coordination emerges because of the common threat that global warming poses for all global powers—but particularly for China and India. Not only will these societies face direct challenges to maintain their productivity, given rising sea levels and concurrent environmental degradation but will have to also deal with increased migration pressures as neighboring nations with substantial populations seek refuge as sea levels rise.

Third, trade levels between global powers remain an encouraging sign of economic integration and technological exchange. If these patterns persist, a degree of cooperation can emerge as competitive societies seek stable norms to retain their economic advantages. Western support for the Asian Bank and One Belt One Road would indicate a shift from confrontation to competition among the great powers.

Fourth, suggesting a fundamental convergent of values, the three prominent global powers—China, the United States, and the EU—have partially closed the gender gap. Moves to achieve ethnic equality within these societies could reinforce international coordination.

Fifth, while this is a slow process, levels of education across the global powers are converging suggesting a future closing of the per capita income gap between China, EU, and the United States. China's trade road initiative may evolve over time into a unifying force particularly as the host countries reimpose sovereignty over their ports and connection points following the pattern Latin American countries established after the construction of the Pan-American Highway.

Finally, a closing of disparity in values cannot be excluded. While the model of democracy developed in the West may not fit all, stability requires a semblance of participation. China and Russia may develop the requisite level of domestic participation within their own authoritarian system as income rises with productivity and populations demand a larger role in political decisions. Overall, if value converge, confrontational policies will diminish.

Current conditions enhanced by the dispute over the future of Ukraine, suggest cooperation with Russia and China is not likely to emerge. But peaceful competition is feasible. Cooperation in Europe emerged in large measure because participants recognized that continuing a confrontational posture devastated their societies. To preserve the preponderance of satisfied nations, require coordination among China the United States, the EU and India. Convergence of global powers provide the brightest prospects for global peace. Emerging Africa needs to be incorporated in the next century. Further integration of the Americas, Asia, and Africa would be useful to consolidate global satisfaction. Policies that lead to global integration are the most likely paths to permanent peace.

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Part II
China and World Policies

China's and the Great GHG Emitters' Response to the World Climate Policy

Fulvio Attinà

Abstract China has realized the importance of matching the goal of fast industrialization and of raising the living standard of the population with the imperative of transitioning to an economy based on low carbon emissions and renewable energy sources. At the same time, the requirements of economic development, the dependence on oil-producing countries for energy supply, and the politics of world order transition put brakes to China's compliance with the world climate policy. The chapter analyses how multilateral policymaking has won on multiple obstacles to forming the world climate policy despite the swinging attitude of the great powers, China included. The chapter spotlights China's compliance with the climate policy in comparison with the other large greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters' compliance.

More than half a century ago, ecologists and scientists warned that the excessive concentration of CO_2 and other gases in the atmosphere was causing the rise in world temperature, depleting natural resources, and generating weather catastrophes. They advised to address the problem globally by agreeing on the appropriate response. State leaders, therefore, had to deal with a collective action problem. Concretely, they had to form an effective and, above all, legitimate world policy response so that all governments felt obliged to implement it through convergent national policies. They achieved this by forming a framework-policy that creates a collective plan for political convergence. They established a problem-specific policymaking institution, the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), which has formed the framework-policy through a process that has been on-going since 1992. Only in 2015, governments approved the current version of the framework-policy by signing and, subsequently, ratifying a treaty of international law known as the Paris Agreement.

Even today, the world climate policy continues to be a work in progress because the policy convergence all the states have committed to has been devised as a

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double-way process anchored to the UNFCCC through the principle of the national ownership of the policy. The principle consists in the equal rights of all states in making, implementing, and, if needed, reforming the policy. In the policymaking phase, the governments have established the policy objectives, rules, and standards that drive the convergence of the national policies. In the implementation phase, national policymakers report to the UNFCCC the national issues and interests that influence policy convergence. Differentiation is one of the fundamental characteristics of the world climate policy in the dual sense of recognizing the different responsibility of the states in causing climate change and as well as their different capacity to implement measures to mitigate climate warming and adapt to the effects of climate change. In this perspective, this chapter focuses on what differentiates China's reception of the world climate policy from the reception of the other large emitters of CO_2 and the gases that have an impact on the greenhouse gas (GHG) effect that protects the Earth's climate.

The present chapter is organized as follows. The first section is about the Paris Agreement world climate policy. It describes not only the objectives, rules, and principles that guide the policy convergence programme but also the policymaking method that has been used to form the world climate policy. The second section deals with policy convergence and the current state of policy implementation. It analyses the political convergence of China compared to that of the other major emitters of greenhouse gases who have a real responsibility to bring climate policy to effective results. The third section deals with the main problem of world climate policy today, i.e. the leadership role that the great powers must play in a concerted way to bring the policy to success even in the current transitional phase of the world order.

The final section sums up the analysis and assesses the world climate policy progress and prospects.

1   The World Climate Policy

In the 1970s, meteorological and environmental scientists warned of the negative effects of excessive consumption of fossil fuels derived from coal, oil, natural gas, and biomass. Carbon dioxide (CO_2) emitted by fossil fuels added an excessive amount of man-made gases to natural gases and modified the beneficial effect of greenhouse gases (GHGs) that protect the Earth from the sun's heat. As a result, the temperature of the Earth has increased with effects on the sea level, the intensity of rains, and the life of humans, animals, and plants. The policymakers have recognized climate change as the perfect collective problem to be addressed by all states and have devised tools that can reduce climate warming before it's too late. In 2015, the collective response was defined in the treaty known as the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement is the game-change event of the long multilateral policymaking process that started in 1992 with the signature of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and that since then has been animated

by the international organization that is named UNFCCC, the acronym of the 1992 document. Every 2 years, the UNFCCC general meetings, known as COPs (Conferences of the Parties), give to states and to non-state stakeholders the right and voice to assert their own values and interests into the multilateral policymaking but the non-state actors have no decision-making rights. The Paris Agreement has been ratified by all states except Iran, Iraq, and Libya. Following this, the task of the governments is to form and implement national policies consistent with the world climate framework-policy. The chief goal of the policy is to hold climate warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, though experts call for committing to the 1.5°C, and to decarbonize the world possibly by 2050 to avoid the risk of reaching 3° C or higher warming by 2100. To achieve the policy goal and reduce the fossil fuel emissions, the states must replace fossil fuels with other energy sources and put in place carbon offsetting measures to counterbalance the use of fossil fuels. The agreement is silent on the link between de-carbonization and renewable energy sources, but it is clear to all that this is the crucial issue. Analysts have praised the United States and European Union (Parker and Karlsson, 2018) and the United States and China (Eckersley, 2020) for making out the negotiation of the Paris Agreement. These countries are top technology actors, great industrial and trade powers, and great consumers of energy. One of them, the United States, is a big fossil fuel producer and all of them, China on top, are desperately concerned with the future sources of energy to keep their own economy growing. Energy modernization and research and development of carbon-neutral energy are essential to the effective accomplishment of the world climate policy.

The first stage of the process accomplished through the approval of the Paris Agreement, the UNFCCC is engaged in two tasks, which are the monitoring of implementation by states and the organization of financial and technical assistance to states that do not have an adequate implementation capacity. Every 5 years, the governments deposit a file at the UNFCCC Secretariat. The file contains the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that make public what each state does to converge into the world policy. This aspect is examined in the next section of the present chapter. Capacity-building assistance to states that do not have sufficient resources to implement policy is in recognition of the fact that the results of the world policy are conditioned by the available resources of each state. Therefore, world climate policy is also a distributive policy. If the states that have the resources to implement the policy do not provide resources to the states that lack them, the policy is not really implemented, which is both a failure and a detriment to all states. In such a perspective, it is clear why non-state stakeholders are recognized as decisive policy actors. They contribute to policy implementation as much as they contributed to policy formation. They provide resources such as knowledge, advice, expertise, and independent monitoring. Therefore, it is common to label the whole process as climate global governance. But at the core of the world response to the climate warming problem is the multilateral method of policymaking and the primacy of state governments as well as of the international organization they have established for policymaking and implementation.

1.1   Analysis of Climate Policy

From the 1970s to 1990s of past century, policy response to climate warming moved from the national to international level and finally took the form of multilateral policymaking. Busch and Jorgens (2005) remark that during such process three mechanisms, that they named diffusion, imposition, and convergence, extended to all countries the policy response to climate warming. The last mechanism, still in place, has been institutionalized in the mid-1990s by establishing the UNFCCC. Policy diffusion took place among the industrialized countries in the 1980s. Environment protection measures diffused spontaneously due to regulatory competition and imitation. Policy imposition was put in place in the early 1990s by the World Bank seeking to impose environment protection measures on countries seeking financial assistance. The European Community followed suit and put environmental measures among the conditionality clauses of aid cooperation. Finally, harmonization is the environmental convergence policy mechanism the UNFCCC initiated at the end of 1990. Bush and Jorgensen point out that building political convergence through intergovernmental and supranational process legitimizes every government to defend the national interest within the UNFCCC's decision-making process that has policy-specific legitimacy and authority. By pointing out the inter-governmental and supranational nature of the decision-making process of the UNFCCC conferences, Busch and Jorgens (2005) and also Parker and Karlsson (2018) call harmonization what in reality is the multilateral policymaking method and the national ownership of the convergent response to collective problems. Therefore, the scholarship on the UNFCCC climate policy connects to the scholarship on multilateralism and multilateral policymaking.

The existing scientific literature on policy response to climate problems largely concerns the political preferences of individual states, the actions of green NGOs and social movements, the role of scientist communities, and the interaction of all these actors at the United Nations climate conferences. The great powers receive attention as they are large emitters of greenhouse gases, are owners of problem-specific technologies and large financial resources, and play an important role but only if their internal interest is at stake (Eckersley, 2020). The conditions of the world political system and the world order process are not put under observation by political scientists to explain the policymaking process and the implementation of climate policy. Events such as the war in Ukraine remind that, since the convergence of national climate policies and the transition of order are works in progress contiguous to each other, the relationship between great powers cannot be kept out of scientific analysis. Steven Bernstein's article (Bernstein, 2020) is a notable exception. He offered three explanations for why the great powers are little considered in the analysis of the world climate policy process. First, there is not much correspondence between large systemic powers and large environmental polluters. This is only partially true because the great powers on the front lines, namely the United States, China, and Russia, are large emitters of GHG although not the only ones. Second, engaging in environmental issues has no significant effect on world

politics. Such an explanation was true in the past, but it has lost meaning today due to the issue of energy autonomy exposed in the Ukrainian war not to mention the ruinous effects of climate disasters on the economy and security of all states, including the great powers. Third, countries that invest a lot of national resources in the world climate policymaking process are not remunerated with substantial benefits and special political rights. In fact, the statutes of the UNFCCC do not attribute special political rights to any party. This is contrary to what, in the history of multilateralism, has been considered a legitimate trade-off, namely the granting of special decision-making rights to the great powers in exchange for their contribution to politics and world order. The statutes of the International Monetary Fund differentiate the voting power of member countries in proportion to the financial contribution paid by each country. The World Trade Organization, on the other hand, does not give any special decision-making rights to any member country. This is also the UNFCCC model. In conclusion, Bernstein's analysis provides clues to explain the low profile of major powers in the climate policymaking of the past. While the first two explanations are crumbling, the third underscores a crucial issue of climate policy. Because climate warming triggers costly natural disasters and makes everyone's life unhealthy, and because the great powers are the biggest emitters of CO_2, they can hardly play as if they were mere rank-and-file members of global climate policy, especially in the transitional phase of the world order.

1.2   The Lesson of Climate Multilateral Policymaking

Today, multilateralism is the catchword used to denote many and disparate forms of international cooperation, such as regular consultations between three or more national governments, joint actions of small and large groups of states, formal alliances, multinational negotiation for the signing of international treaties, and the normal activity of international organizations. Such forms of cooperation are morphologically different from each other and all of them are different from the intergovernmental practice that came to life in post-World War II conferences when the word multilateralism entered diplomatic jargon. Those conferences created international organizations and formed the first world policies to address the problems that the governments of the World War victorious states felt urgent to address to restore normal international relations and build the post-war world order.

Understanding the form of multilateralism introduced after World War II is crucial in the present time, and even more crucial is distinguishing it from the current multilateral form of climate policymaking that is in intimate relationship with the world order process.

The San Francisco Conference established the United Nations Organization to primarily address the problem of state security in the event of military aggression and to end colonialism by giving sovereignty to all nations. The Bretton Woods Conference established the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which developed the policy towards the problems of currency exchange stability and the

circulation of international investment capitals. Last, another conference approved the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that formed the world policy towards the gradual reduction of trade tariffs. Over the next 70 years, these institutions and policies underwent major changes and met with the opposition of dissatisfied states. The de-legitimation of the world order affected the effectiveness of the policies, and the decrease of policy effectiveness affected the order legitimacy. Minilateral trade agreements and non-UN peacekeeping missions have grown in number. The world policy towards finance and currency exchange has been overwhelmed by the actions of private stakeholders. In many cases, the decolonization policy has been unable to build national, democratic, and self-sufficient states. Consequently, today, policymakers and experts do not trust multilateralism as they used to, and the American hegemonic order is on transition mode.

Social scientists (Babic, 2020; Bauman, 2012; Stahl, 2019) claim that today's world politics exhibits what Gramsci called interregnum symptoms that need to be carefully studied to understand the future of world politics. The argument echoes the views of opponents and supporters of multilateralism who agree on the poor state of such a practice at the time of the transition of the world order. Opponents believe that multilateralism cannot work in the sovereign state system based on national interest and power that flare up in the interregnum and transition phase. Supporters accuse nationalism and populism of proposing outdated conceptions of sovereignty and national interest. They reaffirm the benefits of multilateralism and want it to be updated to address world macro-transformations and order transition.

Macro-transformations have made the state a territorial–political organization crossed by problems that the national laws and policies effectively address only as much as they are consistent with those of the other states. In other words, problems such as climate warming and the pandemic place all states within the same political space and make it necessary to form policies of world reach providing the framework for national policies convergence and consistency. Therefore, states must create political institutions endowed with problem-specific authority to form the world framework-policy through legitimate decision-making. This argument has as corollary of primary importance the stability of the world order. In other terms, multilateral policymaking institutions and world policies are conditioned by the world order process. In the phase of order establishment, the leading states have primacy in building institutions and policies. In the de-legitimization and even more so in the transition phase, multilateral institutions and policies are less effective and new forms of multilateral policymaking come up in conjunction with the world order confrontation. Such an argument depicts the scenario of the present analysis of world climate policymaking and the role of China.

According to John Ruggie, an academic and United Nations professional, the conditions that give legitimacy to the policies of multilateral institutions are the preliminary policy principles selection by all the states, the equal decision-making rights of the states, and the non-discrimination rule of policy implementation (Ruggie, 1993). The first condition promotes the convergence of the national policies because the world policy principles are subsumed by the national ones. The second condition enshrines the procedural legitimacy of decision-making,

although, at the same time, it reduces the policy spectrum due to the opposition of any country and discourages the support of the great powers willing to give resources to the policy implementation if they receive special decision-making rights. In fact, the decision-making rules of the IMF and the Security Council of the United Nations that launched the financial and security policies of the present world order do not comply with such condition. The third condition is meant to generate policy compliance by raising the expectation of the states that the policy rules are intended to be generalized rules of conduct. Every state has interest in policy complying for the benefits of preserving the set of rules that make the system ordered and foreseeable. The three conditions were significant features of multilateralism in the early stages of the current world order cycle. They are still important, but the UNFCCC policymaking highlights the importance of additional conditions.

Contrary to the post-world war policymaking of the multilateral institutions, policymaking towards the climate problem has been designed as a double-level, circular process that, based on international law and political agreements, aims to reach more than legal obligations to respond to collective problems. It forms a framework-policy that the states agree to implement by approving and enforcing consistent policies at the national level. In general terms, a policy is a coherent set of principles, goals, rules, and programs endowed with organizational, human, and financial resources to address a problem. Accordingly, the world policy towards the climate warming problem is the framework-policy, approved by the representatives of the states, that sets out general principles, goals, rules, programs, and resources to guide each government to form national policies consistent with both the world policy and the own values, standards, and interest.

After a problem is recognized by state and non-state stakeholders as a world-scale problem, it enters the multilateral policymaking process as state governments form the shared understanding of the problem, define the policy objectives, agree decision-making rules, and establish the existing or new international organization responsible for the process.

Understanding what the problem is and what policy goals to achieve means forming the policy paradigm, i.e., the agreed view of the nature and causes of the problem that prefigures the policy goals and instruments. The institution officials, national diplomats, and policy experts form the policy paradigm in the preliminary and early stages of the process through negotiation, mediation, and compromise. As a result, the shared paradigm is not necessarily the optimal one. It can also make it difficult to form a policy as has happened for many years with the UNFCCC process. However, defining the shared paradigm of the problem is necessary to start the process (Coleman et al., 2021).

Three aspects of multilateral policymaking important to know China's position on climate policy since the Paris Agreement entered effect are the monitoring of policy implementation, the technical and financial assistance to states lacking adequate implementation capacity, and the relation of world-scale problems and policies with the world order process. Monitoring consists primarily of checking the compliance of states with the policy standards and deadlines on schedule. Monitoring serves to hinder states from deviating from the policy and deceiving others. The

overall goal, therefore, is to save the world policy by hindering free riding that puts the costs of the policy implementation on the budgets of other states. Monitoring implementation takes place through measurement and evaluation tools agreed by all states. When it comes to monitoring UNFCCC policy, states must report to the political institution in good faith and according to the instructions established by the institution experts.

Since policy implementation depends on each country's ability to implement policy appropriately and in a timely manner, policy risks failing if the institution does not assist all countries that lack the policy implementation capabilities. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement addresses the issue of how to gather resources and distribute the costs of the policy that should be borne in proportion to the resources of each state (Ivanova and Escobar-Pemberthy, 2021). From the beginning, the UNFCCC struggled with such a sensitive issue. The policymaking process even stalled after the 1997 approval of the Kyoto Protocol which placed the burden of decarbonization entirely on advanced economy countries and exempted developing countries, including rapidly industrializing countries such as China, from this obligation. The 2015 Paris Agreement passed the Kyoto Protocol system and instructed the policy institution to collect financial and technical resources from donor countries and non-state stakeholders such as international financial organizations, the scientific community, and all relevant national and international agencies, and to distribute those resources to countries in need.

Through monitoring and assistance, the policy institution assesses the policy effectiveness and the need to update it. Thus, the UNFCCC process is exemplary of the policy-making circular model that brings together the policy institution and national governments. The model combines the equal decision-making rights and policy ownership the states enjoy with the monitoring and the implementation assistance tasks of the institution. The difference of the circular model from the top-down and bottom-up model of the post-World War II policymaking institutions is obvious. The top-down model assigns primary authority to the institution and protects the preferential decision-making rules of some countries while the institution is neutral towards the policy implementation capacity of the states. This was the deal imposed by the Western countries at the conferences that created the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations. The bottom-up model assigns primary authority to the states and does not give to the institution the direct responsibility of the implementation. The GATT/WTO and the world trade policy are examples of this model.

The states competing for leading the current order transition process should take due account of the legitimacy the circular model brings to multilateral policymaking towards world-scale problems because multilateral institutions and policies are instruments of political order. Since such policies condition the internal affairs and foreign relations of the states that undertake to produce domestic policies consistent with the world ones, world order is strengthened by the resulting homogeneous response of the states to the problems of common interest. Overall, the world order is the result of two interrelated conditions, the institutions to which states confer authority to make world policies and the policies that are formed through the

legitimate and effective action of the institutions. Conversely, when the number of states dissatisfied with existing multilateral policies grows and world policies cease to be perceived by states as binding and are not transposed into domestic policies, de-legitimization of institutions and policies follows and the world order deteriorates. The current world disorder is the result of de-legitimization of the institutions and policies of the American world order, but the approval of the Paris Agreement and on-going implementation of anti-warming climate policy, although implementation is difficult and raises the dissatisfaction of many states, show that the circular model is received by governments as a suitable tool to cope with such problems, even in times of transition.

2   China and the CO_2 Great Emitters

China, the United States, the EU-27, India, Russia, and Japan are on the top of the list of countries that emit greenhouse gases of anthropogenic origin. Carbon dioxide, CO_2, is the most common gas in the atmosphere, and all GHG emissions are expressed in CO_2 equivalent units. In 2020, the share of all six major emitters was 72.3% of world emissions, ranging from 3.0% of Japan to 32.5% of China (Crippa et al., 2021: this publication is the source of all CO_{2eq} emissions data of the present chapter). Iran, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Canada, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, Turkey, and Australia form the second group of the large emitters. Each of them exceeds 1% of the world's total CO_2 emissions. The total share of these 10 countries is 14.2% of global emissions. Together, the 6 largest emitters and the second 10 largest emitters account for 86.5% of the world's CO_2 emissions. The share of the remaining 179 countries is 13.5% of the world's total emissions. Thus, achieving the UNFCCC policy objectives is primarily the responsibility of the governments of the 6 largest emitters and secondly of the group of the 10 second large emitters, though the overall outcome of the policy depends on how the governments of all states respond to the constraints that can hinder the policy convergence of their own country. In this perspective, to understand the possibility of convergence of national climate policies, the analysis begins by comparing the level of CO_2 emissions of the 16 countries and their internal conditions such as population size and the state of the economy that most determine the response to the problem of climate warming. Based on this knowledge, the analysis extends to the political programs and economic plans of the policymakers of these countries.

2.1   Policy Convergence

The country's population size is a generic indicator of the national demand for fossil fuel energy to produce goods and services. In general, the greater the number of citizens, the greater the greenhouse gas emissions. In 2020, the population of the

16 countries producing 80.9% of the world total CO_2 emissions was 61.6% of the world population (World Bank data[1]). China has the largest world share of both population, 18.2%, and CO_2 emissions, 32.5%. India has the second largest share of population, 17.8%, with a share of CO_2 emissions of 6.7%. The third and fourth most populated countries are EU-27 and the United States. These countries' share of world population, respectively, 5.8% and 4.2%, is much lower than that of China and India, while the share of CO_2 emissions is lower than China's share, and higher, much higher for the United States, 12.6%, and slightly higher for the EU, 7.3%, than India's. Russia and Japan, the fifth and sixth largest CO_2 emitters, are the least populated and the lowest CO_2 emitters of the first six CO_2 emitters, though they produce much more CO_2 than Brazil and Indonesia, the most populated countries in the next group of 10.

The indices of CO_2 emissions per capita and per GDP provide useful information to assess the propensity of each country to climate policy convergence. The CO_2 emissions per capita index is the national total of CO_2 emissions divided by population. It is an indicator of the size of CO_2 emitted by the average citizen. Equally populated states are expected to have equal emission levels and therefore, if a group of countries does not have a constant ratio between these two measures, the reason must be sought in some causal factor. Since the most suspicious factor is the size of the economy, the comparison is made through the index of CO_2 emissions by GDP, i.e. the national total of CO_2 emissions divided by gross domestic product, the measure of the market value of all goods and services produced in a country. Since it is granted that GDP and CO_2 emissions are in positive correlation and increase or decrease together, the country's propensity to reduce CO_2 emissions is conditioned by the costs that the average citizen suffers if unwisely the government decides to decrease the carbon emissions without CO_2 offsetting measures and not approving a policy to develop sources of non-fossil and renewable energy.

In 2020, the world average CO_2 emissions per capita reached 4.6 tons. The CO_2 emissions per capita of China and Japan, respectively, 8.2 and 8.6 tons, reached almost twice the world average emissions. The US emissions per capita, 13.7, are three times the world average. Those of Russia, 11.7, are two and a half times higher. CO_2 emissions per capita of the EU-27, are 5.9 tons, which is higher than the world average. India, on the other hand, is at 1.7, much less than the world average. The 10 countries of the second group are spread on a range between 2.1 tons, Indonesia, and 16.9, Saudi Arabia. Australia, Canada, and South Korea are above three times the world average CO_2 emissions per capita. Only Mexico and Brazil are below the world average while Turkey is at the world average. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs esteemed that at the average of 3 CO_2 tons per capita, the yearly total world CO_2 emissions would be equal to the world natural carbon sinks that preserve the normal level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (UNDESA, 2011). In 2020, the CO_2 emissions per capita of 12 countries of the 16 largest and large emitters are above the UNDESA threshold and the world

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[1] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.

average. The CO_2 reduction goal is distant because the CO_2 levels per capita of the large emitting countries are distant and policy convergence is difficult for all the countries. Thus, reducing fossil fuel consumption to achieve the zero-carbon target by a reasonable date affects the economic growth of all countries in the short to medium term, whether they are low-, medium-, or high-income economies; whether they are industrialized or fast or slow industrializing countries; and whether they are only consumers and not large or small producers and exporters of oil, coal, and natural gas. Consequently, the data of the relationship between fossil fuel consumption and GDP per capita will give us additional information to grasp the national propensity for climate policy convergence.

The CO_2 emissions per GDP index is expressed in kilograms of CO_2 per unit of purchasing power parity. Change of CO_2 emissions per GDP over the years shows the growth or decrease in fossil fuel energy that contributes to the country's GDP. From 1990 until 2019 (see Crippa et al., 2020), the CO_2 emissions per GDP index trend has been downward for the largest emitting countries apart from Russia, whose emissions per GDP have been remaining flat since 2012. But China and Russia have been above the world average level; the United States, Japan, and the European Union have been below the world levels; India virtually equalled the rest of the world and the world average. In the year 2020 in which the pandemic hit the economy of all countries, the world average emissions per GDP was 0.282 tons (Crippa et al., 2021). India was still almost there, at 0.286. China, at 0.508, and Russia, at 0.432, were at a level almost double the world average. The remaining largest CO_2 emitters were below the world average. The United States and Japan were close to the world average, at 0.229 and 0.214, respectively. The EU-27 was at 0.141, the lowest CO_2 per GDP of all 16 high-emission countries. At the top of the list of CO_2 emitters per GDP were Iran and South Africa, at 0.661 and 0.640, respectively. Saudi Arabia, Australia, and Canada were above the world average, but below China and Russia. Indonesia, Mexico, Turkey, and Brazil were below the world average, below the United States and Japan, and above the EU-27. Briefly, in 2020, the CO_2 emissions per GDP of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and Canada have been above the world average.

The extraction and refining of crude oil, coal, and natural gas contribute to CO_2 emissions as much as consumption. As a result, the income obtained from the extraction and refining sector is among the determining factors of the CO_2/GDP index of the producing and exporting countries and may influence the national propensity for policy convergence. This explains why countries in the second group of CO_2 emitters that are large producers of one or more fossil fuels such as Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada, and Iran have a high CO_2/GDP index though they are lower emitters than China, the United States, and Russia, which are the largest producers of one or more fossil fuels, i.e. oil, coal, and natural gas. According to data gathered in 2019 by Our World in Data,[2] China is the largest producer of fossil fuels in the world, 85 % of which is coal, by far the most polluting fossil fuel. The United

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[2] https://ourworldindata.org.

States is the second largest producer of fossil fuels, mainly oil and natural gas. Russia, the third largest producer, also counts on the three fossil fuels but above all oil and gas. The remaining large producers of fossil fuels are Saudi Arabia with large oil fields, Australia with large coal deposits and gas fields, Canada with large oil and gas fields, Iran with gas and oil fields, and India with large coal deposits. Having large amounts of fossil fuels available is an obvious disincentive to converge on the world climate policy goals and suffer capital losses for untapped reserves. If fossil fuel-rich countries do not commit to producing renewable energy resources and CO_2 offsetting measures, they will do everything they can to slow down the world climate policy process.

2.2   National Ownership

The Paris Agreement requires parties to report by 2020 and thereafter every 5 years on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), i.e. national decisions and actions to reduce emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change in accordance with the agreement provisions and subsequent UNFCCC decisions. Though NDCs, which are stored in the UNFCCC's NDC Registry, are dependent on national reporting process, have data gaps for specific sectors, and are not requested to produce decades-long time series and emissions up to the most recent year (Crippa et al., 2020, p. 6), preparing the NDC is a meaningful act. It makes public what any government is willing to do to steer national climate policy towards convergence in world policy. Reviewing NDCs, therefore, is a valuable source of information to better understand each country's climate policy. In the following, the knowledge provided by the NDCs is added to that derived from the demographic and economic variables on policy convergence.

Both the EU and Japan pledge to reach the 2030 reduction target and the zero-carbon target in around the mid-century. Both the United States and Russia pledge to get close to the Paris Agreement targets. Both China and India claim good will to come close to the Paris Agreement reduction targets but charge improving the life conditions of their large population as the reason for failing to reach the targets in time. Additionally, they do not state to reach absolute reduction targets, i.e. reductions measured in metric tons relative to a historical baseline, but reduction targets of emission intensity of the GDP, i.e. emission reduction accounting for the country's productivity and economic output. The Paris Agreement is silent on the different types of emission targets but most of the countries use the absolute reduction measurement.

The ten countries of the second group pledge to reach emissions reduction targets set at between the 22% and 30% reduction above 2005. Indonesia and Mexico set also a higher reduction target that would be reached if they receive international financial and technical support or if other conditions are met. In addition, they condition the reduction targets to the BAU (business-as-usual) scenario, which is chosen by the government and could be a scenario of few or no steps to limit

emissions. Finally, the NDC of Saudi Arabia conditions the reduction plan to the goal of diversifying the national economy and moving away from the current heavy dependence on oil-generated income.

The dependence of economic growth of all countries on greenhouse gas energy and the reduction of incomes of some countries from the production, refining, and export of oil and gas are the main obstacles on the road to zero-carbon energy sources. Accordingly, the UNFCCC's principle of differentiated convergence recognizes the importance of ensuring economic growth for all countries through strategies of decarbonization that suit national conditions and needs. However, the Paris Agreement targets—reducing temperature to 2° C or 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels and achieving net-zero CO_2 by the end of the century—are the same for all the countries. Governments should be willing and able to switch from fossil energy sources to non-CO_2 emitting energy sources fully complying with the agreed time targets or require citizens to change their lifestyle and reduce the consumption of goods and services produced with energy from fossil fuels. Assuming the impracticability of the second option and as well the low level of free riding thanks to the policy ownership mechanism that allows modulating policy convergence, the decarbonization goals of the Paris Agreement depend on the will and efforts of countries that have the capacity to reduce CO_2 emissions in obedience to the agreement and on the generous financial and technical assistance of rich countries and financial institutions to countries lacking the capacity to decarbonize.

2.3 Climate Finance and Technical Assistance

Financial and technical assistance to countries that need specific capabilities to converge in world climate policy depends on gathering enormous resources and organizing appropriate assistance under the leadership of the UNFCCC, as provided for in the Paris Agreement. Knowledge about such conditions is scarce at present but growing especially through analyses and reports of international organizations and expert groups. The Paris Agreement calls on developed countries to fund climate change mitigation and adaptation projects in developing countries. Unlike previous UNFCCC documents, the agreement also encourages voluntary contributions from other countries. These could be developing countries that have developed anti-CO_2 technologies as China has done so far. But there is no indication that such assistance is provided today.

Since the creation of the UNFCCC, climate change funding has been organized and led by the Global Environment Facility and, since 2011, also by the Green Climate Fund. Subsequently, the Special Fund for Climate Change, the Fund for Least Developed Countries, the Adaptation Fund, and the Standing Committee on Finance were established within the UNFCCC. In 2010, developed countries pledged to meet the needs of developing countries by jointly mobilizing $100 billion per year by 2020. However, no formal decision has been taken on the contribution made by each country. A fair share to reach the $100 billion target could be the

percentage of each donor's gross national income, but this criterion is not implemented, and each country decides its own contribution. Japan, Germany, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom are the five largest donors of climate finance. They and all donor countries choose their own funding strategy. Many countries finance mitigation projects far more than adaptation projects and mostly give their larger shares through multilateral development banks of which they are significant shareholders. Bilateral aid is also widely used. Contributions to UNFCCC funding mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund, are modest, given that these funds give developing countries a greater say in governance and direct access to climate finance. Finally, climate financing of developed countries takes the form of grants and loans and includes guarantees of public loans of private financing.

Developing countries need information, guidance, and technology transfer to address climate policy convergence. Thus, climate financing is normally combined with technical assistance provided by donor states and international organizations. UNFCCC has the institutional mission to support developing countries to improve the national response to climate warming and converge in global climate policy. In 2010, it established the Technology Mechanism that works through the Technology Executive Committee, the Climate Technology Centre and Network, and expert groups.

China is a beneficiary of climate finance and technical support, mainly through funding secured by the Asian Development Bank. As a developing country, China does not provide climate finance to other countries. The Belt and Road Initiative, on the other hand, is the way to transfer Chinese climate technology to partner countries. To this end, in 2019, the Chinese government, UNFCCC, and UNDP created the Technology Transfer South-South Cooperation Center in Beijing. China wants to challenge North–South technology transfer directed to climate change thanks to its innovation capabilities that can also lead to South–North technology transfer.

3   Climate Policy Leadership and the World Order

Replacing carbon energy is feasible and cost-effective, but climate policy convergence is a political problem for all governments due to internal and external pressures. Moreover, in times of order transition, world politics makes it more difficult and complex to achieve the policy goals. The Ukrainian war is a case in point. The progress of climate policy requires two conditions: credible and effective leadership to support UNFCCC policy and role, and the shielding of climate policy from the negative effects of confrontation between the great powers on the world order transition.

Experts recognize the merit of the United States, China, and the EU in exercising leadership in world climate policy, although none of them can boast of consistently playing such a role (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2019; Eckersley, 2020; Hurri, 2020). American Presidents such as Barack Obama in the past and Joseph Biden today have

played an active role in COPs negotiation, but other presidents have not, notably Donald Trump that withdrew his country from the Paris Agreement. In April 2022, rising fossil fuel market prices prompted the Biden administration to subvert the previous policy and resume the sale of leases for new oil and gas drilling on public lands. China plays a moderate and discontinuous leadership in climate negotiations. In addition, although it is the second largest economy in the world, it defends its status as a developing country and the reasons for adapting the timing of climate policy to national plans for economic growth.

States adhere to policy convergence to the extent that the leading countries are loyal to the policymaking institution, comply with the policy, and are also willing to contribute their own resources to the good outcome of the policy. This is the way sometimes the things go but rarely in time of order transition. After the initial phase of amplification of the strategy of the leader country and the coalition of the friend states, the legitimacy and effectiveness of the world order diminishes for reasons including the strategy of leading states, the relative decline of their resources and capabilities, and the growth of the resources, capabilities, and aspirations of states that foment the de-legitimization of existing world institutions and policies (Attinà, 2021). In the current transition phase, the United States and the western countries have much less political and material resources than they would need to lead the world order. No surprise, then, confrontation affects world response to many world-scale problems, climate policy included.

All the great powers agree on the rule of national ownership of policy implementation which they set out in their NDCs report and defend their right to go their own way to decide the steps and timing of their country's reduction of CO_2 emissions. President Biden commits the federal government to act within the lines of the Paris Agreement and urges the state governments to act accordingly but neither all of them do it nor the scientific and business sectors of the American society share such engagement thoroughly. China is committed to bringing together rapid industrialization and rising living standards with the transition to the green economy. Alignment with developing countries that exempts China from full responsibility for meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement and the special relations with oil-producing countries for the huge energy supply, however, raise the concern of countries that blame China for the high CO_2 emissions and the continuous use of coal energy. Russia is concerned about the environment and much more about the defence of national income from the export of fossil fuels. In short, the great powers tie their climate policy convergence to national goals and the strategy for the transition of the world order.

4 Conclusions

World policy towards climate change arose from the universal recognition of climate warming as a world-scale problem. The resulting shared willingness of governments, UN officials, scientists and experts, and environmental groups to build the world

policy response led to the signing of the UN Convention on Climate Change and creating the UNFCCC as the world climate policymaking institution. The policymaking process has been going through ups and downs until the consensual approval of the Paris Agreement which initiated the policy for the gradual reduction and compensation of fossil fuels emissions with a view to complete elimination by the end of the century. The policy is based on the convergence of national climate policies into the world policy under the leadership of the UNFCCC and on technical and financial assistance to countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and countries that do not have sufficient response capabilities.

The 16 major emitters are, except Iran, members of the G20, the leading economies forum that has set itself the mission of leading the world economy, promoting sustainable development, and supporting convergence in global climate policy. Over the past 30 years, China, India, and the countries of the second group have raised their emissions significantly. The United States, Japan, Russia, and the EU-27 have reduced them.

In 2020, China had the largest world share of population and CO_2 emissions as well. China's CO_2 emissions per capita are much lower than the United States' and Russia's, though almost double the world average emissions per GDP, and for the past 20 years has been above the downward trend of the CO_2 emissions per GDP of the largest emitting countries. China is the largest producers of fossil fuels in the world and 85 % of such fossil fuels is coal, by far the most polluting fossil fuel. On the other hand, China claims good will to come close to the Paris Agreement targets by peaking CO_2 emissions intensity of the GDP before 2030 and reaching carbon neutrality by 2060. India, the second largest CO_2 emitting developing country, pledges to possibly get half its electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. The leaders of both countries charge improving the life conditions of the large population as the reason for failing to reach in time the Paris Agreement targets. Experts disagree over the adequacy of China's approach but acknowledge China's progress in renewable energy capacity which is already much larger than that of any other country.

Indeed, China can challenge North–South technology transfer towards climate change, and open South–North technology transfer thanks to its innovation capabilities. When it comes to the relations between China and the United States, the two largest CO_2 emitters, concern that different political orientation towards many issues and the world order transition too could derail the climate policy process is high.

The road ahead is not easy. States agree on the principle of common and differentiated convergence since they recognize that climate responsibility is common but differentiated, and at the same time that the resources to implement the policy response are unevenly distributed. On the other hand, the conditions of the country and the priorities of the government influence the convergence of national policy. Just think that the energy transition creates problems for fossil fuel-rich countries while facilitating the economic problems of countries rich in materials and minerals to produce solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries. Replacing carbon energy sources with renewable energy sources is feasible and cost-effective since these sources are abundant if public and private investments in R & D are put in

place (Hafner and Tagliapietra, 2020). The problem is political and depends also on the choices of the great powers in reconfiguring the world political order.

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Major Powers, Middle Powers, and Multilateral Arms Control Negotiations: The Case of China

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Abstract This chapter describes and explains the patterns of state leadership during the negotiations on the selected multilateral arms control treaties. More specifically, it focuses on the leadership roles performed by the following three groups of states: the military superpowers constituted by the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia; other military major powers consisting of the other three permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations, namely Britain, China, and France; and middle powers. In addition to analysing the general patterns, the chapter pays a particular attention to the case of China. To explain the variation in the identified leadership patterns, the chapter departs from the realist approach to international relations. In line with this approach, it focuses on the influence of state preferences and capabilities on leadership actions. In empirical terms, the chapter analyses the negotiations on eight multilateral arms control treaties. These treaties include five treaties that ban or regulate the development and use of particular categories of weapons of mass destruction, namely the BWC, CTBT, CWC, NPT, and PTBT. Treaties that ban, or regulate, the possession, use, and other activities related to the specific types of conventional weapons form the second group of treaties explored by this chapter. This group involves the APMBC, CCCW, and CCM.

For more than 50 years, the international community has been seeking to enhance international security by concluding multilateral arms control treaties.[1] The Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) concluded in 1963 represented a breakthrough in the effort to create multilateral rules applying to the tests of nuclear weapons. It can also be considered as one of the factors that contributed to the adoption of the Treaty on the

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Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) 5 years later. In spite of the intensive Cold War conflict, other multilateral treaties emerged during the subsequent decades. After the end of the Cold War, their number further increased. Overall, by regulating the development and possession of important categories of weapons, multilateral arms control cooperation reduced the intensity of security dilemma. In this way, it contributed to the limitation of arms races and the maintaining of international security.

This chapter has two objectives. First, it will describe and explain the patterns of state leadership during the negotiations on the selected multilateral arms control treaties. Even though numerous studies analysed the negotiations on these treaties, there is a deficiency in more systematic findings about the leadership activities that states carried out during these negotiations. The chapter will focus on the leadership roles performed by the following three groups of states: (1) the military superpowers constituted by the United States, and the Soviet Union (USSR) and later Russia; (2) other military major powers consisting of the other three permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) (UNSC), namely Britain, China, and France; and (3) various middle powers, represented in this area mainly by several Western middle powers, such as Australia, Canada, Norway, or Sweden.

Second, in addition to analysing the general patterns, the chapter will concentrate more deeply on the case of China, i.e. it will describe and explain the leadership actions of China or, more precisely, the absence of these actions in China's case.

To identify the leadership actions of states, I will focus on certain specific activities that states exercise to facilitate the adoption of multilateral arms control treaties (Young, 1991). These activities may, in the first place, include the effort to promote the idea of a treaty and its creation. The interested states can also supply the technical information necessary for mutual talks or identify concrete options for collective action. Furthermore, states acting as leaders can use their negotiation capacity and skills to put forward concrete proposals or to solve negotiation problems. Last but not least, leaders can also motivate other countries to support the adoption of a particular treaty, either by accepting, on a unilateral basis, substantive policy commitments already before the completion of negotiations or by providing material side-payments.

To explain the variation in the identified leadership patterns, I will depart from the realist approach to international relations. While it is unlikely that this approach will be able to account for all the important aspects of leadership during multilateral arms control negotiations, it can help us to identify the most basic explanatory factors. On the whole, the realist perspective puts the emphasis on the preferences and power capabilities of states. In this way, it tends to view arms control as a process that states, in particular major powers, initiate to stabilise their relations. With regard to preferences, there are three specific factors that should be relevant for the following analysis. First, states to which the negotiated treaties will provide security benefits are more likely to support their creation by leadership actions (Downs et al., 1994; Paul, 2003; Way & Sasikumar, 2004). On the contrary, states to which the treaties will accrue high security costs should not actively support their adoption. Second, multilateral arms control treaties can also lead to power gains and losses. Whereas countries that will gain from the existence of the treaty have a rational reason to carry

out some leadership actions supporting its creation, countries that will lose do not have an incentive to engage in such actions. Third, multilateral arms control treaties are also linked to the international order. They may correspond to the general principles of this order, but they may also partly clash with them. Consequently, state leadership actions can also reflect the attitude of states to the international order. While a status quo state should provide its support to a treaty that reinforces the existing order, a dissatisfied state is likely to view such a treaty critically.

Yet, the size of the power capabilities of states can also substantially influence their behaviour during negotiations on multilateral arms control treaties. In general, the realist perspective highlights that states that possess superior material capabilities determine the course of international events. Furthermore, great variation exists among the analysed major and middle powers concerning the size of their military arsenals that fell under the scope of the given arms control treaties. The major military powers usually possess the largest arsenals of the regulated weapons. Hence, a typical multilateral arms control treaty cannot have a sufficient impact without their participation. Yet, major powers are not likely to join treaties if these treaties do not correspond to their preferences. This requires, in turn, their active involvement in the negotiation process. Hence, under the typical conditions the status of a major power also increases the likelihood that a state will act as a leader in multilateral arms control negotiations.

Overall, the chapter will analyse the negotiations on eight multilateral arms control treaties. These treaties include five treaties that ban or regulate the development and use of particular categories of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The following five treaties belong to this group: the PTBT (1963), the NPT (1968), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) (1972), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) (1993), and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) (1996). Treaties that ban, or regulate, the possession, use, and other activities related to the specific types of conventional weapons form the second group of treaties explored by this chapter. This group involves the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCCW) (1981), the Anti-Personnel Mines Ban Convention (APMBC) (1997), and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) (2008). On the contrary, the chapter leaves out treaties that prohibit the deployment of WMD in certain spaces and areas, such as the Antarctic Treaty or the Outer Space Treaty. Likewise, I will omit the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was only negotiated very recently.

The chapter consists of three parts. In the first part, I will analyse the leadership by major and middle powers in the negotiations on multilateral WMD treaties during the Cold War, paying a particular attention to the case of China. In the second and third sections, I will carry out the same analysis for WMD treaties accepted after the end of the Cold War, as well as for treaties dealing with conventional weapons. Again, these sections will devote a particular attention to China's case. The conclusion will summarise the major findings.

1 Cold War WMD Treaties

1.1 The Treaties

During the 1950s, the United States and the USSR significantly expanded the frequency and magnitude of their nuclear explosions (Goodby, 2005). This increased the public concern about the effects of explosions on human health and the environment. An international campaign to ban nuclear testing emerged. Reacting partly to the growing public concerns, informal negotiations on a treaty that would ban nuclear tests formally began in 1958.

Initially, the negotiations had mostly bilateral or trilateral character, involving the representatives of Britain, the United States, and the USSR. Later, they were, in parallel, conducted in a multilateral format, in UN Ten Nation (and later Eighteen Nation) Committee on Disarmament (TNCD/ENCD). The preferences of the United States and the USSR clashed mainly with regard to two issues: the scope of the treaty and the inclusion of a verification mechanism. The USSR declared that tests should be banned in all the environments, yet it also persistently rejected any international verification of a future test ban. On the contrary, the United States, as well Britain, insisted on the need to establish a verification mechanism for the treaty. After protracted negotiations, which were also interrupted due the U-2 accident (May 1960) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962), the representatives of all the three countries reached an agreement on the PTBT in 1963. Given the persisting differences in their preferences, the treaty only prohibited testing in three environments (in the atmosphere and outer space, and under water), and thus allowed for the continuing of underground tests. The treaty also did not include a mechanism for the verification of compliance.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the nuclear arsenals of the United States and the USSR led the two superpowers to reach the situation of the so-called mutually assured destruction (Popp, 2017). Consequently, the superpowers began to more seriously consider making steps that would stabilise their mutual relations and the world political situation. The successful negotiations on the PTBT reinforced their intention to establish some common regulation of nuclear weapons. Consequently, the United States and the USSR began to actively explore the possibility of a multilateral treaty that would prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Negotiations on this treaty took place both at the bilateral level between the representatives of the two superpowers, as well as in the ENCD. The initial US–Soviet joint proposal of a new treaty concentrated only on the prevention of proliferation. The majority of middle sized and small states opposed this narrow focus, as it would only impose obligations on them without providing them with any direct benefits. The consequent, multilateral negotiations led to a more balanced package. The NPT, concluded in 1968, prohibited the possession of nuclear weapons to all the non-nuclear states, i.e. the states that had not obtained nuclear weapons until the conclusion of the treaty. Yet, it simultaneously obliged the nuclear states (i.e. the states that had already possessed nuclear weapons) to provide the

non-nuclear states with access to nuclear materials and technologies for peaceful use. It also contained a commitment of the nuclear states to eventually achieve nuclear disarmament.

The adoption of the NPT opened the way towards a treaty that would regulate biological and chemical weapons (Chevrier, 2006; Wright, 2002). After the Second World War, the prohibition of these two categories of weapons was repeatedly considered. The refusal of the USSR and other communist countries to accept an international verification of compliance complicated the possibility of reaching an agreement on this issue. In the end, the diplomatic negotiations separated the two types of weapons and a convention focusing only on biological weapons was concluded in 1972. Unlike the NPT, the BWC constituted a disarmament treaty as it completely banned biological weapons. More specifically, it prohibited the development, production, stockpiling, and acquisition of biological weapons. Importantly, the treaty did not single out any states that could legally possess these weapons and it obliged all its parties that possessed biological weapons to destroy them.

1.2 Leadership

On the whole, the United States and the USSR acted as crucial leaders during the negotiations on the Cold War WMD treaties (Chevrier, 2006, pp. 312–319; Popp, 2017; Seaborg, 1981; Sims, 1988, pp. 34–38; Terchek, 1970). With regard to all the three treaties, their representatives repeatedly proposed the possible principles of the treaties and even put forward their concrete drafts. As mentioned above, they also extensively discussed the content of the treaties on the bilateral basis. The supportive unilateral actions of the superpowers, such as the moratoria on nuclear tests preceding the adoption of the PTBT, or a unilateral declaration by which the United States renounced the possession of biological weapons, also facilitated the negotiations. Moreover, the United States also sought to motivate its Western allies to accept WMD treaties. By agreeing on the 1958 Mutual Defence Agreement, the United States wanted to assure the British support for the PTBT. Likewise, to obtain the support of its allies for the NPT, the United States launched the initiative of the Multilateral Nuclear Force as a form of nuclear sharing arrangements within the NATO.

Britain also played an active role in the negotiations on the Cold War WMD treaties (Seaborg, 1981, pp. 113–114; Terchek, 1970, pp. 31–32; Walker, 2016, pp. 49–114; 185–202). In particular, it acted as a crucial leader in the negotiations on the BWC. In 1968, Britain presented a paper on biological warfare. In this paper, which significantly influenced the subsequent negotiations, the British government proposed to decouple biological and chemical weapons and to adopt a treaty that would ban only biological weapons. In PTBT negotiations, the United States closely consulted its positions with Britain, which de facto represented the third central negotiation party. During NPT negotiations, Britain presented a proposal for the

Atlantic Nuclear Force as an alternative form of nuclear sharing among the Western allies.

On the contrary, China and France did not actively contribute to the diplomatic efforts leading to the conclusion of the Cold War WMD treaties. They opposed these treaties in principle, and for a long time even did not ratify them. As for the Western middle powers, they generally supported the post-war arms control attempts and participated in the related negotiations taking place in UN bodies (Ungerer, 2007). In general, middle powers left most of the initiative and activity to the superpowers. Still, they occasionally also contributed to negotiations with important ideas and proposals. For example, Ireland repeatedly sponsored resolutions in the UN bodies on nuclear issues. With these resolutions, it sought to achieve an international regulation of nuclear weapons. Sweden proposed the so-called Undén Plan aiming at establishing regional nuclear weapons free zones. Canada also contributed to NPT negotiations by providing important technical and legal expertise supplied in a number of discussion papers on the subsequent drafts of the treaty.

The realist perspective presented in the introduction of this chapter provides the basic explanation for the described variation in the leadership activities related to the Cold War WMD treaties. Concerning the central leadership provided by the United States, the USSR, and, to a lesser extent, Britain, it needs to be highlighted that these treaties essentially corresponded to the interests of all the three countries as status quo powers and provided them with security benefits and power gains (Goodby, 2005; Paul, 2003; Popp, 2017). In the late 1950s, when the negotiations on the PTBT as first of the treaties began, Britain, the United States, and the USSR represented the only three countries that acquired nuclear weapons. At the same time, they reached a sufficient level of technological development that allowed them to conduct underground tests. Therefore, while the PTBT did not considerably reduce their ability to develop their nuclear programmes, it imposed significant constraints on other countries that did not still obtain nuclear weapons and were not able to conduct underground tests. Likewise, the NPT preserved the nuclear superiority of the superpowers and also the geopolitical status quo in Europe.

Security benefits and power gains can even account for the active support by Britain, the United States, and the USSR to the BWC (Beard, 2007; Wright, 2002). As the NPT provided these powers with an exclusive right to possess nuclear weapons, the importance of other types of WMD declined for them. On the contrary, for some of the non-nuclear states biological weapons might still represent a useful military and political option. Therefore, by supporting the BWC, in particular Britain and the United States sought to prevent the situation in which a greater number of the non-nuclear states would search for biological weapons. In the US case, the renouncing of biological weapons also allowed the Nixon government to send a benign signal to the public at the moment when the use of chemical weapons by the US army in the Vietnam War was disturbing the public opinion both at home and abroad (Revill, 2018).

On the contrary, the critical attitude towards the hegemony of the United States and the USSR mainly accounts for the opposition of China and France as the other two major powers to the Cold War WMD treaties (for a more detailed analysis of

China's case, see Sect. 1.3). Concerning middle powers, the respective treaties might, on the one hand, accrue security costs to them, as some of these powers considered at least a nuclear option. However, they could also benefit from WMD treaties. If these treaties reduced the proliferation of WMD, they would also protect the security of middle powers. In such a case, they could diminish the need of middle powers to keep their WMD option open. On the whole, the Western middle powers tended to support the adoption of WMD treaties. Yet, they also realised that these treaties could only be effective as long as the superpowers and major powers take part in them. This explains why middle powers let the superpowers drive the negotiation process and concentrated on supplying supportive actions and protecting their interests.

1.3 The Case of China

The previous section has already indicated that China abstained in the negotiations on the first three WMD treaties concluded during the Cold War and even had a critical attitude towards these treaties. Turning now to the explanation of China's position, it is possible to argue that this position can be explained by the country's security and power interests and by its attitudes towards the existing international order. On the whole, there are three main factors that led to China's negative stance: (1) the conflictual relations with the United States and the USSR as the main instigators of the Cold War WMD treaties, (2) a negative attitude towards multilateral institutions during the rule of Mao Zedong, and (3) China's effort to build its own nuclear military programme. First, right from the communist revolution in 1949, China's relations with the United States involved a lot of suspicion and mistrust (Harris, 2014, pp. 13–18; Lanteigne, 2016, p, 131; Scott, 2007, Chap. 2). The United States did not manage to establish political relations with the communist regime, which gravitated towards the USSR. Consequently, the United States pursued a policy of non-recognition and containment towards China and encouraged its allies to follow the same approach. For China, the United States and its global policy constituted an indisputable security threat. The mutual relations further worsened due to China's intervention into the Korean War in 1950 and its growing ambitions in the East and Southeast Asia.

From the very beginning, the communist China viewed even the USSR with a certain degree of distrust. Yet, for tactical reasons it initially decided to build an alliance with the Soviets and acknowledged the position of the USSR as the leader of the communist bloc. In the 1950s, both countries concluded an alliance treaty. Nevertheless, the first tensions in mutual relations emerged already in the second half of the 1950s. After the 1955 Bandung Conference, China began to increasingly portray itself as a Third World country and to develop more intensive relations with developing countries. Simultaneously, it also started to view itself as an equal ally of the USSR.

Second, China had during the rule of Mao Zedong a rather negative view on multilateral institutions (Lanteigne, 2016, pp. 76–78). It interpreted these institutions as an instrument of the Western imperialism. It even did not participate in the UN as an organisation since the UN recognised the Taiwan's government as the sole representative of the whole China. Moreover, during the Korean War the Chinese army de facto fought against a military operation authorised by the UN. A strong insistence of sovereignty further reinforced the negative view of the Chinese leadership on multilateral institutions.

Third, in the late 1950s China also began to consider the achievement of a nuclear military capacity as one of its major priorities (Lanteigne, 2016, pp. 105–107; Scott, 2007, pp. 47–50; Tow, 2006, pp. 126–130). Its effort to obtain nuclear weapons was driven by two major incentives. The first of them was the above-described perception of the United States as a key security threat. In the first 5 years after 1949, the United States threatened three times with the use of nuclear weapons against China: twice during the Korean War and once during the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis (Malik, 2000, p. 447). In addition, the USSR showed a little willingness to share its nuclear technology with China. In fact, the Soviet regime directly opposed the building of the Chinese nuclear force. In 1964, China conducted its first nuclear weapon test and became the fifth nuclear power. From the beginning, it built its nuclear arsenal mainly as a deterrent against the United States and possibly also the USSR. Rather than trying to match the size of the US and Soviet arsenals, it aimed at developing a nuclear force to prevent a US or Soviet military attack. Furthermore, the possession of nuclear weapons also served the power interest of China as it improved its political status and prestige.

All these three factors explain why China adopted a negative stance on the PTBT. The treaty seriously limited its possibilities for nuclear testing right at the moment when China was advancing its effort to achieve a nuclear weapon. At that time, Beijing was still not able to carry out the underground tests, i.e. the only type of tests that the treaty permitted (Chiu, 1965; Malik, 2000, pp. 447–448). Moreover, the PTBT closely corresponded to the shared interest of the United States and the USSR in preventing other countries from achieving nuclear weapons. In fact, the United States and the USSR anticipated, from the beginning of the 1960s, that China could obtain a nuclear weapon soon. This possibility also worked as one of the major factors that motivated them to agree on the test ban treaty. The PTBT also symbolised the dominance of the superpowers in the international system, which China strongly opposed. Beijing criticised the treaty for providing the existing nuclear states with a nuclear monopoly, given the fact that testing in the atmosphere usually served as the starting point of tests.

During the 1960s, the relations between China and the USSR deteriorated (Goldstein, 2006, pp. 226–248; Scott, 2007, pp. 62–67; Tow, 2006, pp. 123–133, 140–144). At first, ideological divergences between both countries and their communist parties emerged. In addition, older territorial issues were re-opened. The USSR was considerably fearful of China, due its increasing population and a more ambitious foreign policy. Gradually, it limited the amount of aid supplied to China and engaged in a military build-up along the borders with China. In 1969, direct

clashes took place between the Soviet and Chinese military troops across the Usuri River.

Therefore in the end of the 1960s, China had tense and competitive relations with both superpowers. Leaving a position of a member of the socialist camp and an ally of the USSR, China now perceived the USSR as an imperialist power, which posed a threat to China. From then onwards, it openly criticised the existing international order based on bipolarity and the domination of the two superpowers.

Consequently, China also had very little interest in supporting the NPT and the BWC as treaties that were sponsored by the two superpowers and cemented their domination in the international system. Concerning the NPT, it needs to be acknowledged that China would also have one strong reason to support it: it belonged to one of the five countries which were provided by the NPT with the right to possess nuclear weapons. However, this did not change China's negative attitude. Instead, China strongly criticised the treaty, by rejecting it as a hegemonic instrument of the superpowers. More specifically, China had three concrete objections against the NPT (Hunt, 1986; see also Malik, 2000, pp. 448–449). First, it argued that while the treaty prohibited the acquisition of nuclear weapons to the non-nuclear states, it did not provide any guarantee of nuclear disarmament of the nuclear states. Second, according to China, the NPT also did not prevent the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons by the nuclear states against states that could not, due to the rules of the NPT, obtain nuclear weapons. Third, China supposed that safeguards could excessively limit the ability of the non-nuclear states to employ nuclear materials and technologies for peaceful purpose. In the initial phase of the NPT's existence, China even outright supported, at least at the rhetorical level, nuclear proliferation and defended the right of other countries to obtain nuclear weapons.

2 Post-Cold War WMD Treaties

2.1 The Treaties

To some extent, the CWC and the CTBT, the two multilateral WMD treaties concluded after the end of the Cold War, represented a completion of the goals that emerged already during the 1960s but could not be achieved due to the lack of consensus among the major powers. As explained already above, the impossibility to reach a simultaneous ban on biological and chemical weapons resulted in the decoupling of the two issues and the conclusion of the BWC in 1972. Nevertheless, even after the adoption of the BWC, negotiations on a chemical weapons convention continued (Bernauer, 1993, Chap. 1). They took place in two formats: in UN Conference of the Committee for Disarmament (CCD) and at the bilateral level between the United States and the USSR. For a long time, it was not possible to make a greater progress in these negotiations due to the conflicting views of the participants on several issues. In particular, the Western countries insisted on providing a possible treaty with a verification mechanism, which was repeatedly

rejected by the communist states. At the beginning of the 1980s, the prospects of achieving a common agreement further worsened due to the deterioration of the relations between the two blocs. This agreement became only possible with the end of the Cold War. In 1987, the USSR gave up its long-term objection to an international verification mechanism. In the subsequent years, negotiations became more intensive and in 1993 they ended with the adoption of the CWC. The convention completely banned chemical weapons, including their possession.

As was already explained in the previous section on the Cold War WMD treaties, due to the divergent views of the superpowers on the design of a nuclear test ban treaty, only a partial ban was reached in the 1960s. The end of the Cold War opened a way towards finding an agreement on a comprehensive ban (Johnson, 2009). Negotiations on the CTBT started in 1993 and were completed in 3 years, in 1996. Moving beyond the scope of the PTBT, the CTBT banned nuclear tests in all the environments. The treaty also established the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation and a verification mechanism. Nevertheless, it still has not come into force due to the non-ratification of several states that possessed nuclear power or research reactors at the time of the negotiations.

2.2 Leadership

As in the case of the previous WMD treaties, the leadership of the two superpowers, and in particular the US leadership, constituted a crucial factor in the negotiations on the post-Cold War WMD treaties (Bernauer, 1993: chap. 1; Johnson, 2009; Ramaker, 2014; Zartman & Lendorfer, 2014). In 1984, the US government put forward a draft of the CWC. For the next 8 years, this draft became the basis of negotiations and in this way considerably influenced them. In 1990, the United States and the USSR reached a bilateral agreement on chemical weapons, which also significantly helped the multilateral talks to move further. Also in CTBT negotiations, both the United States and Russia belonged again to the states that were driving the negotiation process.

Compared to the previous negotiations on multilateral WMD treaties, other major powers and middle powers exercised a greater degree of leadership in the post-Cold War negotiations. Britain continued, in line with its long-term attitude, to be an active negotiating party in the negotiations on both the CWC and the CTBT. Furthermore, departing from their previous policy of absence and opposition, China and France participated actively in CTBT negotiations (Johnson, 2009). Likewise the other major powers, they submitted a number of proposals on various issues, such as the characteristics of acceptable nuclear explosions, the design of the monitoring system, or the conditions for the coming of the treaty into force.

With regard to middle powers, Australia repeatedly carried out a particularly decisive leadership role. In CWC negotiations, its diplomatic effort made it possible to overcome a stalemate in the last phase of the negotiations (McCormack, 1993). Seeking to find solutions for the unresolved areas, Australia offered a number of

compromising formulations in its draft of the CWC, which paved the way for reaching the final consensus. In CTBT negotiations, Australia tried, from the very beginning, to promote a complete ban of nuclear explosions (Johnson, 2009: chap. 4). It significantly influenced the negotiations by elaborating the language related to the delimitation of explosions. In 1996, Australia tabled its own comprehensive draft of the CTBT.

The continuing leading roles of the United States and the USSR in the post-Cold War negotiations on the regulation of WMD can be explained by the fact that both countries possessed by far the largest stockpiles of both chemical and nuclear weapons. Hence, it was not practically possible to reach an effective multilateral agreement without their participation. As for chemical weapons, it also mattered that the superpowers could, due to their large nuclear weapon arsenals, afford to dismantle their chemical arsenals in exchange for their greater ability to prevent, through the CWC, the proliferation of chemical weapons.

The change in the attitudes of China and France to the international order clarifies why these two countries approached CTBT negotiations actively. In the 1990s, neither China nor France continued to interpret multilateral WMD agreements as merely the hegemonic tools of the superpowers. Finally, the increased activism of middle powers can be attributed to the changes that occurred in the international system in the wake of the end of the Cold War. Under the new circumstances, middle powers were considerably less forced than in the past by the geopolitical environment to leave the initiative and action to the United States as the leader of the Western bloc. This enabled them to become more autonomous and active players in security affairs.

2.3   *The Case of China*

The conditions allowing for a positive turn in China's attitude to multilateral WMD treaties began to slowly emerge already during the Cold War, due to the changes in the country's general foreign policy that were gradually taking place since the beginning of the 1970s (Harris, 2014, pp. 18–20; Lanteigne, 2016, pp. 132–134; Scott, 2007: chap. 4; Tow, 2006, pp. 133- 140). In 1972, the US President Richard Nixon visited Beijing and both countries subsequently normalised their relations. The United States considered this rapprochement as an opportunity to weaken the USSR, and also to stabilise relations with China as a major power with a rapidly increasing potential. Faced with a threat of a military conflict with the USSR, China was also interested in establishing some cooperation with the United States. In short, both China and the United States had an intention to use the conflict of the other state with the USSR for its own advantage. Furthermore, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China went on the way of economic modernisation. In its foreign policy, it continued to highlight its opposition towards hegemony and its belonging to the Third World. However, it became, due to the highest priority placed now on

economic development, also more interested in a peaceful international environment and closer cooperation with the West.

Consequently, China also adopted a more positive approach towards multilateral institutions (Kim, 2006; Lanteigne, 2016, pp. 79–83). Thanks to the rapprochement with the United States, already in 1971 Beijing obtained a seat in the UN and UN Security Council. This paved the way for a substantial change of China's attitude towards the UN: China transformed itself from an opponent of the UN into its supporter. Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, China's attitude towards multilateral institutions underwent a general change. More specifically, China wanted to terminate its isolationist policy and to demonstrate to the outside world its interest in integration into the world society. A greater involvement in multilateral structures constituted an indispensable means of this effort. Furthermore, due to its interest in economic development, China was particularly interested in participation in global economic institutions.

China's policy towards the existing WMD treaties also began to change, reflecting the above-described general changes in its foreign policy. The first notable shift in the attitude towards the NPT came with the statement of Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua in 1978 (Malik, 2000, pp. 449–450). In this statement, the minister only highlighted the right of the non- nuclear states to employ nuclear energy for peaceful use, without reaffirming their right to obtain nuclear weapons. Gradually, China considerably changed its attitude towards nuclear proliferation. Now, it perceived it to be detrimental to international security. In addition, while China still refused to join the NPT, it joined the International Agency for Atomic Energy (IAEA) in 1984. In the same year, China also ratified the BWC.

Two additional changes, which also paved the way for a more positive approach of China to multilateral WMD treaties, occurred with the end of the Cold War. First, the relations with the USSR improved already after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985. The subsequent economic and political decline of the USSR further reduced China's apprehension of the USSR, and later Russia, as a political rival and security threat. Second, China also took a more positive approach to the existing international order after the end of the Cold War (Harris, 2014, pp. 187–188; Lanteigne, 2016, pp. 84–86; 134–135 Scott, 2007, Chap. 5). On the one hand, it was highly critical of a unipolar moment and the US domination, which followed immediately after the termination of the bipolar conflict. The relationship with the United States was also complicated by the fact that the United States increasingly viewed China as a potential threat. Yet, the collapse of the bipolar system also made it possible for China to believe that the existing order, even though momentarily based on the American dominance, could gradually evolve into a multipolar alternative, which was desired by the Chinese leadership. Given this, China followed the strategy of continuing in its power rise, while simultaneously partly accepting the US-built international order.

As a result, China began to be involved in multilateral WMD treaties in the 1990s. In 1992, it finally signed the NPT (Malik, 2000, pp. 452–453). At the same time, it also concluded a voluntary safeguards agreement with the IAEA and agreed on reporting its trade with nuclear technologies and materials to the same organisation.

Immediately after its conclusion, China signed the CWC. As mentioned already above, it also played an active role in the negotiations on the CTBT.

3 Treaties on Conventional Weapons

3.1 The Treaties

Military conflicts which took place in the 1950s and 1960s demonstrated the inadequacy of the existing international rules regulating the use of conventional weapons that cause unnecessary human suffering in war. In particular, the employment of these weapons during the Vietnam War raised the concerns about the issue (Carvin, 2007; Cottrell, 2009). In consequence, between 1977 and 1980 an UN-sponsored conference discussed the possibility of adopting an agreement that would regulate inhumane conventional weapons. The conference resulted in the adoption of the CCCW, which was intended to serve as a framework agreement. Additional protocols to the CCCW laid down specific obligations connected with individual types of weapons, such as landmines, incendiary weapons, or lasers causing permanent blindness.

With the civil wars that took place after the end of the Cold War, the use of anti-personnel landmines increased (Price, 1998; Rutherford, 2011). Several millions of new landmines were deployed each year. These landmines caused serious injuries to a considerable number of people and their employment gradually resulted in a humanitarian crisis. NGOs, led by the International Committee of the Red Cross, started an international campaign seeking to ban landmines. Cooperating closely with these NGOs, a group of like-minded countries, consisting mainly of several middle powers, searched for a solution within the CCCW. However, it turned out that concluding a ban on landmines within the CCCW was not possible due to the opposition of some of the states. Consequently, the like-minded states decided to conduct the negotiations outside the traditional venues represented by UN Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the CCCW, using a two-thirds majority as the decision-making principle. In 1997, these negotiations succeeded in reaching an agreement on the APMBC. This convention prohibited the developing, producing, as well as stockpiling of landmines. It also required its parties to destroy all their landmines and clear the areas contaminated with them.

Finally, the CCM originated in a process that was relatively similar to the dynamics that produced the APMBC. During the first decade of the 21st century, NGOs intensified their critique of the inhumane nature of cluster munitions and began to promote the idea of their complete ban. Likewise in the case of the APMBC, several middle powers initiated, in close cooperation with the NGOs, negotiations on a treaty prohibiting the use and possession of cluster munitions. The negotiations again took place out of the CD and the CCCW. In 2008, they terminated with the adoption of the CCM. The convention prohibited the production, stockpiling, transfer, as well as use of cluster bombs.

3.2   Leadership

The treaties on conventional weapons significantly differ from the above-presented WMD treaties in that they were not promoted by major powers. Instead, it was primarily middle powers that advocated their adoption. Already in the late 1970s, several middle powers acted as the major leaders during the conference leading to the CCCW (Carvin, 2007). In particular, Sweden served as an active advocate of the CCCW. Several other middle powers joined Sweden's effort (Austria, Egypt, Mexico, Norway, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia). These states carried out important agenda-setting functions, e.g. by putting forward proposals promoting bans of specific ICWs.

As already mentioned, middle powers were also driving the negotiations on the APMBC (Bower, 2015; Rutherford, 2011). In fact, the APMBC belongs to one of the examples of a non-great power multilateralism as a process in which states agree on important international commitments under the leadership of middle powers, without the consent of the United States as the most powerful state. It was Canada that became the central middle power leading the efforts of the coalition of the pro-ban states. Norway also belonged to the core group of states that promoted the conclusion of the APMBC. Middle powers again constituted the major leaders in the negotiations on the CCM (Borrie, 2009; Bolton and Nash 2010). This time, it was Norway that took the role of the central leader of the coalition. At the beginning of the process, Sweden also belonged to a core group of countries that called for a legally binding instrument on cluster munitions, but its leadership effort later waned.

Concerning the major military powers represented by UNSC permanent members, they actively participated in the negotiations on the CCCW (Carvin, 2007). While they essentially did not oppose the idea of the treaty, they were reluctant to support a more ambitious regulation of inhumane conventional weapons. As a result, they concentrated in the negotiations on the limitation of the authority of the future treaty.

As for the APMBC and the CCM, the attitudes of the major powers differed. Even though Britain belonged to the initial opponents of the APMBC, its position changed after the 1997 parliamentary elections. In these elections, the Labour Party, which criticised the use of landmines during the election campaign, came to power. Consequently, Britain started to actively support a complete ban on landmines. While France did not directly oppose the APMBC, it did not exercise a significant leadership role in the negotiations on this treaty. At the beginning of the negotiation on the CCM, Britain and France approached the idea of the ban of cluster munitions with reservations. They also preferred to conduct negotiations within the CD. Later, they altered their views and joined the CCM process.

The Clinton administration in the United States considered the humanitarian crisis stemming from the employment of landmines to be a crucial issue and wanted to make steps to resolve it. However, in spite of its general support for the treaty, the US representatives also stated particular red lines by which they conditioned the US participation (exceptions for mixed antitank and personnel landmine systems and for

the deployment of anti-personnel landmines at the Korean Peninsula). The US inability to convince the other participants to accept these red lines prevented the United States from joining the treaty. The United States also did not actively support the conclusion of the CCM and has not ratified it. Finally, China and Russia adopted a reluctant approach to both the APMBC and the CCM. They were only willing to consider the regulation of landmines and cluster munitions, not their complete bans.

It is necessary to highlight that the realist framework, which is used in this chapter as the central explanatory scheme, explains only part of the above-described variation in leadership actions. It can shed some light on the reluctant attitude of major powers. For them, relatively high security costs would usually stem from a potential participation in these treaties, due to foreign military operations that they occasionally conduct. Therefore, these costs can clarify why major powers typically did not belong to the countries that promoted the adoption of the given treaties.

The attitudes of middle powers are more difficult to interpret on the basis of the given explanatory scheme. Their leadership can hardly be explained with a reference to some security benefits or power gains as the given treaties do not provide countries with such benefits or gains. It is true that most of the middle powers that led the effort to adopt the treaties were not located in particularly insecure environments or did not frequently engage in military operations. For this reason, they did not face particularly high security costs from participation in these treaties and this can partly account for their leadership role. Still, the mere absence of security costs cannot explain the active behaviour of middle powers, i.e. the reason for which they advocated the regulation of conventional weapons that are particularly harmful to civilians and soldiers. Also, some of the middle powers possessed landmines or cluster munitions and had to renounce them due to their participation in the respective treaties. In this way, these treaties even bring to them some security costs. To fully understand the leadership of middle powers concerning multilateral cooperation on the regulation of inhumane conventional weapons, we also need to take into consideration their altruistic motivation and humanitarian concerns (Garcia, 2015, p. 55).

3.3   The Case of China

As indicated above, the positive turn in China's attitude to multilateral WMD treaties did not extend to the new and ambitious treaties dealing with conventional weapons, namely the APMBC and the CCM. China certainly did not belong to the countries that led the effort to conclude these treaties and it did not even ratify these treaties later. While it generally supports the APMBC and the CCM and lauds their humanitarian purpose, it continues to stockpile landmines, as well as cluster munitions (Landmine & Cluster Munitions Monitor, 2021). It justifies this by national conditions and national defence.

This time, China's reluctance to support multilateral arms control is not related to a concrete and immense security threat, or to an opposition to the international order.

Instead, it can be explained by specific security costs that the participation in the given treaties would accrue for China, and also by China's perception of these costs. Conventional weapons such as landmines and cluster munitions have a military importance for China as a country with extremely long borders that also often cross insecure environments. Yet, China's need to keep these weapons does not stem only from objective geopolitical conditions, but also from the country's subjective perception of these conditions. More concretely, deeply rooted feelings of insecurity and vulnerability characterise China's thinking (Harris, 2014: chap. 4). In relation to the respective arms control treaties, it is especially a geographic sense of insecurity in the country's neighbourhood that matters most.

4   Conclusion

In this chapter, we identified three major leadership situations in the past negotiations on multilateral arms control treaties. The first situation was characterised by the domination of the greatest military powers. It is represented by the negotiations on the Cold War WMD treaties (PTBT, NPT, and BWC). In these cases, the United States, the USSR, and, to a lesser extent, also Britain acted as the most important agenda-setters and had the greatest leverage over the negotiations. The second situation took place when the superpowers, other major powers, and also middle powers carried out significant leadership actions during the negotiations. The cases of the post-Cold War WMD treaties (mainly the CTBT, and partly also the CWC) correspond best to this scenario. Under the third situation, middle powers acted as the major drivers of a treaty's adoption. This scenario applies to the negotiations on treaties dealing with conventional weapons, in particular the APMBC and the CCM.

We have seen that security costs and benefits, power gains and losses, and the attitudes toward the international order, in combination with the distribution of military capabilities among states, can provide a basic explanation for the variation in the leadership patterns. During the Cold War times, the two superpowers possessed the largest arsenals of WMD. In addition, a considerable number of countries were also tightly linked to them by security alliances. Under these circumstances, it typically would not be rational for other states to initiate the conclusion of multilateral WMD treaties. They usually preferred the major action to be taken by the superpowers. Moreover, the superpowers benefited, due to their nuclear dominance, from the specific constraints set up by the concluded treaties. This combination of reasons predestined Britain, the United States and the USSR to be the major instigators of the WMD treaties concluded during the Cold War.

The above highlighted explanatory factors also cast light on the attitudes of China, France, and middle powers to WMD treaties. Given their opposition to the bipolar order, China and France opposed the Cold War WMD treaties. While leaving the major role to the superpowers, middle powers tried to actively contribute to the negotiations on these treaties due to the security benefits that they were likely to obtain from them. The end of the Cold War brought about a change in the behaviour

of both groups of countries. The bipolar order that China and France opposed ceased to exist. The Western middle powers could also afford to be more autonomous in their security policies. As a result, the negotiations on the post-Cold War WMD treaties were characterised by a greater involvement of both groups of states.

Finally, security costs and benefits also provide a basic insight into the variation in the leadership efforts connected with the treaties dealing with inhumane conventional weapons. Security costs account for the opposition of the major military powers towards the APMBC and the CCM. On the contrary, the absence of higher security costs, together with their already mentioned greater latitude permitted by the changed geopolitical conditions, partly explains the leadership of middle powers. Nevertheless, this leadership cannot be fully explained on the basis of low security costs. To a high extent, it resulted from humanitarian concerns.

With regard to China, the analysis revealed that, in comparison to the other permanent UNSC members, China acted the least as a leader in multilateral negotiations in the past. The analysis also indicated that this outcome should be attributed to specific security and power interests of China, rather than to its general opposition to multilateral arms control. The first three decades of multilateral arms control cooperation coincided with the period in which China had, in general, a critical view on multilateral institutions and opposed the bipolar order based on the dominant positions of the United States and the USSR. When the country ultimately took a more positive attitude towards multilateral arms control institutions in the 1990s, the agenda shifted to conventional weapons that represented important military means for China. Hence, while the absence of China's leadership in multilateral negotiations continued, in the new circumstances it reflected specific security costs, and not an opposition to the existing international order.

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China and International Development: Narratives and Strategic Priorities

Silvia Menegazzi

Abstract In 2021 the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (PRC) released a new white paper, *China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era,* articulating the vision and framework of China's engagement to global development. Although China's development strategies remain heavily reliant on bilateral funding, China-promoted multilateral initiatives, such as the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB), recently emerged as major actors in disseminating ideas about social and economic development in Asia and beyond.

This chapter discusses the relevance of a *Chinese narrative* about development cooperation, the multilateral institutional framework established by China, and the strategic priorities that guide it. It argues that Chinese narratives with regard to international development and, more specifically, about South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC), while designed to improve the country's competitiveness at the global level, posit consistent challenges to the ideological orientation for international development cooperation. The creation of Chinese-led multilateral institutions raised fundamental questions about the future of the MDBs agenda and policy prescription but, even more, with regard to the global public discourse in the context of international development.

On July 28, 2020, the Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the opening ceremony of the fifth annual meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In his speech, President Xi remarked that he "proposed on China's behalf the establishment of the AIIB," an initiative that "has established itself in the world as a new type of professional, efficient and clean multilateral development bank."[1] The creation of

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[1] Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping, president of the People's Republic of China, at the Opening Ceremony of the Fifth Annual Meeting of The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, 28 July 2020, Xinhua.

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the AIIB was celebrated as an effort by Chinese political elites to cement China's economic presence in global governance and to create greater influence in multilateral institutions. However, it also implemented a Chinese approach to development lending (Wagner 2019). At the same time, the AIIB enhanced China's international status, as it challenges the more traditional MDBs such as the World Bank (WB). Through the creation of such a new institutional statecraft, China gained credibility thanks to membership recruitment while propagating new rules, principles, and norms reflecting Chinese principles and values (Wei 2020). The strategy supports China's quest to regain great power status, possibly delegitimizing, overthrowing, and replacing the US-led liberal international order (Yang, 2020). Yet, despite China's growing relevance in international affairs, it is not always acknowledged by the policy-making and the scholarly community that global governance "is no longer possible without the participation and cooperation of China" (Besoon & Li, 2016). As an example of such transformation and its strategic implications, it is China's growing commitment in shaping the context of international institutions, of which the creation of the AIIB rests its most important manifestation (ibid. p. 491).

Many authors analyzed the establishment of the new bank. In this regard, two contending visions provided alternative explanations to discuss the genesis of the AIIB and its consequences to multilateral development finance (MDF). To some, the AIIB is a rival of the World Bank and a challenge to the US-led economic order.[2] Such initiatives are perceived as competitive, leading to regional blocs and the disintegration of global trade. The China-led multilateral initiative is thus a clear manifestation of Beijing's intent to challenge American supremacy (Dollar 2015). To others, the AIIB does not challenge the global status quo. It deals with infrastructure development but not poverty reduction, and it rests a marginal player within China's fragmented development finance domain (Hameiri and Jones 2018). More generally, the official rationale for creating the AIIB is to meet the urgent need of infrastructure development in the developing world (Wang, 2017). Such view would also be supported by the report published by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2017, according to which until 2030, Asia will need to invest $22.6 trillion to maintain its level of economic growth to eradicate poverty (ADB 2017).[3]

Nevertheless, when analyzing the AIIB's new prospective members, the number of non-democratic countries also increased, thus questioning the relevance of liberal norms and values to the membership of the AIIB and, more generally, that of international institutions (Wang, 2018). Given the significance of the AIIB and the emergent normative challenge posed by China at the global level, this chapter goes beyond existing analyses of the AIIB in two ways. First, it discusses the ideological development narrative of the AIIB through the lenses of the *China story* (Brown,

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[2]Following the Money. Development Finance helps China win friends and influence American allies', The Economist, 17 March 2015. Available at: https://www.economist.com/asia/2015/03/17/following- the-money.

[3]Available at: https://www.adb.org/documents/adb-annual-report-2017.

2021). Chinese storytelling, i.e., the concept of "telling China's Story Well" (讲好中国的故事) became an essential element in the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) foreign policy agenda since 2013 in order to "eliminate misunderstandings, and to construct and spread a good image of China."[4] The Chinese leadership envisioned such strategy on four different aspects: to tell the story of the Chinese Communist Party; to explain the nationalistic dimension of the China Dream; to focus on China's traditional culture and soft power; and to showcase China as a successful model to be emulated by non-western countries (ChinaMediaProject 2021). For instance, with the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, China's media efforts and diplomatic practices conducted abroad with the intent to shape the narratives about PRC's responsibilities vis-à-vis the pandemic have been substantial (Jacob, 2020). To this extent, the chapter builds on previous research by contributing to enlarge the investigation about China's international communication strategy within China's most important contribution to global economic governance. Second, the chapter provides an assessment as to the extent the politics of multilateralism is affected by Chinese storytelling strategies. As rising powers and emerging economies began to play a growing role in international economic institutions, they were also successful in advancing different normative narratives vis-à-vis models and conceptualizations for a different world order (Menegazzi, 2020). Given that in recent years political actors worldwide become increasingly aware of the power of storytelling in international politics (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2019), the chapter also elucidates Beijing's approach to the global public discourse on South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC). The rest of the chapter is organized into four sections. The first section engages with a theoretical discussion about ideology and global institutional politics with a focus on the MDBs and Chinese storytelling strategy. The next section discusses China's development approach in the MDBs sector. The third section analyzes the AIIB's narrative about international development and the last section concludes with a discussion about China's priorities in the context of international development.

1 The Chinese Narrative About Development Cooperation

The AIIB was not the first attempt to establish alternative, non-western MDBs. In the post-WWII period, among the multilateral development banks established by non-western countries were the Eurasian Development Bank (Russia and Kazakhstan), the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO), and the Eastern and Southern African Trade Development Bank (African countries). Nevertheless, in 2015, the US administration made open statements about its displeasure with regard to United

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[4] '习近平 讲述好中国故事给我们的启示', The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 26 May 2015, available here: http://www.scio.gov.cn/m/zhzc/10/Document/1435028/1435028.htm.

Kingdom's decision to join the AIIB, worried about "a trend toward constant accommodation of China."[5] China's growing global economic clout heightened with the creation of the AIIB undermining US leadership role in global finance.[6] According to Erik Voeten, "the United States opposed the creation of the AIIB not because it feared China's development aid, which China can and does deliver unilaterally, but because the AIIB, challenges values, practices, and policies that the United States-dominated World Bank cherishes" (Voeten, 2021, p. 2). From the EU side, the Union was also divided in its response to the AIIB, although aware of its role as an emerging player in the context of multilateral development finance (Menegazzi, 2017).

Ideology is an important concept in international relations and development studies; however, its multifaceted interpretations make it difficult to ensure consensus on a common definition. For the purpose of this chapter, ideology is defined as "a set of fundamental beliefs, ideas and normative values that serve as a guide for action and the interpretation of reality and as a basis for political orientation" (Sofer, 1989, p. 491). Debates about the limited relevance of ideas and normative values explaining international relations are as dated as the dawn of the discipline.[7] But as noticed by Rosemary Foot and Andrew Walter, "among countries, at least at the conceptual level, there are always competing ideas of what constitute national interest, desirable foreign policy goals, and associated views of global order" (2011, p. 3).[8]

Gamble emphasized that at least for two centuries, neoliberalism as a western ideology rested unchallenged by any real criticism. The attachment to the west and its universal values, the celebration of the global liberal order which it promotes, and the political and economic institutions created by the United States granted neoliberalism the status of a model "that the rest of the world should embrace" (Gamble, 2009, p. 3). Therefore, questions posed by the "China challenge" also arise: does China with the creation of new institutions challenge the ideology of neoliberalism and, consequently, the context of global economic governance? If so, to what extent is China storytelling about SSDC affecting the global public discourse on international development? The so-called China Hawks in the United States have long

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[5] US anger at Britain joining Chinese-led investment bank AIIB', The Guardian, 13 March 2015. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/mar/13/white-house-pointedly-asks-uk-to-use-its- voice-as-part-of-chinese-led-bank.

[6] New Asian Development Bank Seen As Sign Of China's Growing Influence', NPR, 16 April 2015. Available at: https://www.npr.org/2015/04/16/400178364/finance-officials-to-discuss-asian-development-bank- at-spring-meetings?t=1623230777268.

[7] According to Behr and Heath, even the formation of "paradigms" in academia can be considered as an ideological process. See Hartmut Behr and Amelia Heat, (2009), 'Misreading IR theory and Ideology critique: Morgenthau, Waltz and Neo-realism', Review of International Studies, Vol.35, No.2, pp. 327–349.

[8] To Voeten, liberal internationalism identifies the WWII multilateral institutional order with the US hegemony. As the US long-term interests do not match anymore with that specific set of ideological principles envisioned by the liberal order a decade ago, new institutions with a set of ideologically different principles are also on the rise (2021, p. 51).

warned of the systemic and ideological risks posed by China's global rise. China, in its quest for establishing an alternative world order and by promoting *democratization in international relations* through *win–win practices*, resonated powerfully with developing and non-democratic nations ready to offer a durable foundation for future partnership with a non-western country. As an example of such alternatives, we can mention China's colossal foreign policy project, the Belt and Road Initiative. The massive investment strategy was launched in 2013 with the aim to expand China's economic and political presence worldwide, as well as to readjust China's strategies of soft power and its diplomatic apparatus. Yet, apart from skepticism from the United States (and the EU more recently), non-western countries in different regions of the world, such as Latin America for instance, welcomed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its impact on the national economy. According to Ginsburg, however, even if the BRI envisages the aspiration of China to play a responsible role on the world stage, it still offers to the Chinese leadership the possibility to affect the democratic development in participating countries (2021).

To Yan Xuetong, we live in an era in which the international configuration of power manifested itself with the transformation from a US-dominated unipolarity to a China–US-led bipolarity. Consequently, ideological competition—and particularly Chinese political values—are expected to be detrimental to the liberal hegemony of the United States and western countries more broadly. If, during the Cold War, communism and capitalism were the two main contending global ideologies, today's main ideology, American liberalism—based on equality, freedom, and democracy—is challenged by Chinese traditional values, such as benevolence, righteousness, and rites, thus defining the passage from a Cold War to a post-Cold War global ideological scenario (Yan, 2018:10). To Heldt and Schmidtke, the greatest challenge posed by the AIIB to the multilateral development finance (MDF) sector is that its establishment limited democratic control with regard to civil society access, transparency, and accountability. They argue that democratic progress at the international level suffered precisely because of the recent authoritarian rise of regimes such as China or Russia. By comparing formal mechanisms of democratic control at the WB, the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), and the AIIB, they concluded that the normative demands of authoritarian states help contribute to a decline of democratic practices on the international level (Heldt & Schmidtke, 2019).

The real conundrum is that the AIIB transformed China from a *participant in* international rules (国际规则的参与) into *a creator of* international rules (国际规则的创设者). As a matter of fact, the Chinese narrative about multilateral development banks challenges western ideas of international development cooperation and its practices. For instance, China's contribution to the MDF sector is associated with a different lending policy, i.e., the AIIB does not distinguish member states into borrowing and non-borrowing countries, therefore showing greater "fairness" to borrowers. Moreover, it also functions as a commercial bank, improving the

financial environment for companies in developing countries.[9] In July 2020, a speech was given by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the AIIB in Beijing. To explain why the AIIB can facilitate the building of a *community with a shared future of mankind*, the Chinese president envisioned the following characteristics for the bank to function as a new MDB: (1) the AIIB is a new type of multilateral development bank; (2) the AIIB is a new type of development platform; (3) the AIIB is a new type of high-performance institution for international cooperation; and (4) the AIIB stands as a new paradigm of multilateral cooperation.[10] The Chinese leadership is, in fact, cognizant of the many challenges affecting global economic governance and the multilateral development finance sector. Under these circumstances—split between borrower countries on the one side and non-borrowers on the other; the balance of power between industrialized economies and emerging developing countries—to "tell China's story well" becomes an important strategy to shape China's global narratives in the MDB sector. Consistently, in its quest for global influence, Chinese leaders have widely emphasized China's "right to speak" (话 语 权) or *discourse power*, a strategy aimed at expanding China's global audience while mobilizing specific normative arguments, world views, and communication policies counting as counter-narratives to explain China's rise in world affairs. In 2017, the theoretical legacy of China's discourse power was well highlighted by the PRC's State Council Information Office: an instrument to subvert the current narrative "the West is strong, China is weak."[11] The strategy is also part of what is recognized as Xi Jinping's Thought, a set of policies and ideas envisioned by the same president for China's *New Era*. With regard to China's role in world affairs, it depicts the necessity to create a positive international discourse on China with the objective to increase China's international prestige.[12] It would be misleading, however, to consider China's discourse power just a recent element of China's foreign policy. For top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party international discourse strategies have always played significantly in determining power structure internationally.

Yet, the intensification of the government action with regard to discourse power manifested, according to Kejin Zhao (Zhao, 2016), because of China's multiple identities: is China a socialist or a capitalist state? Is it a developed or developing

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[9]Jiang Zhida and Zhang Chuanhong, '亚投行 推动多边合作, 促进发展的新典范', China Institute of International Studies, 31 July 2020, available here: https://www.ciis.org.cn/yjcg/sspl/202009/t20200918_7364.html.

[10]Remarks by H. E. Xi Jinping at the Opening Ceremony of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the AIIB', 28 July 2020, available at: https://www.aiib.org/en/news-events/events/2020-annual- meeting/_common/_download/Opening-Address-His-Excellency-Xi-Jinping-President-of-the-Peoples-Republic-of-China.pdf.

[11]国际话语全建设中几大基础性理论问题', The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 27 February 2017, available here: http://www.scio.gov.cn/zhzc/10/Document/1543300/1543300.htm.

[12]提升国际话语权中国需要这样做', People's Daily, 7 June 2021, available here: http://www.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0607/c437595-32124020.html.

country? Does it recognize the so-called universal values or adheres only to the China model? As Breslin pointed out, China's intention to change its role in global politics seems quite obvious (Breslin, 2013, p. 615). But to understand China's dissatisfaction with the nature of the current global order necessitates to recognize the mix of integrative strategies derived from its different simultaneous identities, namely, China being at the same time a developing country, an emerging power, a quasi-superpower, and a regional power (ibid, 617).

Even though China's self-reflection about its place in global economic governance and the domestic debate rests contradictory (Zeng, 2019), the development paradigm with regard to multilateral development finance is shifting, because of the influence of developing countries. The rise of countries such as China, Russia, India, or Brazil lets them place an imprint on global economic institutions with a marked different stamp from the status quo supported by the western countries. Multilateral institutions are expected to be more durable than the US hegemony (Keohane, 1984), but they've been affected by increasing deadlocks, through the establishment of parallel, informal clubs alongside established institutions, such as the IBSA Forum and the BRICS Forum (Stephen 2017). At the same time, because it is the rise of China raising fundamental questions about the future of the liberal international order, it was the establishment of the AIIB which was envisioned as a major threat to liberalism and its international institutions. Despite China not replacing the United States as the "illiberal hegemon" (Ikenberry, 2018), two reasons explain the argument of an AIIB's challenge to the liberal international order: the composition of its membership, of which China's preferences pushed for the participation of many developing countries, and the policy field of the bank—development banking— which, compared with other issues such as human rights, allowed China to keep the normative divergence with the west on a bearable level (Stephen and Skidmore 2019).

2 South-South Development Cooperation

South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC) appears to be a very important strategy to the Xi Jinping administration and China's commitment increased particularly since he took office in 2012. In 2015, China announced the creation of a special fund to support South–South cooperation and assist development countries in implementing their agendas at the UN Sustainable Development Summit.[13] In November 2017, the Government of China provided USD 17 million through the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund to partner with UNDP in support of the recovery and reconstruction efforts in five countries: Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan,

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[13] http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2018-08/20/c_264437.htm.

Antigua and Barbuda, and the Commonwealth of Dominica.[14] Nevertheless, it should be noticed that the Xi administration is operating in a line of continuity with respect to past policies. As Rudyak remind us, despite China often being called as a new "donor," the PRC possesses in fact a longer history of aid giving than many of the so-called traditional donors (Rudyak, 2021).

When dealing with the Chinese approach to multilateral development finance (MDF), it appears necessary to distinguish between China's unilateral contribution to global development finance vis-à-vis the multilateral development framework, even though the two are intimately connected. In the first case, China's development finance is conducted in the form of commercial loans for energy and transport infrastructure projects to middle- and high-income countries (Ferchen 2017). Grants and loans are provided mostly by the China Development Bank (CDB), a state-owned bank founded in 1994. The story of the CDB, the policy financial institution directly administrated by the State Council, is tied double strand with the life of its chairman, Chen Yuan. Under his mandate, CDB's ration of non-performing loans fell from 33% in 1998 to 1% in 2004 (China.org). Chen Yuan is considered today a legend within the Communist Party financial planning section. His "philosophy" of development finance was aimed at creating a system of local financing for infrastructure projects to fund highways, schools, and housing development through the country. In the last decade, the CDB strongly contributed to China's foreign aid sector. In 2017, CDB's foreign exchange loans totaled CNY 261.7 (USD 39 billion), mostly concentrated in the Asia-Pacific and Euro-Asia regions.[15] Despite the AIIB and the BRI representing China's greatest contribution to multilateral development finance today, the CDB rests China's flagship institution regulating and managing China's resource portfolio with regard to infrastructure financing abroad. For this reason, we can envision China's national development banks to have functioned as a model to China's approach with regard to the global development finance framework. Specifically, in internationalizing the coordinated credit space model between state finance and commercial banks Chinese financial institutions exported the coordinated financing model that has allowed Chinese banks to control credit risk while boosting the country's economic growth (Chin & Gallagher, 2019).

The second contribution deals specifically with China's growing engagement into international development cooperation through multilateral mechanisms. In January 2021 the State Council Information Office (SCIO) published a white paper titled *China's International Cooperation in the New Era*.[16] The document highlights China's principles for development cooperation: (i) recognize all countries as equal members of the international community; (ii) increase South–South

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[14] https://www.cn.undp.org/content/china/en/home/library/south-south-cooperation/south-south-cooperation-assistance-fund.html.

[15] https://cdn.gihub.org/umbraco/media/2617/china-case-study.pdf.

[16] Full Text: China's International Cooperation in the New Era', The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 10 January 2021, available at: http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202101/10/content_WS5ffa6bbbc6d0f72576943922.html.

cooperation with respect to developing's countries opinion; (iii) increase investment in poverty alleviation, disaster relief, education, health care, agriculture, employment, environmental protection, and climate change; and (iv) provide means of independent development for developing countries. In the document, we can notice the emphasis to grant developing countries an *independent development*, which stands as a main pillar of China's foreign policy (independence), but in fact much less with the development "philosophy" of Bretton Woods institutions. As Ngaire Woods argued, the World Bank's core task is development assistance, but criticism arose over time precisely because of the conditionalities applied to borrowers (high interest rates, reduction in public sector expenditures, increased taxation, privatization of state-owned industries, etc.). Other contentious issues are the scarce representation of developing countries on the executive board, the allocation of voting power among members, as well as the political nature of the allocation of quotas, demonstrating how the WB has been slow to reflect changes in the global economy (Woods, 2008). Unlike that, the Chinese narrative is precisely the opposite: "the founding and opening of the AIIB means a great deal to the reform of the global governance system. It is consistent with the evolving trend of the global economic landscape and will help to make the global economic system more *just, equitable and effective*" (Xi Jinping 2016, emphasis added).[17] To these different narratives, we can perhaps add the two different visions on how to think about development cooperation: North–South and South–South. Whereas the former is based on obligation of developed countries to assist developing countries because of unbalanced resources and past colonial legacies, South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC) is based on resource exchange, technology, knowledge, and shared expertise and on the principles of solidarity, mutual respect, mutual benefit, and non-interference in international affairs (Lin & Wang, 2017). The unique features of China's SSDC differ from the traditional approach of established donors, and it combines aid, trade, investment, and private capital mobilization (ibid 91).

The Chinese approach to the multilateral development finance framework has been subject to intense academic debate and speculation. This is because, as a policy field, MDF is a key component of the liberal international order (Stephen and Skidmore 2019). Although the PRC makes use of liberal practices such as participation in multilateral organizations, it remains an open question how China interprets (or re-interprets) liberal principles such as rules-based multilateralism, economic openess, human rights and more generally, liberal values.

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[17] Full Text of Chinese President Xi Jinping's address at AIIB inauguration ceremony', Xinhua, 16 January 2016, Xinhua, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2016-01/16/content_2311671 8_2.htm.

3 The Multilateral Institutional Framework Established by China with Regard to International Development Cooperation

China's engagement with multilateral organizations can be categorized into three different *tracks*. Track number one relates to the UN institutions' context, from participation in World Health Organization (WHO) activities to UN peacekeeping missions; track number two deals with non-UN multilaterals, for instance GAVI, the vaccine alliance. The third track concerns MDBs. Until 2015 China's major engagement with the MDBs was mostly directed at traditional organizations dealing with international development aid, such as WB, IDB, and AfDB. More recently however, China's contribution to the MDBs sector dramatically changed following the establishment of numerous China-led initiatives, among which the AIIB, the NDB, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). In addition, in 2020 China formally established the Multilateral Cooperation Center for Development Finance (MCDF) with the goal of accelarating financing for infrastructure projects and increasing cooperation among major IFIs.

Despite some initial difficulties, the AIIB's achievements cannot be questioned: a rapid growth in worldwide membership (from 57 founding members in 2015 to 103 approved members in 2020); an increased credit rating received by the top rating agencies (Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch); and the granting as a Permanent Observer Status by the United Nations. The operations of the AIIB are strictly related to the narrow mandates stipulated in its Articles of Agreement: (1) foster sustainable economic development and improve infrastructure connectivity in Asia by investing in infrastructure and other productive sectors; and (2) promote regional cooperation by working in close cooperation with existing MDBs. Two issues, however, emerged about the AIIB's real accomplishment with regard to foster sustainable development and regional cooperation. First, it is the AIIB's connection with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). To many commentators, the multilateral development bank remains a key instrument to China's foreign and development policy, rather than an initiative built on win–win cooperation. Since China proposed the BRI in 2013, the question of the AIIB being a China-controlled MDB emerged as a key debate point in the international community (Zhu 2019). Among major criticisms was the specter of the so-called debt trap for the developing countries most involved in the Chinese project. But according to Wang Huiyao, president of the Center for China and Globalization, the AIIB "has emerged as a beacon for multilateralism" and the BRI should draw on the AIIB's organizational structures and decision-making processes to foster its commitment to multilateralism and globalization.[18] The truth lies somewhere in between: despite the AIIB being well integrated into the global finance regime, a consistent number of loans approved by the bank promote

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[18] AIIB can be a key benchmark for BRI', Global Times, 7 July 2019, available at: https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1157054.shtml.

Chinese geopolitical and economic interests (Gabusi, 2019). Second, it is the question about AIIB's commitment to improving sustainable development by guaranteeing environmental standards. One milestone in AIIB's commitment to sustainable infrastructure is the Environmental and Social Framework, a directive aimed at implementing the bank's environmental and social policy by integrating good international practice on environmental issues and social management. Yet, to some, the environmental and social framework policy adopted in 2016 is not as robust as those adopted by other multilateral development banks.[19] While the bank's president Jin Liqun affirmed AIIB's commitment to be "lean, clean and green," civil society and other international financial institutions worried about AIIB's sustainable development strategy of being limited with regard to climate change and sustainability. On top of that, language on climate change still rests unsatisfactory and policies' implementation has left little mark on the AIIB's portfolio.[20] In April 2021 the bank launched the Sustainable Development Bond Framework with the intent to set up a mechanism that monitors AIIB's impact of its financing. Concerns about its investments—the use of coal power and renewable projects that are land intensive—as well as the bank's policies to prevent potential negative impacts suggested that the AIIB might not be as "lean, clean and green" as predicted.[21]

The AIIB's most important narrative with regard to international development cooperation is rooted within the expression "infrastructure for tomorrow (i4t)," a strategy based on four main priorities: (1) green infrastructure; (2) connectivity and regional integration; (3) technology-enabled infrastructure; and (4) private capital mobilization.[22] Therefore, sustainable development is envisioned as the main commitment of AIIB's members, who are committed through the bank in the fight against climate change. Second, improving cross-border connectivity among countries represents another fundamental thematic priority to promote regional cooperation. Last, thematic priority concerns private financing for projects. Intermediaries include not only the Singaporean Keppel Asia Infrastructure Fund, but also the Sinovation Disrupt Fund, the new venture capital fund part of Sinovation Venture, the Chinese venture capital firm founded by Kai-fu Lee, the Taiwanese-born American, recognized worldwide as a leading expert in the Chinese Internet sector. The development provisions in the AIIB mission are, at least on paper, on par with that of the World Bank. For instance, the three priorities envisioned by the WB to end poverty worldwide are (1) to create sustainable economic growth; (2) investing in people; and (3) building resilience to shocks and threats undermining decades of

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[19] See for instance the World Bank Environmental and Social Policies, available here: https://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/environmental-and-social-policies.

[20] https://chinadialogue.net/en/business/europe-pushes-for-higher-standards-on-climate-at-aiib/.

[21] Lowell Chow, 'Is the AIIB lean, clean and green?', The Diplomat, 2 August 2017. Available at: https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/is-the-aiib-really-lean-clean-and-green/.

[22] AIIB website: https://www.aiib.org/en/about-aiib/who-we-are/infrastructure-for-tomorrow/overview/index.html.

progress.[23] As a matter of fact, the AIIB has been highly cooperative with other MDBs considering that two-thirds of the banks' projects are co-financed.[24] But consistently, we see three main reasons why the AIIB's narrative about South-South Development Cooperation appeared more convincing to the developing world as compared with other MDBs. First, all the new development institutions established by the so-called emerging economies, the AIIB, the BRICS NBD, and the Silk Road Fund, portray a different model of development cooperation based on three main pillars: (1) equality between partners, i.e., not imposing conditions on partners; (2) the value of the market philosophy, i.e., development cooperation is implemented in accordance with the needs of the countries involved; and (3) avoidance of doctrine-imposing strategies, i.e., development policies must follow a gradual and bottom-up model. Second, the governance structure of the AIIB is representative of the discontent about the lack of inclusiveness of developing economies in the governance structure of existing IFIs, such as the WB or the IMF. For instance, as of December 31, 2020, only 2 out of 13 directors were representative of non-regional member countries outside Asia—respectively, Katharine Rechico for Canada and Philippe O'Quin for France. Third, the history of South-South Cooperation among developing countries, hence the current narrative with regard to SSDC, is rooted within a process that began with the Bandung Conference in 1955. Developing countries proposed a new model of partnership among developing nations on the basis of respect for national sovereignty, equality, and mutual benefit. The Bretton Woods Conference held 11 years earlier never focused on the needs of the developing world, but it concluded a series of new rules and policies for the post-WWII international monetary system from the lesson taken by US policy makers and their European allies from the interwar period. Put these reasons together and we can understand why Chinese storytelling with regard to SSDC is thus relevant to understand how China is challenging the global public discourse about international development. A final consideration concerns the projects approved by the AIIB in relations to thematic priorities. As of December 2020, a total of 22 projects in the energy sector have been approved by the AIIB, followed by transport (18), water (11), and finance (18). Whereas western MDBs largely emphasize interventions in human capital, health, and environment, the MDBs in which China is a key stakeholder focus on energy and infrastructure development, thus a distinct approach from what western-led MDBs have done until recently (Chin & Gallagher, 2019) (Fig. 1).

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[23] For further information about the World Bank's environmental and social policies, see: https://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/environmental-and-social-policies.

[24] AIIB: is the Chinese-led Development Bank a role model?', CFR, 25 June 2018. Available at: https://www.cfr.org/blog/aiib-chinese-led-development-bank-role-model.
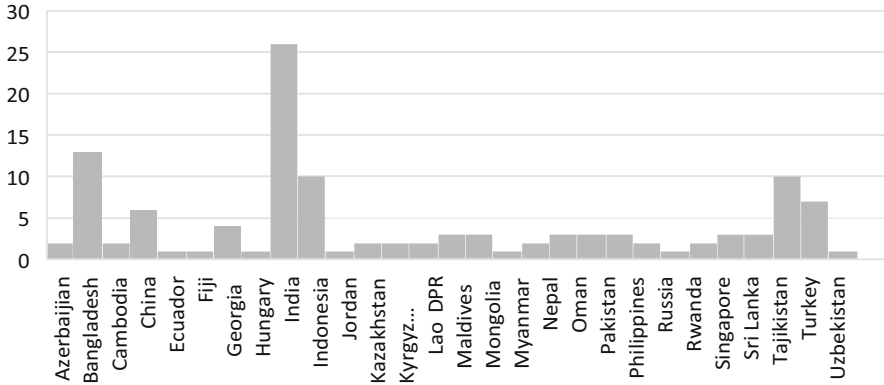
Fig. 1 AIIB-approved project by country. Source: AIIB website

4   Conclusion: The Strategic Priorities About China's Development Cooperation

On April 11, 2021, "a ceremony attended by over 300 political and business leaders, academics and representative publishing agencies from 14 countries and regions" was held in London to present the multilingual version of the second volume of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*.[25] Among the participants at the event were Mario Monti, former prime minister of Italy, and the Duke of York, Prince Andrew. Whereas for decades, China's international communication strategies maintained a defensive approach, at present Chinese leaders and diplomats are pursuing a more sophisticated yet assertive strategy targeting international audiences. The controversial aspect of this change resulted in the west with the appellative of *Wolf Warrior Diplomacy*, a public diplomacy practice that is nationalistic, assertive, and especially critical with regard to foreign countries' relations with China. In 2020, the outbreak of Covid-19 and the spread of the pandemic also strengthened Chinese storytelling strategy. However, the global coronavirus rather than having a catastrophic effect on China's global image transformed it into an occasion to push the glories of its response as an exemplar to the world (Rolland, 2020). Whereas previous analyses investigated Chinese storytelling strategies with regard to Covid-19 (or the Hong Kong protests), this paper focused on the relevance of such strategies to understand China's contribution in global economic governance with a focus on the MDF sector.

The alternative normative dimension advanced by China and its leaders with regard to South-South Development Cooperation is challenging the global public discourse about multilateral development banks and, more generally, international

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[25] 'Telling China's Story', Beijing Review, 30 January 2019, available at: http://www.bjreview. com/China_Focus/Newsweek/201901/t20190130_800155631.html.

development. In the last decade, but particularly since 2013, China has spoken loudly through diplomats and multilateral fora of its own view about international development and cooperation, generating a great deal of attention and controversy in the international community and beyond. For some, this strategy is representative of China's growing economic and geopolitical interests. But one should not underestimate the "attractiveness" of Chinese storytelling about development, especially outside western contexts. The fact that China is playing today a prominent role in multilateral development finance (through the AIIB in our case) suggests that China has also found a multilateral channel (rather than unilateral/bilateral occasions) through which it is now possible to "diffuse" its own model of international development, by protecting its economic interests while guaranteeing at the same time a political narrative in line with the needs of the countries involved as well as with those of the Chinese leadership—as envisioned by the CPC's political agenda. In official speeches, Xi Jinping and Chinese diplomats always emphasize the contribution of countries that are not usually seen as key players in global financial governance.[26] As Fu Ying points out, the world's perceptions of China can be shaped by Chinese narratives and behaviors. This is because, to tell China's story well requires China to form "a narrative style with Chinese characteristics that gives China a distinct voice that can be heard and understood in international discourse."[27] To this end, the way China advances its messages within multilateral development institutions will play an important role in strengthening China's position in global governance, not necessarily subverting neoliberalism and its ideology, but it is certainly a challenge that western countries will have to get used to living with.

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[26]President Ashraf of Afghanistan Meets with Wang Yi', 9 December 2015, available at: https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/cgjb/eng/xwdt/zgyw/t1323368.htm.

[27]Fu Ying, 'Shape global narratives for telling China's stories', China Daily, 21 April 2020. Available at: https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202004/21/WS5e9e313ba3105d50a3d178ab.html.

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Health Problems, World Institutions, and China's Approach to Pandemic Outbreaks

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Abstract Over the past two decades, several factors have amplified the risk of emerging infectious diseases spreading beyond national and regional borders. Concerns have been raised over Southeast Asia's environmental, social, and demographic specificities and its traditional aversion to accepting global and formal instruments of international governance. With its large size population and high economic growth, China will shape international health-security policy at the local, regional, and global levels.

This chapter explores China's participation in that policymaking by considering its embeddedness in and compliance with the International Health Regulations and their custodian agency, the World Health Organization. The investigation is relevant for the broader international relations agenda, as a fundamental question of the last twenty years concerns the implications of the rise of China and whether the country is challenging the rules-based international order created after the Second World War.

This chapter is based on primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources include book chapters and peer-reviewed journal articles from various research fields (international relations, security studies, area studies, and especially public health, health governance, and epidemiology). Primary sources, including World Health Organization (WHO) documents, situation assessments, and mission reports as well as news coverage, represent the main sources for understanding the COVID-19 crisis. Interviews with WHO officers supplement the written sources. These contributions inform the analysis with evidence from the field and enable a more grounded standpoint.

The first section explains the importance of the problem and the urgency of understanding China's position regarding which principles, norms, rules, and operating procedures would be tolerable.

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The second section describes the global health policy related to health security and explains how states manage the cross-border circulation of emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) and agents responsible for Public Health Emergencies of International Concern (PHEIC). The section hopes to clarify the domain, essential norms, and critical institutions of the health-security governance structure, and how its principles have developed over time. It then summarizes the elements of opposition and support such policies have conveyed.

The third section discusses how China has historically dealt with health security, especially during the public health crises of the twenty-first century.

The fourth section focuses on the COVID-19 crisis. By retracing the steps of China's response to the pandemic, the section analyses China's relationship with the extant health-security policy framework and discusses whether and how the crisis has modified or will modify the relationship between China and its institutions and norms. The last section concludes.

1 Why a World Policy for Emerging Infectious Diseases, and Why Do We Need China on Board?

EIDs represent a significant public health, economic, and security burden nationally and internationally (Fidler, 1999; Price-Smith, 2001; Sherman, 2007; Drezner, 2020). Because of global interdependence, addressing infectious diseases has become increasingly challenging and requires grander cooperation. A country that protects itself from a virus while others do not will be as vulnerable as the latter since each is only as safe as the least safe one (per weakest-link theory).

Beyond the recent experiences of COVID-19, avian influenza (in 2009), and SARS (in 2003), at least two pandemic viruses in the twentieth century (the 1956 Asian influenza and the 1968 Hong Kong influenza) are widely believed to have originated in Asia (Kilbourne, 2006; McIlroy, 2003; Ricci, 2006). It is no accident that all eyes have turned to Asia regarding epidemic control strategies.

After conducting a comparative analysis of 335 EID events between 1940 and 2004, Jones et al. (2008) confirm a nonrandom global (temporal and spatial) representation of EIDs. Their analysis proves that EIDs have significantly increased in number over time and spread from specific areas of the globe. Being dominated by zoonoses (the majority of which originate in wildlife), EID events correlate with socioeconomic, environmental, and ecological factors common in Asia (see also WHO, 2007). Beyond natural events, since 2000 a number of other circumstances have raised anxieties over East Asia's health-security profile, including the expansion of its biotech industry, lax procedures for securing biochemical materials (which make lab leaks possible), and some countries' potential role as terrorist bases (Ogilvie-White, 2006).

The region's attitude towards international norms and procedures intended to manage pandemic risks represents an additional concern (Davies, 2012;

Caballero-Anthony & Gayle Amul, 2013). As seen during the SARS epidemic, China's reluctant participation in international disease monitoring and response can have severe consequences for the rest of the world (Kamradt-Scott, 2011; Hanrieder & Kreuder-Sonnen, 2014; Kamradt-Scott, 2015).

China's behaviour vis-à-vis infectious diseases has come under intense scrutiny once again during COVID-19. Some scholars argue that the country's earlier approach to pandemics, from secrecy and obstructionism (documented in the cases of HIV and SARS) to international constructive engagement (in the case of avian influenza) (see, e.g., Goldizen, 2016), endured throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Others insist that China has persistently flouted international norms and accuse the country of withholding crucial information.[1]

Since 2015, many voices, especially in Anglo-Saxon academia, have described China's relationship with the existing international order as confrontational if not openly hostile (see also Sutter, 2020, pp. 97–99). Others argue that China is not dissatisfied with the fundamental rules of such order but with its status in it (Zhao 2018). Along these lines, moderate judgements have problematized the definition of order and how to measure compliance with it (Johnston, 2019; Kastner et al., 2020; Chan, 2021). Johnston (2019) suggests that a single liberal order does not exist. Rather, we need to evaluate China's attitude towards multiple issue-specific orders and policies to appreciate the nuances of Chinese performance.

Notwithstanding the growing scholarly attention to China's involvement with international institutions (UN, peacekeeping missions, arms control, human rights, and international trade and finance), crucial issues such as the extent of China's commitment to global health and health-security policy as well as its consequences (for the international community and the country itself) have been underassessed, with few exceptions (Huang, 2014b, 2015).[2]

No less critical in dealing with China and health-security policy is acknowledging that analysis of China's profile in terms of adherence ('compliance to order' in Johnston's vocabulary) rather than contestation is limited by recourse to the US's behaviour as the only benchmark. The US's support for the health-security policy has not always been consistent and was reversed during the Trump years.

Therefore, it is important to recognize the difference between conflicts of interest between the United States and China and conflicts between China and a specific international order (Johnston, 2019).

Clarifying China's position vis-à-vis the extant health-security policy is important for two reasons. First, it contributes to the broader discussion about China's power

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[1]For a COVID-19-related debate, see inter alia, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/chinese-officials-note-serious-problems-in-coronavirus- response-the-world-health-organization-keeps-praising-them/2020/02/08/b663dd7c-4834–11ea-91ab- ce439aa5c7c1_story.html.

[2]See also Huang's later production mentioned below in the chapter and the Global Health Strategies Initiatives, 2012, 'Shifting Paradigm: How the BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa] Are Reshaping Global Health and Development' GHSi BRICS Report, March 27. New York: GHSi. www.ghsinitiatives.org/downloads/ghsi_brics_report.pdf. in Huang, 2015, 42; Huang, 2013; Sutter, 2020.

transition (Johnston, 2019; Attinà, 2021; Nye, 2020). Second, it indicates what the global health-security governance might look like in the future. The international management of EIDs is entering a new phase of profound restructuring whose outcomes will inevitably accommodate diverse values and interests (Fidler, 2010). China's preferences can hardly be discounted.

2 Global Health-Security Policy Through Time

The possibility of infectious diseases spreading from Asia was a significant driver for establishing the legal framework on the cross-border transmission of pathogenic agents in the mid-nineteenth century (Howard-Jones, 1950). A series of International Sanitary Conferences between 1851 and 1951 resulted in twelve conventions together known as the 'classical regime' (Fidler, 2005). The classical regime established three primary principles for international governance of infectious diseases: notification, surveillance at points of entry and exit, and trade protection. It structured state responses to infectious-disease outbreaks so that developed countries could protect themselves from disease importation and benefit from a diffuse surveillance system while safeguarding commerce and travel.

After the Second World War, the newborn WHO adopted the International Sanitary Regulations, which left the classical regime unchanged apart from one important aspect: the WHO Constitution gave the World Health Assembly (WHA) the authority to adopt further regulations concerning 'sanitary and quarantine requirements and other procedures designed to prevent the international spread of disease' (WHO Constitution, Art 21(a)). Those regulations would become automatically binding on all WHO member states unless they actively rejected them (Fidler, 2003, 2005).

Notwithstanding the prospects for change, the norms incorporated in the Health Regulations were progressively sidelined. According to Fidler (2005), this was for three main reasons: the reduced prominence of infectious diseases compared to other health issues, the fragmentation of international law and the relative downgrading of concerns in the public health domain vis-à-vis other domains (e.g. human rights, trade, environment), and the impasse created by the WHO's large and diversified membership (with different priorities especially across the north–south division). In the eighteenth century, epidemic diseases' international management was shaped by the parochial and imperialistic interests of great powers with a clear disease-trade focus, an interpretation increasingly at odds with the new liberal outlook towards health cooperation supported by the WHO Constitution (Fidler, 2005).

During the late 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, epidemics returned to the forefront of public debate in Western countries. The world had witnessed the spread of new viruses and antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria, which represented significant threats to developed countries (HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s, West Nile virus in 1999, and SARS in 2003). National and international authorities exploring the actual and potential consequences of infectious diseases concluded that HIV/AIDS

could cause unbearable economic harm and social disruption and potentially endanger regional and international stability (UNSCR Security Council Resolution 1308, 2000).[3] Besides, in the aftermath of 9/11, the 2001 anthrax letter case, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and media coverage of high-profile experiments which highlighted the potential for advances in life sciences to be misused, the threat of manmade diseases jumped onto the international security agenda. The idea that outbreaks could be deliberate enabled interaction between two previously separated domains of international relations: health and security (see Davies, 2008, 2010, and Koblentz, 2010, 2012).[4]

The SARS outbreak made more pressing the need for the Health Regulations' revision process, which had started in 1996 after a plague epidemic in Surat (in 1995), to reach an outcome, especially because the WHO had made decisions that exceeded its formal mandate (Kamradt-Scott, 2011; Hanrieder & Kreuder-Sonnen, 2014). The International Health Regulations (IHR) were adopted in 2005 and represent 'one of the most radical and far-reaching changes in international law on public health since the beginning of international health cooperation' (Fidler, 2005; see also Heymann and Rodier; 2004; Rodier et al. 2007).[5] The 2005 revision included five substantial changes to the text of the previous treaty: (1) the scope was expanded from a disease-specific framework to one which included all events that might constitute a PHEIC, irrespective of their origin (the all-risk approach); (2) an obligation was established for member states to notify the world of events that might constitute a PHEIC within twenty-four hours of local reports; (3) member states were asked for increased commitments and efforts towards developing surveillance and response capacities; (4) the WHO was given enhanced authority regarding (a) data and verification provisions, including access to unofficial sources of information, and (b) declaration and recommendation, including limits on the type of health measures states can take against public health risks; (5) human rights principles were incorporated because of the potential harm to civil and political rights from health interventions.

In the aftermath of SARS and after the IHR revision, global health governance entered a new phase. The all-risk approach, the explicit support for improving public health cooperation (by strengthening national health care systems), a universalistic claim, the vertical reallocation of power and authority within the WHO, the incorporation of human rights principles, and the inclusion of constitutional outlines marked a shift to a 'public health new world order', one more liberal and more aligned with the WHO Constitution. For some authors, the SARS outbreak and the IHR revision represent a springboard for launching post-Westphalian epidemic governance (Fidler, 2004).

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[3] See also Price-Smith, 2001, Elbe, 2002, Mcinnes & Rushton, 2010.

[4] Such an interpretation was made explicit in WHO Resolutions WHA 54.14 (2001) and 55.16 (2002).

[5] See also "New Rules on International Public Health Security", Bulletin of the World Health Organization 85 (6) (2007): 428–30 available at https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/269957; and Fidler & Gostin, 2006.

Others have downplayed the significance of the 2005 amendments and emphasized how beyond ambitions states would have retained ultimate control over the WHO's competencies and state-level implementation (Kelle, 2007; Davies, 2008). Consider the protection of human rights. The IHR (in 2005) incorporated human rights principles, but it was left to individual states to determine the degree to which they would safeguard individual autonomy, privacy, and liberty while building public health capacity and implementing surveillance and response measures regarding disease outbreaks.

Both interpretations are valuable because they capture the political controversies and divisions that characterized the reform process and are inevitably reflected in the IHR.

As noted by Lorna Weir, the final text of the IHRs was a masterpiece of 'oblique diplomacy' that balanced two opposing trends. On the one hand, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom hoped the revised IHR could become a tool to reinforce protection against not only natural but deliberate outbreaks (including chemical biological radiological and nuclear (CBRN) events) and 'to get information not otherwise obtainable on such incidents' (see Tucker 2005, Kelle, 2007, Weir, 2014). On the other hand, regional groups led by delegates from a Southern bloc (including China), feared the negative (and asymmetric) repercussions of such an interpretation for the principles of sovereignty and territoriality.[6] These groups required that the scope of the treaty be limited to public health aspects of international emergencies, called to restrict the WHO's powers to intervene in countries from which outbreaks originate and rather prioritize health development and assistance objectives.

Since 2007, when the treaty took force, it has attracted criticism for failure to prevent or respond to PHEICs and the tensions between its statist and globalist souls never composed (for a discussion see Adam Kamradt-Scott, 2016; Peters et al., 2022).

3   International Institutions and China's Health-Security Policy

Although China was one of the founding members of the UN, the PRC became the official representative of China in the WHA only in May 1972 and, until then, treated the institution as alien if not illegitimate (Huang, 2015, p. 43). Notwithstanding its limited interaction with foreign agencies, China's pre-reform healthcare system has

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[6] Author's interview with former WHO officer of the WHO World Health Emergency Department. Recall that the United States also made relevant reservations to the treaty, regarding the need to preserve consistency with 'its fundamental principles of federalism' and to guarantee that the US armed forces operate effectively (IHR, 2005, 60–61), making the country's overall position less consistent than it seems.

been hailed as a model for reducing communicable diseases in developing countries (Schwartz et al., 2007). Critical to this success was the prevention-first strategy combined with an extensive healthcare bureaucracy comprising the Ministry of Health, provincial and country-level Epidemic Prevention Stations (for infectious-disease surveillance and running sanitation, immunization, and health-education programmes), and the Red Medical Workers (in rural areas).

In those years, China's international health engagement was rather limited. Initially restricted to the Soviet bloc and then enlarged to the so-called intermediate zones, Chinese health cooperation was linked to the country's effort to export the revolution and confined to dispatching medical teams to Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia to offer preventive care and essential services (Huang, 2010, pp. 109–10).

In Deng Xiaoping's plans, the creation of wealth (in addition to national security) became a top government priority. But although Chinese funding for the Epidemic Prevention Service increased in nominal terms, public health reforms reduced the scale of the overall public health system, especially regarding communicable diseases whose prevention and cure were less profitable (Chan et al., 2009, p. 5; Huang, 2010). In rural areas, conditions such as tuberculosis and schistosomiasis resurfaced (Huang, 2014b, pp. 84–86).

China's relationship with global health institutions also changed. Transforming hospitals into profit-making machines reduced healthcare workers' opportunity cost of joining medical teams (Huang, 2010, p. 111). On the other hand, Chinese interest in international health governance grew because it became a precious source of healthcare financing (Huang, 2015, pp. 43–44).

In 1978 the Ministry of Health signed a historic memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the WHO, which designated forty-one research institutes as WHO centres.

From 1978 to 1994, China obtained from the WHO technical support, policy counselling, and personnel training in health policy, in addition to financial assistance (Chan et al., 2009). Huang (2015) lists several collaborations between China and international institutions with public health mandates which funded the development of the country's healthcare system (Huang, 2015, p. 48). With the end of the Cold War and with China's integration into the world economy, the country became even more constructively involved in international institutions (including health-related ones). The shift was also motivated by the desire to appear to be an internationally responsible state and not a system challenger (Johnston, 2003). Along these lines, in Huang (2012, pp. 85–86) perspective, the Tiananmen crisis contributed to strengthening international guidelines on public health in China, with important results: the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CCDC) was created, the Law on Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases promulgated, immunization of children sponsored, a high vaccination rate reached, and polio eradication achieved. However, as the state became a 'defence regime', its capacity to detect and respond to emerging and reemerging infectious diseases was, once more, severely compromised.

Leaders promoted an ostrich policy towards critical public problems including public health ones, thus incentivizing cover-ups of disease outbreaks.[7] HIV/AIDS represents a case in point. In 2001, while Western countries had been debating the disease's national-security implications for ten years, China was still in denial. Since the first cases were reported in the country (1985–1989), China concealed the disease and refuted the existence of a crisis.

Beijing explicitly prevented discussion on the topic and even covered up a local-government-sanctioned paid-blood-donation scheme that reused needles and mixed blood donations (He e Detels 2005; see also Huang 2012, p. 88). The WHO played a key role in alerting local health officials to the gravity of the threat, helped to identify illegal blood collection in rural areas, and assisted local civil society organizations to gain representation within decision-making bodies (e.g. the China Country Coordinating Mechanism for the Global Fund), but the situation was slow to change (Huang, 2006).

The health-security process regarding HIV/AIDS and other epidemics was part of a larger development of including nontraditional security (NTS) threats in national-security considerations, an idea which emerged in a position paper submitted to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Forum in July 2002. The document, further developed in a joint declaration, did not specifically acknowledge health issues within NTS threats, but created the environment for that acknowledgement the following year.

Originally intended to build a stronger relationship with neighbouring countries and the international community, the NTS-related narrative initially had limited impact on domestic communicable diseases.[8] The years 2003–2005 represented a critical juncture regarding how the Chinese government viewed global and national public health. SARS emerged in Guangdong Province in November 2002, eventually infecting 8,400 people worldwide and killing almost 1,000. The Chinese government was heavily censured for its management of the pandemic. The main criticisms pointed to the poorly functioning infectious-disease surveillance system, dysfunctional central–local communication and coordination, lack of transparency, and information cover-ups during the early days of the epidemic (Huang, 2012). Only after the WHO opted for an unprecedented 'name and shame' policy and Chinese leaders realized that their actions were jeopardizing China's image as a responsible player in the international system did Beijing change its attitude and accede to WHO's demands, thus reinforcing the WHO's authority (Huang, 2020a, b, pp. 118–19).[9]

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[7]This idea was validated during multiple conversations with former WHO technical officers working at WHO World Health Emergency Department, Country Preparedness & IHR.

[8]For an overview of the expanding role of nontraditional security in contemporary Chinese foreign and security policy, see Ghiselli (2018, pp. 614–14).

[9]For more on the WHO's response to SARS, see inter alia Hanrieder Hanrieder & Kreuder-Sonnen, 2014.

When President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao were appointed, the change of direction became apparent. The new posture was advertised through private and public discourses (e.g. in a Politburo meeting, the new leadership announced its determination to fight the disease) substantiated by actions (central authorities ordered local governments to provide accurate information and declared that the number of cases was ten times higher than that stated the day before), and most importantly came with concessions (the WHO was finally granted access to Beijing, Guangdong, and other places in China while at that time the international community and the WHO had a modest legal basis for condemning China for its refusal to allow its delegation into the country). No less critical in providing legitimacy to health security governance was the Chinese government's public admission of the country's 'past mistakes'. In April 2003, during a meeting with ASEAN leaders in Bangkok, Wen stated, 'In the face of the outbreak of this sudden epidemic, we lack experience with its prevention and control. The crisis management mechanism and the work of certain localities and departments are not quite adequate' (Huang, 2010, p. 119).

From that moment on, Beijing employed the health-security argument extensively, with slogans such as 'Declare war on SARS', 'Activate the whole party', 'Mobilize the entire population', and 'Win the war of annihilation against SARS' (Goldizen, 2016, p. 186). Since then, Beijing has mentioned control of infectious diseases in every white paper on national defence. Public health expenditures have been increased, disease reporting and surveillance upgraded, political governance reformed, and public health infrastructure expanded (Li, 2021, pp. 1222–27).

The CCDC was revamped to resemble its US counterpart. It was intended to provide advice to local centres for disease control, give policy recommendations to the Ministry of Health (MOH), spread educational material nationwide, and increase laboratory capacity (Zhang et al., 2017). The government invested US$850 million into building a novel-disease control-and-prevention infrastructure comprising in part a new online-surveillance system for reporting (from local hospitals to the CCDC and the MOH, bypassing the bureaucracy of provincial health commissions), inaugurated in 2004, and in part an automated alert system to facilitate central–local communications, introduced in 2008 (Zhang et al., 2017). Chinese participation in international (especially regional) global health institutions became more enterprising (Chan et al., 2009).

In 2005 the International Regulations revision process entered its final stages. Katz and Muldoon (2011) list China among the key players in the negotiations. On the one hand, China supported the idea that a treaty was needed to govern epidemics effectively. It recognized that solutions to global health problems needed common strategies for disease prevention and control and accepted the need to compromise. Chinese negotiators agreed with the treaty's enlarged scope and its adoption of an all-risk approach. Beijing conceded that the WHO would receive information from nonstate sources and that cooperation with the agency in disease surveillance and control would become mandatory, which would mean China would lose some control in reporting on and responding to diseases in its territory.

China also demonstrated flexibility regarding the universal application principle, according to which 'even political entities that are not WHO members should not be excluded from the WHO global diseases control network' (Huang, 2014a, p. 134).

On the other hand, China's delegate clearly highlighted Chinese priorities when he declared that 'health is a very important issue, but sovereignty and territorial integrity are more important to a sovereign state' (Huang 2012, p. 7). China's assertiveness regarding sovereignty was an incontrovertible fact.[10] Vis-à-vis the US's desire to strengthen the security profile of the IHR and the WHO's role in intentional and natural outbreaks, China (through an Iran-led coalition) opposed the adoption of any security-sensitive language and made sure to limit WHO's undertakings to public health activities (Weir, 2014). The topic was mainly linked to the potential involvement of the WHO (and the UNSC) in the deliberate or accidental release of biological agents—a possibility that the treaty, in the end, left open (although restricted to public health-related activities) and that China never legitimated. The position paper presented to the UN in 2005 is telling. It reads, 'Currently, there are no universally recognized standards to define whether contagious diseases pose a threat to international peace and security. Given that the Security Council's main function is to deal with issues that pose grave threats to international peace and security, it is inadvisable for it to repeat the work of other agencies [e.g., the WHO]' (Fidler, 2005, p. 367).

The second issue concerned Taiwan. Though, in May 2005, China signed an MoU with the WHO in which it agreed that Taiwanese medical experts could enjoy 'meaningful participation in WHO related activities', it also required that the WHO get China's consent before making direct contact with Taiwan and that any presence of WHO experts in Taiwan should be justified from both a technical and policy point of view (Huang 2010, p. 136).

Delegates from Taiwan attended WHA conferences as nonvoting observers only from 2009 to 2016, a period of relatively warm ties between Beijing and Taipei.[11]

After the IHR revision, China's public health institutions entered a 'golden time' (Husain, 2020). China revised its law governing transparency and information sharing during emergencies by implementing the New Regulations on Public Health Emergencies in a way that finally allowed provincial health authorities, supervised by the local government, to release epidemic information to the public without prior authorization from the MOH (such regulations do not apply to nongovernmental actors). The public health emergency-response system was developed from scratch (Wang et al. 2020, 18). Whatever the mechanism through which China's policy shift occurred (opportunism, issue linkages, identification of problems and framing,

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[10]For a deeper investigation over the role of SARS in activating the latent norm conflict between rules relating to sovereignty and health security in China and within the WHO see Kreuder-Sonnen, 2019.

[11]For more on the significance of China–Taiwan discord in the World Health Organization see Tubilewicz, 2012.

fostering transnational networks and advocacy, learning), it boosted China's international health presence (Huang, 2015).

According to Youde (2018, p. 16), there is no clearer sign of Chinese willingness to engage with health-security policy and the WHO than Dr Margaret Chan's nomination for director-general in 2007. Beijing had actively promoted her candidacy and gave her patronage (People's Daily 2006 in Youde, 2018, p. 16; interview with WHO DX). Chang was a native Hong Kong resident and had no part in China's domestic political power structure or diplomatic mission. According to Huang (2015), what made her appealing to Beijing was her apolitical reputation and her technocratic experience (mainly gained in Canada and other Western countries). In other words, she represented both a way to revise the image China had projected during SARS and a marker of China's improved international status.[12]

Chinese participation in health-security policy kept growing after Chan's election. In 2007 China received US$2.7 million to strengthen its capacity to respond to avian-flu outbreaks with a focus on implementing the WHO's 'whole-of-society pandemic readiness' (Shen, 2008). In the same year, China asked the World Bank and the WHO to draft proposals for China's new round of healthcare reform, a position which hardly fits with health-security policy's contestation (Huang, 2015, p. 54).

Avian flu captured global attention for its high fatality rate when it reemerged in Asia in December 2003, although the epidemic reached a peak only in 2006. China's initial response to the outbreak was described as 'more cautious' than before, with the MOH explicitly warning local officials that any cover-ups or deliberate delays in reporting could cause further spread of the disease (Chan et al., 2009, p. 12). Problems, where acknowledged, were attributed to lack of capacity, not lack of willingness. Later, UN health officials agreed that China had been honest with the international community about avian flu. In justifying misinformation from China during the outbreak, Christianne Brushkehead, of the Bird Flu Taskforce at the WHO, declared, 'China did not do it deliberately' (Rosenthal, 2006; see also Chan et al., 2009, p. 13).

China's management of EV71 was ambiguous, showing still-limited capacity and little transparency and public reporting (Chan 2011). The episode suggested that the enhancement in 2007 was still fragile and imperfect. Two aspects need, however, to be underscored. The first concerns the government's repeated claim that it did not purposefully conceal the virus, whatever mistakes had been made.[13] The second relates to the country's commitment to fighting foot and mouth disease in the years ahead of the outbreak, which resulted in China's production and delivery of the first vaccine against the virus.

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[12]For a more detailed account about the implications of Chinese support for Chan's campaign see Shen, 2008.

[13]On the significance of providing justification in case of international agreements' violations see inter alia Chayes and Chayes (1993, 1995).

Goldizen (2016), who analysed China's management of swine flu (which emerged in North America in 2009), believed that H1N1 (and not SARS) represented the real turnaround point in Beijing's epidemic policy. State Council President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen labelled the virus a 'national priority' and activated the National Pandemic Preparedness Plan immediately. A strict-containment approach was executed, which meant closing schools, scanning the temperatures of all passengers on flights from countries with confirmed infections, and banning pork products from Mexico, the United States, and Canada (Goldizen, 2016).

The measures targeting Mexican nationals instantly triggered a diplomatic row with Mexico and a hostile international reaction because they were not based on WHO recommendations, were void of public health justifications, and violated the IHRs. According to Huang (2010, pp. 143–46), however, China's behaviour should be framed as the result of the interplay between politics and science. Even if draconian and intrusive border controls were not scientifically justified, they made perfect political sense. Because they have been widely credited with helping stop the spread of SARS, the government made them the panacea for all infectious diseases. After health was securitized, health security became a common basis for political action, with all that this meant in the authoritarian Chinese system.[14]

A similar strategy was adopted to contain the 2013 avian influenza (H7N9), when China still earned praise from the international community. The CCDC sequenced the virus on 19 March 2013, and by 31 March the WHO was informed of all Chinese cases. In compliance with the IHRs and the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework, the virus sequence was released by 11 April. The new online reporting tool was crucial to the response, as it incorporated more than 90% of rural hospitals. In Goldizen (2016) account,

Beijing's response to H7N9 was transparent, assertive, swift, and effective (China was also the first state to develop and distribute an H1N1 vaccine).[15]

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[14] We could hardly interpret such a reaction as an existential challenge to the health-security policy in front of the European Union 'border politics' adopted in the early months of the COVID-19 crisis and the historical pervasive use of external border control (border orientation) in the face of actual or perceived health threats (Kenwick & Simmons, 2020).

[15] The only available measure of a country's health-security profile is the Global Health Security Index, an academic tool which allows intercountry comparisons on pandemic preparedness (available at https://www.ghsindex.org , accessed 2022, 17 June). The GHSI, a project of the Nuclear Threat Initiative and the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security developed jointly with The Economist Intelligence Unit, comprises 6 categories (prevention, detecting and reporting, rapid response, health system, compliance with international norms, and risk environment), 34 indicators, and 85 sub-indicators based on 140 questions. In 2019, China positioned itself at 51st place among 195 countries with scores in all but one category (norms) that are higher than average scores. The index also ranked China as the 12th most prepared country out of 56 upper-middle level income countries (Bell & Nuzzo, 2021: 100).

For a commentary, see https://chinapower.csis.org/china-health-security/.

Unfortunately, the utility of the index is limited in two ways. On the one side, data are not available for years before 2019 which makes time series analysis and longitudinal studies impossible. On the other side, recent studies have questioned the predictive value of the GHSI with regard

Before the COVID-19 crisis, challenges persisted in China's implementation of international health principles and norms (mainly those linked to equity, transparency, and human rights), but the changed status of the country in global health security had become apparent. In 2016 the WHO mentioned the need to update its collaboration with China: 'China is no longer primarily a beneficiary of development aid. China now draws upon its technical expertise and finances and serves as a development partner to other developing countries. China is an engaged Member State of WHO and the United Nations, active in multilateral platforms and a founder of new regional and global institutions and initiatives.'

Along the same lines, the *China-WHO Cooperation Strategy 2016–2020* described China in the following terms:

China plays an important role in global health security with its 1.3 billion strong, increasingly mobile population. The government actively promotes the implementation of IHR (2005), for example, ensuring timely notification of human cases of avian influenza A(H7N9) virus in 2013 and in 2014, ensuring that a national Ebola preparedness plan was in place, and coordinating 22 government agencies to reach 259 of 285 points of entry to attain IHR standard requirements. China is continually reviewing and strengthening preparedness in response to new and emerging threats of communicable diseases. China also contributes to global health and security through its 65 WHO collaborating centres, of which 59 are in mainland China. The country is also an increasingly important contributor to the global supply of affordable, essential medicines and vaccines (WHO 2016).

4   COVID-19

The virus later identified as SARS-CoV-2, which gave rise to a respiratory syndrome frequently complicated by acute pneumonia, began to circulate in Hubei Province in the last quarter of 2019.[16] As of May 2022, there have been over 5.5 million deaths from the syndrome and 530 million cases worldwide.

According to the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, there were three routes through which the WHO became aware of the outbreak on 31 December 2019—the Centers for Disease Control, Taiwan, who contacted the WHO through the International Health Regulations (2005) reporting system after

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to public health emergencies. As a matter of fact, the index has showed a poor correlation with countries' COVID-19-related mortality outcomes or disease risk importation (Haider et al. 2020). Beyond suggesting the need for a reappraisal of the ranking system and methods used to obtain the index based on experience gained from this pandemic, those studies imply that at the time being a qualitative/comparative analysis, as the one performed in the chapter, is still appropriate to appreciate the evolution of Chinese health provisions with regards to both diseases prevention/management and public health emergency response.

[16]For a detail discussion about the estimated outbreak's date, see Associated Press, 2020a, WHO, 2021, Huang, 2022.

noting media references to an outbreak of unknown origin; the alert published on the ProMED website and picked up by the epidemic surveillance system; and the WHO Country Office in China recording the public bulletin from the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission (The Independent Panel: 23).

China confirmed the outbreak on January 3 within the terms provided by the IHR (2005). Still, Beijing reportedly did not share all available information, especially concerning the virus's genetic sequence and means of transmission. A local cover-up of the disease occurred, especially at the municipal and provincial levels, and, most likely, there was further dissimulation at higher levels in the CCP (Christensen, 2020, Huang, 2020a, 2020b, Li, 2021, p. 1229).

According to some authors, prompter action may have reduced spread within and outside the country by about 85 percent (Lai et al. 2020).

Concerning human-to-human transmission, the problem was discussed during WHO regional coordinator Dr Gauden Galea's visit to Wuhan when their Chinese counterpart mentioned the need for the WHO to share news of the transmission with the public (Associated Press, 2020b).[17] The episode signalled that the epistemic community of scientists cooperated openly at the technical level until the party-state apparatus took control of epidemic management (Sullivan, 2022; see also Chaguan 2020).[18] Political issues could also explain why the WHO avoided releasing significant statements and did not declare a PHEIC one week earlier (Associated Press, 2020a), thus delaying the adoption of preventive measures (Ducharme, 2020).

Analysis of international press coverage, internal WHO documents (minutes of meetings, statements, and public and confidential reports), and interview accounts does not support the thesis of collusion between the WHO and China (see also Associated Press, 2020b and Huang et al., 2020). It instead suggests the WHO was constrained by the need to maintain a working relationship and efficient line of communication with Beijing to obtain updated information (e.g. epidemiological data, genetic sequences) and authorize the exploratory mission (see also Fidler 2020).[19] Davies draws parallels with the WHO's technical and diplomatic relations with several other countries (Davies & Wenham, 2020, p. 1230). In other words, the WHO needed China on board for the sake of epidemic response (more than it was dependent on China's economic support at that point). [20] As it was noted, years

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[17] Author's conversation with a former P5 officer, WHO World Health Emergencies, Country Preparedness & IHR, for a different opinion see also https://www.thinkchina.sg/china-cdc-head-hero-or-villain

[18] I confirmed this interpretation during interviews with former WHO staff, World Health Emergencies Department (WHO-WHE). To learn more about US–China government-to-government health relationship and bilateral technical exchanges between the two countries in the aftermath of SARS, during the Obama's and Trump's years, see Seligsohn, 2021

[19] To fully assess WHO's constraints and challenges in handling a global pandemic also acknowledge WHO WHA 73/10 2020 (WHO – IOAC, 2020).

[20] Under this perspective it is important to not overestimate China's pre-Covid contribution to the WHO budget. Prior to 2020 (biennium 2018–2019), China contributed only 0.21% percent of the WHO budget compared to the US's 14.67%, with only a slight increase in voluntary contributions

before, by China's chief negotiator during the IHR revision process: 'The future of IHR has no universality without China's participation' (Huang, 2010, p. 134). Consistent with this interpretation at the beginning of the outbreak would be the message of the first WHO–China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 where Chinese containment effort is praised as 'ambitious, agile and aggressive' (WHO, 2020b, 2020c see also WHO, 2020a).

As a matter of fact, on 22 January 2020, President Xi ordered a complete lockdown of Wuhan; within a few days, the state had enough hospitals and facilities to admit most infected people and their contacts, and the CCP had implemented a grid management system and an extensive array of surveillance techniques was granted. To maintain control, the government initiated a zero-tolerance approach under which detecting even one case would trigger mass testing and aggressive contact tracing (Huang, 2022, p. 6).

Abroad, China worked hard to portray an image of prosperity and advertise the superiority of its model vis-à-vis the rest of the world in what has been viewed as a 'rebranding campaign' (Huang, 2022, p. 6). With this aim, China started exporting large amounts of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ventilators, medical supplies, and vaccines. China actively tried to influence international media and close diplomatic and economic ties through COVID-19-related aid and assistance.[21] Because they were tied to global and ideological competition, Chinese domestic and international measures have been interpreted as a broader attempt to exercise soft power and a claim to global leadership.[22]

For the first time, nowhere in the Chinese national and international narrative can one find any apology for pandemic misconduct, unlike during SARS and ensuing epidemics. Also, China worked hard to ensure that the country's 'success' was documented by WHO and international institutions. The manifestation of this effort was Xi's speech at the WHA delivered on 18 May 2020,[23] together with the country's decision to pledge US$30 million for the WHO's coronavirus effort after Trump suspended US funding and quit the WHO in the summer of the same year.[24]

In a declaration to the WHO's Independent Panel, Zhong Nanshan, the public face of China's pandemic response, conceded that he played a critical role in convincing other panel members to revise the panel's report to make it less critical of China's response in the initial stages of the outbreak (Huang, 2022, p. 17).

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with respect to the past. For more data on WHO budget and accountability online at http://open. who.int/2018-19/contributors/contributor. See also WHO, 2019 and Chorev, 2020.

[21] For an accurate analysis of Beijing's interventionism and impact on the media international ecosystem, see Lim et al., 2021.

[22] For a comprehensive analysis of Chinese soft power projection, foreign propaganda, domestic externalities, international shortfalls, and the outcomes of those strategies, see Gill 2020.

[23] For a commentary, see Shih et al., 2020 and Niquet, 2020

[24] For a commentary, see Hernández, 2020.

Even more explicit was China's attempt to reshape the narrative on the origin of the pandemic, an effort conducted, in fact, within and not outside the existing governance system.[25] Beijing could not prevent the WHA from adopting Resolution 73.1 (WHA 73.1, 2020), which called for more research into 'the zoonotic source of the virus and the route of introduction to human population', but strictly controlled its implementation process. China's position vis-à- vis Australia, the first country to call publicly for an investigation into the pandemic's origin, is illustrative.[26] In 2020 China coauthored the terms of reference of the WHO-led mission (WHO, 2020d, see also WHO, 2020e) and kept the WHO from accessing Wuhan until January 2021. The study's conclusions were challenged by scientists and even the WHO's director (Beaumont, 2021).[27] The general opinion was that the investigations were neither independent nor complete. Nonetheless, the mission report's release (WHO, 2021) represented a diplomatic victory for China and a way to constrain the WHO's ability to access China and conduct a second-phase origin probe (Huang, 2022: 17).

The incoming proving ground for (soft) power competition in global health governance will probably concern the future of the health-security policy. The proposals for reinforcing the health-security framework have followed two main trajectories discussed at the 75th WHA meeting in Geneva (in May 2022). The first is the European Union's call for a new pandemic treaty—a call challenged on social media by politicians and experts who doubt that the treaty could avoid the IHR's problems.[28] Scholars also believe that the treaty in the end would hardly see the light precisely because it would not get the support of China and, tellingly, the United States. [29] The Working Group on Strengthening WHO preparedness and Response (WHO-WGPR, 2022) was charged with delivering a backbone document for future intergovernmental negotiations on the new treaty to be presented at the 75th WHA meeting.[30] On the first day of drafting the interim report to submit to the Executive

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[25] Note that the Resolution WHA 73.1, requesting the WHO Director-General to identify the source of SARS- CoV-2 and the route of transmission to humans, does not mention China not even once (WHA 73.1 2021).

[26] For a comprehensive analysis, see 'The deterioration of Australia–China relations' 2020.

[27] See also Director-General's report to Member States at the 75th World Health Assembly 2022, 23 May, available at https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-address-at-the-75th-world-health-assembly. 23-may-2022.

[28] For additional readings on this topic see Gostin et al., 2021; Kickbusch & Holzscheiter, 2021; Fidler, 2021; Wenham et al., 2022.

[29] Although according to the WHO's director China's first reaction to the proposal seemed optimistic only one year ago, Beijing would hardly accept ceding to WHO more power than has already been done. Along these lines, the American senate would hardly get to the two-thirds majority it needs to ratify, possibly for the reasons (https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/05/14/pandemic-pact-would-leave-world-chinas-mercy/).

Under this perspective it is useful to recall that the US position on outbreak's investigations and inspections has not been always consistent as the country sank the verification protocol project within the BTWC in 2001 after having sponsored the initiative for years.

[30] The work of the group is published at the WHO's 'governance' webpage available at https://apps.who.int/gb/wgpr/ accessed 2022, 17 June.

Council in January 2021, China requested that paragraph 11(d) of the draft proposal be deleted to remove reference to the WHO's rapid access to 'relevant sites during an outbreak to facilitate public health investigations' (Ridley, 2022; Cullinan & Fletcher, 2022).[31]

The second option is represented by the US's recommendation for a new IHR revision process. This would be a fast-track option to make the institution better able to address the current governance and compliance gaps. The US proposal comprises a detailed series of amendments to the IHR, with better-defined criteria and timelines for alerts, notifications, and responses to emerging diseases or outbreaks. The amendments will increase the WHO general director's emergency powers, create a compliance committee and universal peer-review mechanisms, and grant the WHO the right to carry out on-site assessment (or send expert teams) that the state party in question cannot easily reject (WHO deployment missions as a default option during PHEICs). The latter would raise the same reservation made over paragraph 11 of the WGPR interim report (WHO, 2022). China's unreceptive attitude should not necessarily be interpreted as a challenge to the system but as a reiteration of its inclination to defend its sovereignty and territory.

5   Conclusions

China's participation in international health institutions was extremely limited until the end of the 1970s. Between 1978 and 2002, its involvement with the WHO and global health-security governance progressively increased. The shift has been motivated by the need to sustain and advance the country's ailing health system (by acquiring funding, knowledge, and technology) and, after 1995, by the desire to appear to be a more responsible state in the international community. Domestic constraining factors limited significant behavioural changes and prevented rules transfer from bearing fruit. 'Mimicking', in Johnston's terminology, describes how China was socialized in international health governance until 2003, with both social influence and persuasion stages a long way ahead.

The SARS outbreak represented a significant wake-up call triggering two decades of constructive Chinese engagement with global health-security policy and growing compliance with its provisions on preparedness and capacity response to EIDs.

At the international level, although China has recognized that the solutions to global health problems require neoliberal strategies of cooperation regarding disease surveillance and response, the country has steadfastly resisted limitations to its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Consistently, China's responses to epidemic outbreaks after 2005 did not challenge the health-security governance's basic principles or WHO's authority as health-security 'orchestrator' but prevented developments that are incompatible

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[31] https://healthpolicy-watch.news/china-nixes-who-access/.

with its priorities even (and especially) when they clash with a US-driven agenda. Of this double standard, COVID- 19 was a litmus test. Although the initial stages of the pandemic showed persistent compliance problems (especially concerning transparency, protection of human rights, travel, and trade measures, and minilateral opportunistic international assistance), China's relationship with the WHO and the overall health-security governance was expressly enhanced, especially during the first months of the epidemic.

Yet China engaged in open competition with the United States concerning several aspects of the pandemic response (framing, strategies, short- and long-term solutions), actively promoting a Chinese health-security model to be emulated internationally.[32] Provision of medical supplies, mask, and vaccine diplomacy (especially in low middle income countries), and wolf-warrior postures suggest a growing Chinese desire for larger international influence in health-security policy. Chinese assertiveness is not new (Raman 2021), but its *global* projection in *health governance* seems to be.

From the combination of diverse needs and priorities surfaces the image of a country that aspires to improve its status in the hierarchy of the existing health-security policy framework without leading to its erosion or overturn, but still align health-security norms with the country preferences and current interests, including the 'health silk road' project. Whether these strategies will work depends on many technical and political variables, from the effectiveness of the Chinese containment strategy net of social and political costs to Washington's reaction to the CCP's global health ambitions. Discussion about a pandemic treaty or amendments to the IHR will be the next ground for confrontation.

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[32] For a discussion over the perspective diffusion of illiberal pandemic response strategies, risks of democratic backsliding, and democratic erosion, see Greitens, 2020.

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Part III
China's Links with Asia and Europe

Chinese Linkage and Leverage Under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Asia

Gul-i-Hina van der Zwan (ID)

Abstract This chapter introduces a novel conceptual framework of Chinese Linkage and Leverage for understanding China's engagement under the global connectivity framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Specifically, I focus on diverse cases in Asia within the subregions such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia and examine various dimensions of Chinese Linkage along economic, social, cultural, communication, and intergovernmental ties for the BRI partner countries from 2013 to 2019. Furthermore, I discuss the Chinese Leverage under BRI for unpacking the dynamics and influence of Chinese involvement and bilateral relations with the BRI partner countries.

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the aftermath of two speeches – the first one in September 2013 at Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan, and the second during the address to the Indonesian Parliament in October 2013. It becomes essential to understand the BRI conception, its meaning, and the motivations behind the Initiative. On 7 September 2013, Xi Jinping delivered a speech at Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan, where he emphasized the need for China and Kazakhstan along with its neighbors to work more closely to develop and maintain "a favorable environment for the economic development and the well-being of the people in this region" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs People's Republic of China, 2013).

President Xi stated that both countries need "to forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and expand development space in the Eurasian region" and "take an innovative approach and jointly build an economic belt along with the Silk Road" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs People's Republic of China, 2013). According to President Xi, it is essential to "improve road connectivity," create a "major transportation route connecting the Pacific and the Baltic Sea," and establish a "cross-

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border transportation infrastructure," and "a transportation network connecting East Asia, West Asia, and South Asia." He also emphasized to "promote unimpeded trade, remove trade barriers, reduce trade and investment cost, increase the speed and quality of regional economic flows and achieve win-win progress in the region" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs People's Republic of China, 2013). The focus on these words from his speech excerpt is essential as it chalks out his aspirations behind the BRI. Moreover, later that year on 3 October 2013, Xi Jinping also addressed the Indonesian Parliament and proposed building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in his speech titled "Jointly Build a China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny" (Belt and Road Portal, 2019b).

These two speeches served as the backdrop for understanding the conceptual framework of the "New Silk Roads" formally known as "一带一路 [*yi dai yi lu*]" literally translated as the "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) which was later changed, and now the initiative is officially called the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) as per the communiqué released by the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2016). The Initiative includes two main components: the "Belt" consisting of the road and rail transportation land routes called the "Silk Road Economic Belt," while the "Road" refers to the sea routes known as the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (Kuo & Kommenda, 2018), and jointly they are called the Belt and Road (B & R) or Belt and Road Initiative or the BRI (henceforth). Under the BRI, there are six international economic cooperation corridors, namely the "New Eurasian Land Bridge; the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor; the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor; the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor; the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor" (Belt and Road Portal, 2019b). Nevertheless, some of these "corridor" countries have not officially signed up with the BRI such as India and Russia but their proposed inclusion will enhance the regional connectivity plan of the Initiative. The land and sea routes initially included around 64 countries but the number of countries joining the BRI is evolving and the "list" of countries is continuously being updated. Under the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) of the People's Republic of China, the Leading Group has been set up for promoting the Initiative. According to the latest data, the Chinese government has signed over 200 cooperation agreements for the BRI with 151 countries and 32 international organizations as of 6 January 2023 (Belt and Road Portal, 2023). The initial five cooperation priority areas of the BRI highlighted in the report titled "The Belt and Road Initiative: Progress, Contributions and Prospects" by the Office of the Leading Group for Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative in 2019 included "(1) policy coordination; (2) connectivity of infrastructure; (3) unimpeded trade; (4) financial integration; and (5) closer people-to-people ties" (Belt and Road Portal, 2019a).

The scholarship on the BRI has been strikingly polarized thus far. Some scholars have supported this initiative significantly (see Liu & Dunford, 2016; Ruwitch & Blanchard, 2017; Zhang, 2018) while others considered it a Sino-centric hegemonic power play and criticized its ambitions of reshaping the world order (see Ferdinand,

2016; Callahan, 2016; Allison, 2017; de Wijk, 2019; Spatafora, 2019). In the study conducted by Zhang Youwen, he argues that BRI not only promotes international cooperation through economic development for the partner countries and incorporates innovation to enhance economic globalization, but it also provides a "China Solution" for the development issues and needs (Y. Zhang, 2018).

The BRI entails a major reorientation of China's foreign and economic policy that seeks to reinvigorate relations between Beijing and its neighbors in Asia (Brakman et al., 2019).

Reuters reported that according to the Foreign Ministry of China, the BRI enables "to usher in a new era of globalization that is open, inclusive and beneficial to all" (Ruwitch & Blanchard, 2017). This strand of literature resonates aptly with the official narrative of the Chinese government according to which the BRI is a "win-win" cooperation for the countries involved (Belt and Road Portal, 2019a). According to the official document released by the Leading Group for Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative, the BRI is a "Chinese proposal whose aim is to promote peaceful cooperation and common development around the world," "[...] it carries forward the spirit of the Silk Road and pursues mutual benefit and complementary gains" (*Building the Belt and Road: Concept, Practice and China's Contribution*, 2017, 7). The Chinese government's official narrative suggests that the BRI is a platform for international cooperation serving a "public product provided by China to the world" which is an open and inclusive economic cooperation initiative (Belt and Road Portal, 2019a). Liu and Dunford's work also reflects a similar perspective of the BRI as they argue that China engages more with developing countries and helps to build infrastructure, modernize, and reduce poverty (Liu & Dunford, 2016). Moreover, they argue that the BRI is making globalization more inclusive (Liu & Dunford, 2016).

As opposed to the view of the BRI as a "win-win" for the countries involved, the critics of the BRI claim that China wants to assert its power and reshape the global order (see Ferdinand, 2016; Callahan, 2016; Allison, 2017; de Wijk, 2019; Spatafora, 2019). According to Peter Ferdinand, the BRI is intended to challenge the US hegemony and reshape the global order (Ferdinand, 2016). China is using the BRI to create new institutions and policies and aims to construct a "new regional order" which is Sino-centric by portraying a "community of shared destiny" (Callahan, 2016). Rob de Wijk cautions that China is on its way to taking over the world and our leaders do not seem to understand it (de Wijk, 2019). According to Bruno Maçães, the Belt and Road is about China's power projection. He highlights that the map of BRI tells the story of power and influence, and it is indeed a movement representing the expansion of the Chinese influence and heralding a new set of political values, rival to those of the "West" (Maçães, 2018). Talking about the US–China relations, Graham Allison has cautioned about the "Thucydides's Trap" where a rising power challenges the established power and it leads to war referring to a situation when Greek historian Thucydides argued that the growth of Athenian power instilled fear in Sparta which made war inevitable (Allison, 2017). Additionally, many critics have also argued about China's hegemonic and military expansion ambitions such as the case of Djibouti in Africa being

China's first naval outpost (Headley, 2018). The Chinese infrastructure lending under BRI has also been dubbed a "Debt-Trap Diplomacy" where the countries are unable to pay back the Chinese loans (Davidson, 2018). The most cited case is the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka which has been signed over to a Chinese state-owned company for a 99-year lease due to the inability of the Sri Lankan government to repay the loan (Davidson, 2018). However, the "debt-trap" myth has been debunked recently (Brautigam & Rithmire, 2021). Furthermore, the scholars have also highlighted the political risks of investing in turbulent political conditions (Zhang et al., 2019).

As most perspectives about China's expansion under BRI do not include explicit analysis of various state and non-state actors, such perspectives disregard the role played by the domestic agency of the recipient countries. This is highly relevant when it comes to understanding the Chinese engagement under BRI – how do the projects pan out on the ground? Who are the main players, public and private stakeholders, businesses, and institutions, as well as the beneficiaries of such huge development projects? Given a complex web of large-scale infrastructure projects under BRI spanning across various regions and sectors, the Chinese engagement under BRI needs to be analyzed from a multidimensional framework to understand various mechanisms and patterns of involvement with the partner countries.

Particularly, the BRI projects involve various sectors ranging from energy, technology, and infrastructure development such as railways, roads, highways, ports, bridges, and several transport networks across different regions with various socioeconomic, cultural, historical, and political challenges. Hence, a comprehensive framework is required that extends beyond the conventional understanding, i.e., focusing only on the economic and diplomatic aspects but rather also including other dimensions such as social, cultural, and communication ties. Therefore, I propose a new concept of *Chinese Linkage and Leverage Under BRI* to study the linkages and networks created through the BRI as well as understand what leverage China has with the BRI partner countries.

1   Theory of Chinese Linkage and Leverage

As China's financing under BRI takes various forms such as concessional loans, foreign direct investments, grants, and joint ventures and varies significantly from project to project across several sectors, it is essential to understand different kinds of deals, their terms and conditions, and agreements for the BRI partner countries. Furthermore, under the BRI, China has established new institutions that have allowed it to craft more space and, hence, it exerts substantial "influence" as well as provides leverage while engaging with the partner countries. The primary source of funding for the BRI has been the Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM), China Development Bank, Silk Road Fund, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) among others. With these China-led institutions, China has also strengthened its linkages with BRI countries through trade, investment, and intergovernmental

and military ties. It has contributed to enhancing China's influence in the region with considerable political implications. The studies exploring Chinese influence have also examined if and to what extent the Chinese linkages and networks exert political influence (Kastner & Pearson, 2021). With the US–China "trade war" under Trump's presidency, the US Department of Defense regarded the BRI as an expansion of China's influence. The former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo criticized China to have "corrupt infrastructure deals in exchange for political influence" and using "bribe-fueled debt-trap diplomacy" (Reuters, 2019). However, does this economic influence translate into political "influence"? If yes, how to understand the nature, degree, and depth of this "influence"?

Although the BRI has the capability to exert a certain weight in political actions and decisions of the partner countries, the direction of this "influence" seems to advance the political goals of China in some cases while undermining Chinese influence in the other cases (Kastner & Pearson, 2021). On the one hand, several countries that have increased economic ties with China have been seen to change their approach to the Dalai Lama, i.e., looking at their voting patterns in the UN Security Council. This could be regarded as a positive case of Chinese economic ties yielding political influence. On the other hand, China's increased economic ties have created a backlash in Malaysia when the newly appointed prime minister warned about the heavy reliance on Chinese loans and the "debt-trap" fear (Dancel, 2019).

Due to this mixed evidence, it becomes essential to understand under what conditions the Chinese economic ties yield political influence in the policy and decision-making of the BRI countries. What are the mechanisms of such influence in the BRI partner countries? And what implications does it have for the governance trajectory of the countries involved?

In the case of China's BRI, the mechanisms and incentives are economically and sometimes also strategically driven but not ideologically driven. The incentives vary in the BRI partner countries and depend on the geographical proximity, resources, technology, and other motivations from the Chinese side. Similarly, the incentives from the partner countries are mainly economic and development of the region, to attract more FDI and enhance the capacity of their industries and infrastructure. Countries have joined the BRI in the pursuit of economic gains and strategic leverage against other foreign aid avenues. This brings in the dimension of external linkages, networks, and alliances the BRI partner countries have. The existing closeness or lack thereof with the "West" also plays a crucial role in understanding the extent and strength of linkages with China.

The scholarly work on China's BRI and the Chinese engagement in partner countries has been focused more on the economic and political aspects of the influence; however, what is lacking in the literature is a multidimensional theoretical framework with a nuanced and explicit analysis of several mechanisms of Chinese influence. Thus, my research is the first systematic study to address the gap in the literature and puts forth a novel theory of Chinese Linkage and Leverage to understand various layers and levels of Chinese involvement under the BRI. The theory of Chinese Linkage and Leverage allows the analysis of Chinese engagement from a wider comparative lens while providing an inclusive conceptual framework to

comprehend the implications of Chinese engagement at the domestic, regional, and global levels.

1.1   Chinese Linkage Under BRI

I define Chinese Linkage based on the theoretical framework of Levitsky and Way's seminal work on "Western" Linkage (Levitsky & Way, 2006). As I have put forth my theory and conceptualization of Chinese Linkage in Asia in my earlier work (van der Zwan, 2022), this chapter builds upon the concept of Chinese Linkage further and elaborates on the theoretical underpinnings and referents.

For defining the concept of Chinese Linkage, I assumed five linkage dimensions as the core attributes. I established the minimal definition of Chinese Linkage if the partner countries have (a) diplomatic relations and (b) economic relations with China – and these two serve as the minimal criterion for the Chinese Linkage to occur. The first core attribute is the existence of a diplomatic linkage if a particular country has established diplomatic relations with China, i.e., most notably observed by the presence of an embassy or consulate of China in the partner country. The second core attribute of the Chinese Linkage is the establishment of economic ties in terms of bilateral trade, the flow of investments, or credit, etc., between China and the partner country. The absence of diplomatic and economic relations would classify a country as a "null" case because we cannot observe the Chinese Linkage fully or at least as conceptualized within the scope of this study. Therefore, I regard these two core attributes to be essential for my Chinese Linkage conceptualization.

Nevertheless, for the conceptual framework for the present study, I include all five dimensions as the core attributes for defining the concept of Chinese Linkage. The main reason behind such a combination of attributes is that the explanatory power of the theory is fully realized only in the presence of these five attributes. The dimensions of economic ties, intergovernmental ties, social ties, cultural ties, and communication ties form the basic pillars and crucial aspects for understanding any impact of Chinese Linkage in the BRI partner countries. Moreover, it follows the logic of Levitsky and Way's conceptualization of Linkage and adapts to the alternative specification for defining Chinese Linkage.

Additionally, the concept can be extended to include more referents and perhaps secondary dimensions such as technological or technocratic ties, and civil society linkages; however, one must be careful to avoid "conceptual stretching" and not to loosen the concept just to make it applicable to more cases (Goertz, 2005).

Using the theoretical framework of Levitsky and Way, I constructed the Chinese Linkage along five dimensions, namely, economic ties, social ties, cultural ties, communication ties, and intergovernmental ties (van der Zwan, 2022). My conceptualization of Chinese Linkage, however, deviates from Levitsky and Way's measure in the following aspects. First, I include cultural ties and military ties for examining China's linkages especially because there has been quite a polarized

debate on the geopolitical implications of the BRI and it has been regarded as an instrument for China's soft power (Hartig, 2016).

Therefore, I include the dimension of cultural ties in addition to social ties that cater to understanding the cultural aspect in terms of the number of openings of the Confucius Institutes, Mandarin language learning centers, and increased educational and cultural exchange programs between China and the BRI country. The second deviation from Levitsky and Way's model is that I exclude "technocratic linkage" as a separate dimension but rather include the educational ties as part of the social linkage dimension of the Chinese Linkage.

Third, I do not include the "civil-society linkage" because it is more relevant and meaningful in the case of Western Linkage as it has been an instrument of democracy promotion, and Chinese involvement is mostly characterized by state-led entities and enterprises. Thus, I defined the Chinese Linkage as:

> "the density or deepening of ties such as economic, social, cultural, communication, and intergovernmental ties in terms of diplomatic and military cooperation among particular countries and China along with the participation in China-led regional or multilateral institutions." (van der Zwan, 2022)

This multidimensional framework allows us to understand a myriad of networks and interdependencies that China has created through multiple road and rail transport channels, corridors, and sea routes under the BRI. Chinese Linkage theory enables cross-case comparisons or the longitudinal analysis of the impact of Chinese engagement in partner countries.

1.2 Chinese Leverage Under BRI

Linkage in the presence of leverage combined can explain the varying levels of political influence in a comprehensive manner. The concept of "leverage" has been abundantly used in the literature and dominated the debates on international relations (Friman, 2015) and global politics as states and international actors exert pressure in a variety of ways. Leverage is most commonly used as a bargaining tool in diplomacy but also as an exercise of direct political and economic pressure (Vachudova, 2005). Moreover, leverage can take the form of external pressure such as sanctions, political conditionality, and sometimes military intervention. However, Levitsky and Way do not regard it as direct external pressure, but rather as how vulnerable the recipient country is to external democratizing pressure (Levitsky & Way, 2010). The "Western leverage," thus, included two main aspects: (1) if the country has a bargaining power vis-à-vis the external (Western) democratization pressure and (2) if the country can absorb the potential impact of a punitive action (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 41).

They ground the concept into three main factors. The first is the size and economic strength of the country. The small and aid-dependent countries with weak states are relatively more vulnerable to external pressure than those of larger

countries with considerable military or economic power (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 41). Less vulnerable countries then hold strong bargaining power against the external democratizing pressure and have the capability to absorb the punitive action – and are classified as cases of low leverage. If the vulnerability to democratizing pressure is high with weak bargaining power and countries are heavily impacted by the Western punitive action, they would be considered as high leverage cases.

The second factor, identified by Levitsky and Way, is the existence of competing security interests for the Western powers. The levels of leverage vary if the country has strategic or economic interests such as major oil producer economies or strategically important allies, then the government has high bargaining power, and the Western powers exert less democratizing pressure (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 41). This has rarely resulted in democratization.

The third factor affecting Western Leverage is the presence of alternative regional powers – counter-hegemonic powers or "black knights" (Hufbauer et al., 1990), whose support strengthens the autocratic regime against the Western democratizing pressure. If the country has support in terms of economic, political, diplomatic, or military from another power then it serves as a counterweight and offsets the Western Leverage in that country (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 41).

Like the Chinese Linkage, the conceptualization of Chinese Leverage is also based on Levitsky and Way's concept of "Western Leverage." For conceptualizing the Chinese Leverage, I take the four dimensions as proposed by Levitsky and Way, namely, the size of the economy, oil production, possession or capacity to use nuclear weapons, and if the country is a major beneficiary of the Western aid (Levitsky & Way, 2006, p. 373). However, for the Chinese Leverage conceptualization, the third criterion does not give us much information on many Asian countries except Pakistan, India, and North Korea. As India and North Korea are non-BRI countries, it is only Pakistan. Moreover, since this dimension had more relevance for understanding the Western Leverage (in terms of a direct democracy promotion agenda), for the Chinese Leverage, it does not constitute a vital dimension. Hence, I do not include this indicator as part of my measurement of Chinese Leverage. Rather I observe if the country is a recipient of "Western" foreign or development aid. Therefore, I define Chinese Leverage as:

> the degree to which governments are vulnerable to external (non)democratic or Chinese pressure.

It is noteworthy to mention that the Chinese Leverage measure differs from the Western Leverage of Levitsky and Way as China does not actively promote autocracy and China has not put any direct pressure to non-democratize the BRI partner countries.

However, it is crucial to examine the leverage a country has against the Chinese "influence" under BRI projects – non-democratic or otherwise because it allows capturing the level of vulnerability of the BRI partner government. It also allows us to compare different countries with whom China is engaging under the BRI and provides us with a conceptual and analytical framework to classify countries based

on their level of vulnerability to the Chinese "pressure," if any. Therefore, the Chinese Leverage will be calculated by four dimensions as proposed by Levitsky and Way.

1.3 Chinese Leverage Measure

According to Levitsky and Way's measure of (Western) Leverage, a country would fall under the category of low leverage if that country meets at least one of the following criteria: (1) if it has a large economy, (2) if it is a major oil producer, and (3) if a country possesses or has the capacity to use nuclear weapons. However, the third criterion does not give us information on many Asian countries except Pakistan; thus, I exclude it as part of my Chinese Leverage measure. Instead, I measure if the BRI partner country is a recipient of "Western" foreign or development aid.

The first indicator of the "size of the economy" is measured by taking the total GDP of the BRI country by using World Bank World Development Indicator. If a country has a total GDP of more than US$100 billion, it can be categorized as a large economy (Levitsky & Way, 2006, p. 373). The second indicator "major oil producer" is measured by the annual production of more than one million barrels of crude oil per day on average based on the US Energy Information Administration data (EIA, 2020). The third indicator of "beneficiary of Western assistance" is measured by analyzing if a country receives a significant bilateral aid (at least 1% of GDP) and the majority of which comes from a major Western power such as the United States, United Kingdom, or EU (Levitsky & Way, 2006, p. 373). Analyzing these dimensions along with the Chinese Linkage measure together is vital as it enables us to understand both sides of the coin so to say and facilitate an in-depth analysis of the cross-national variation in the degree of linkage and leverage of China. Depending on the level of the economy, its oil production, and aid dependency on the West, a country can have a bargaining capacity against the Chinese influence under BRI, if any.

1.4 Low Chinese Leverage Size of the Economy

Using Levitsky and Way's threshold for the economy, it is considered large if the total GDP is more than US$100 billion and it is considered a medium-sized economy if the GDP lies between US$50 billion and US$100 billion. Therefore, I measure the economic size by taking the total GDP of the BRI country using World Bank World Development Indicator (World Bank, 2020). If the BRI partner country has a total GDP of more than US$100 billion, it is categorized as a large economy (Levitsky & Way, 2006, p. 373).

1.5 Oil Production

Oil production is an important indicator for the development of an economy. The criterion given by Levitsky and Way's model is that if a country is producing more than 1 million barrels of crude oil per day on average then it is considered a major oil-producing country, while annual production of 200,000 to one million barrels of crude oil per day average would classify that country as a secondary oil producer. For measuring the annual oil production, I take the data from the US Energy Information Administration: total production of crude oil including lease condensate in billion barrels per day from 2013 to 2019 (EIA, 2020).

1.6 Medium Chinese Leverage

The countries that do not meet any of the above criteria for low leverage but meet at least one of the following criteria would fall under the category of medium leverage cases.

1.7 Medium-Sized Economy

Using Levitsky and Way's threshold for the economy, it is considered a medium-sized economy if the total GDP lies between US$50 billion and US$100 billion. It would be useful for the analysis of all BRI countries and to classify them according to these criteria.

1.8 Secondary Oil Producer

If the country is producing from 200,000 to one million barrels of crude oil per day on average, then that country would fall under the category of a secondary oil producer.

1.9 Competing Security Issues

If the country has major security or foreign policy-related issue for China, then it is categorized as a medium leverage country.

1.10   The Beneficiary of Western Assistance

If the country receives significant bilateral aid (at least 1% of GDP) and the majority of which comes from a major Western power such as the United States, United Kingdom, or EU (Levitsky & Way, 2006, p. 373), I use their classification of a major power as a high-income country with a GDP per capita of US$10,000 or higher or a major military power with annual military spending of more than US$10 billion based on the data available from the SIPRI Military Expenditure from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute dataset (SIPRI, 2020).

The next section deals with the assessment of Chinese Linkage dimensions under the BRI activities in diverse countries across Asia.

2   Understanding Chinese Linkage Under BRI in Asia

Although I presented the theory of Chinese Linkage and Leverage above, I limit the scope of discussion in this section to examining the Chinese Linkage dimensions for a variety of cases in Asia during the post-BRI period. As Asia holds a central position in the regional connectivity plan of the BRI, it has been a hub for most of the "early harvest" BRI projects.

Especially due to the fact that the six economic corridors of the BRI pass through Asia: (1) the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor; (2) China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor; (3) Bangladesh-China-Myanmar Corridor; (4) China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor; (5) China- Indochina Peninsula Corridor; and (6) the New Eurasian Land Bridge (Belt and Road Portal, 2019b).

Due to the varying nature of BRI projects within subregions of Asia, the perceptions of the BRI have also differed considerably. Regarding the regional responses to the BRI, mostly case studies have been conducted. For instance, Hong and Lim (2019) have analyzed the case of Malaysia in Southeast Asia and the BRI projects such as the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL), Bandar Malaysia, and Forest City. They argued that the domestic players' pursuit of goals depends on the realization of "Malaysia's pro-ethnic Malay agenda, a common development goal between the state and federal authorities, and fulfillment of geopolitical interests for both Malaysia and China" (Hong & Lim, 2019, p. 217). Some of the BRI partner countries have used BRI projects to capture domestic gains. For instance, the analysis conducted by Murton et al. (2016) challenges the conventional theoretical expectation of Chinese development as an overwhelming extractive force; they rather show how Nepal uses Chinese involvement to propel domestic projects of state formation and national security locally. Their study focused on understanding how infrastructure is used in the national state-making agendas and how local experiences and responses vary with regard to the international development interventions (Murton et al., 2016). However, many of the partner countries in China's "neighborhood" have perceived the BRI projects reasonably positively. A Belgian-based think-tank Bruegel

Table 1 List of countries inclusive of selected BRI countries

Regions	BRI countries
East Asia and Pacific	Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Vietnam
South Asia	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
Central Asia	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan

Source: Selection based on China's Public Diplomacy dataset, AidData

investigated the extent to which the partner countries in Asia differed in their perceptions of the BRI. While Laos showed a positive media sentiment tone, the countries such as Maldives, India, and Bhutan indicated a negative tone (García-Herrero & Jianwei, 2019, p. 6).

The selection of countries has been made primarily from the pool of countries that were part of the initial BRI Action Plan in 2015 issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (Action plan on the Belt and Road Initiative, 2015). Although there exists no "official" list of BRI countries as the number of countries is still evolving, there are different versions of the BRI country classification. Some countries have signed an MoU while others did not officially sign up as part of the BRI but are still on the "map" of the economic corridors of the BRI such as India and Russia among others. For this research, the countries are considered BRI partners if the country has officially signed an MoU with China on the BRI projects since the Initiative's launch in 2013 up until 2019. The countries are included as per the data provided on the official Belt and Road Portal of the Chinese Government but also triangulated with other sources: (1) the data from the China Global Investment Tracker by the American Enterprise Institute CGIT, 2021); (2) the BRI participants list published by the Green Finance and Development Center at Fudan University, China (Nedopil, 2022); and (3) the report produced by the Council on Foreign Relations (Sacks, 2021). Another important consideration is the availability of relevant data needed for constructing variables for measuring Chinese Linkage. Therefore, the country selection also draws from and relies on China's Public Diplomacy dataset from the AidData for 26 BRI countries within Asia covering the subregions: East Asia and Pacific, South Asia, and Central Asia (Table 1).

The selection of the countries is based primarily on the literature that has highlighted "geographical proximity" to be one of the major factors for understanding China's "influence" in the neighboring countries (Tansey et al., 2016). Additionally, the trajectory of bilateral relations and public diplomacy of China varies greatly among Asian countries, thus providing a suitable spectrum to observe a variety of linkages with China.

Therefore, I discuss the Chinese Linkage dimensions for 26 BRI countries in Asia from 2013 until 2019 using indicator-level data from various sources.

2.1   Economic Linkage Under BRI

I measure economic linkage by taking the level of bilateral trade between China and the BRI partner country as a share of the total trade. I use the bilateral trade data from the UN Comtrade database (UN Comtrade, 2020). The trade flows include both bilateral exports and imports, and I construct the export share and import share as a share of the total trade of the BRI partner country using the World Bank World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2020) (Figs. 1 and 2).

Analyzing the bilateral export share, Mongolia has the highest bilateral exports to China out of its total trade from 2013 to 2019. Furthermore, the export share for Myanmar, South Korea, New Zealand, and Laos ranks after Mongolia, whereas
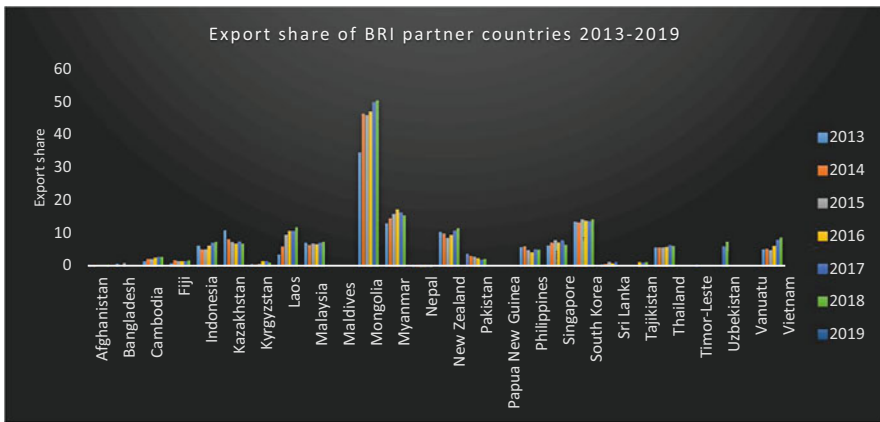

Fig. 1 Export share of partner countries from 2013 to 2019. Source: Author's adaptation based on UN Comtrade data and World Bank data
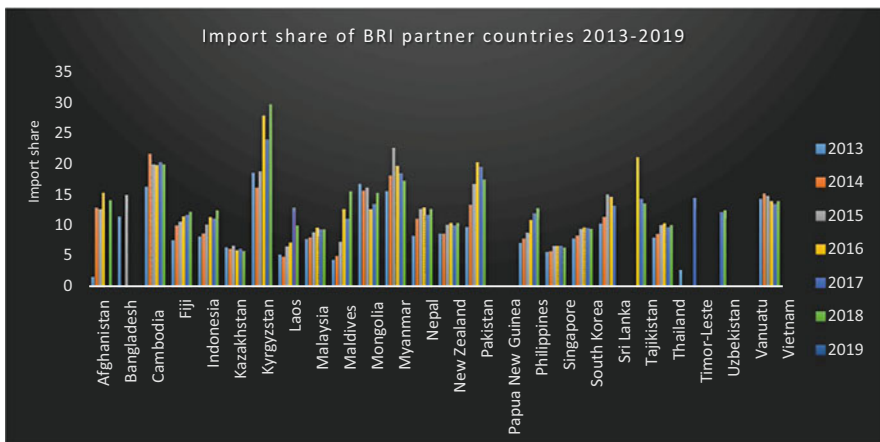

Fig. 2 Import share of partner countries from 2013 to 2019. Source: Author's adaptation based on UN Comtrade data and World Bank data

Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu do not show any bilateral exports to China during the 2013–2019 period.

Kyrgyzstan shows the highest bilateral imports from China out of its total trade. It is followed by the import share of Cambodia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Mongolia, Vietnam, and Nepal. Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu show no imports from China while Timor Leste and Uzbekistan show the lowest imports from China as a share of their total trade, respectively.

2.2 Social Linkage Under BRI

Due to the mobility of Chinese workers under a plethora of BRI projects across various regions within Asia, the number of travels has also increased between China and BRI countries. As people-to-people exchanges have been one of the core policy areas for the BRI (Belt and Road Portal, 2019a, 2019b), it has also contributed to increased levels of educational exchanges and scholarships for the BRI countries. There have been extensive scholarships given under the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) scheme for students from the BRI countries (Dawn, 2017) as well as under the "Silk Road Program" (Belt and Road Portal, 2019a). Thus, I measure social linkage by recording the number of international students studying in China from the BRI country annually (AidData, 2021) as a share of the total number of students abroad. I take the total number of students studying abroad from the BRI country using the education policy indicators from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) (UNESCO, 2021) (Fig. 3).

The share of international students studying in China from the BRI partner countries in the post-BRI period (2013–2019) indicates higher levels of student mobility across several countries in Asia. Laos has the highest number of students
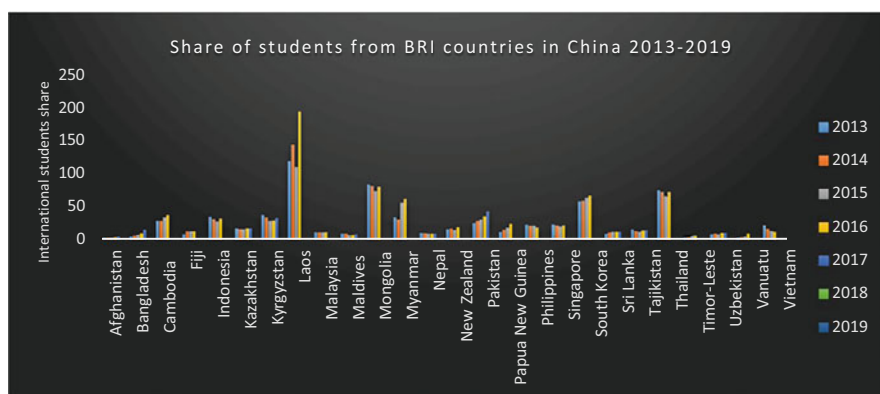

Fig. 3 Share of international students from BRI countries in China (%): 2013–2019. Source: Author's adaptation based on China's Public Diplomacy data (AidData), and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) dataset

studying in China as a share of the total students abroad. It is followed by the student share of Mongolia, Thailand, South Korea, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan among others, whereas countries such as Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Maldives, and Bangladesh indicate relatively lower student share studying in China in the post-BRI period.

3   Cultural Linkage Under BRI

Besides educational exchanges, China's BRI has also focused on cultural promotion and cultural exchanges with the BRI countries. And "one of the essential platforms for enhancing China's cultural ties in Asia has been the Confucius Institutes (CIs)" (van der Zwan, 2022, p. 644). I analyzed the number of Confucius Institutes[1] in the BRI countries in the post-BRI (AidData, 2021). The post-BRI period has seen a spike in the annual number of Confucius Institutes in the BRI partner countries with 134 Confucius Institutes and 130 Confucius Classrooms (Li, 2017) increasing to 153 Confucius Institutes and 149 Confucius Classrooms in 2019 (Belt and Road Portal, 2019a) (Fig. 4).

Analyzing the CIs in Asia, we see South Korea has the highest number of CIs from 18 CIs in 2013 to 22 CIs in 2019. Thailand's CIs rose from 12 in 2013 to 16 in total by 2019. Indonesia saw an increase from 6 CIs in 2013 to 8 in 2019. The countries such as Kazakhstan, the Philippines, and Pakistan show 5 CIs in total as of 2019.
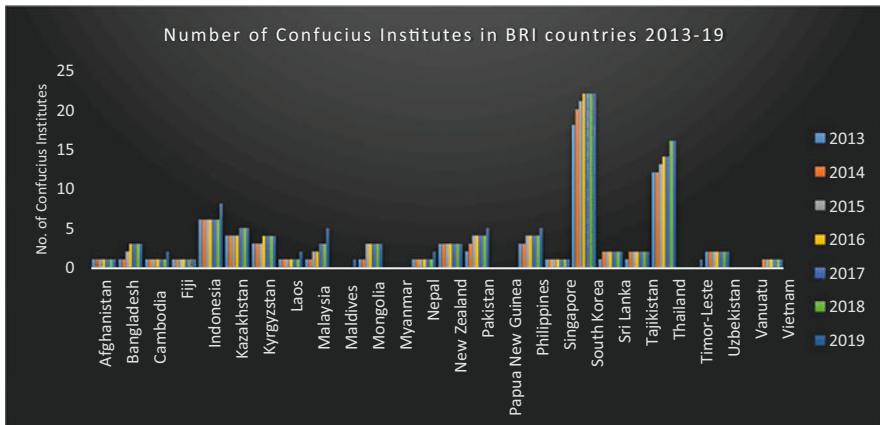

Fig. 4 Cumulative Number of Confucius Institutes in BRI countries (2013–2019). Source: Author's adaptation based on China's Public Diplomacy data (AidData)

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[1]The Confucius Institutes operate under the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and are overseen by Hanban, officially serving as the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban, 2023).
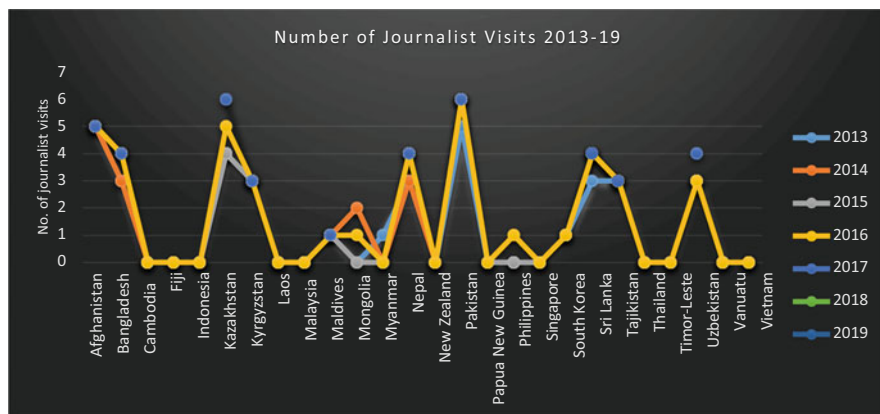
Fig. 5 Annual number of journalists visits from 2013 to 2019. Source: Author's adaptation based on China's Public Diplomacy data (AidData)

4 Communication Linkage Under BRI

Apart from a variety of infrastructure investments in telecommunication and 5G technology, we have also witnessed increased media collaborations and exchanges among China and the BRI countries over the last years. Hence, I measure communication linkage in terms of visits of journalists to China, the BRI country, or at any third location (Custer et al., 2019a, 2019b). This indicator records the number of visits or trips made annually and it does not include the number of journalists participating in each trip (Fig. 5).[2]

Examining the number of journalists visits, we see an increased trend in Pakistan and Kazakhstan, followed by Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

4.1 Intergovernmental Linkage Under BRI

As BRI cooperation is primarily bilateral in nature, the number of official and high-level state visits has increased significantly across countries. There has also been a surge in joint military cooperation and joint exercises with BRI countries. Therefore, I measure the intergovernmental ties by recording the number of official state visits and senior-level military visits jointly termed as "elite visits" (Custer et al., 2019a, 2019b) as well as the membership with China-led institutions such as Asian

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[2]For further details on the operationalization of variables, see van der Zwan, 2022, "Chinese Linkage in Asia".
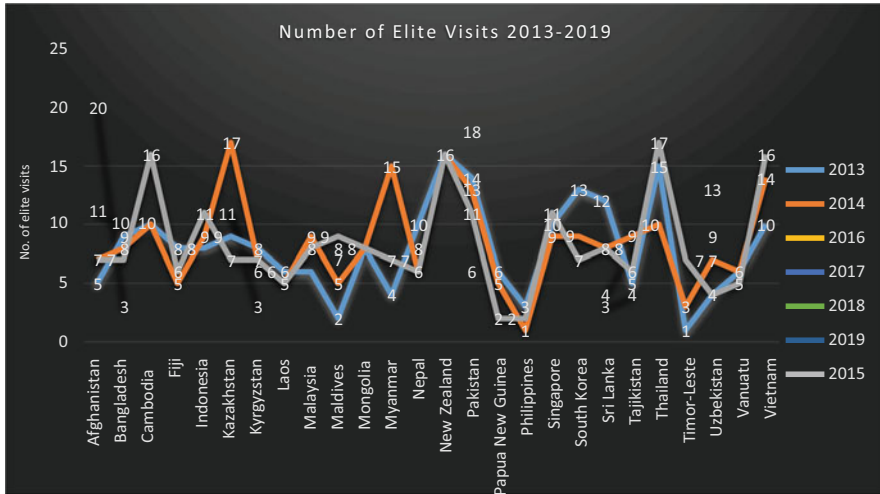
Fig. 6 Annual number of elite visits from 2013 to 2019. Source: Author's adaptation based on China's Public Diplomacy data (AidData)

Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) among others (Fig. 6).

The number of official state visits along with military visits, jointly measured as elite visits, has increased in many Asian countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Analyzing all these linkage dimensions individually as well as collectively provides us with a comprehensive and systematic framework to examine China's BRI involvement through various layers and channels. Under BRI, we witnessed an increase in economic linkage – more imports from China have increased as compared to more exports to China, hence the trade deficit remains in many countries. For the social linkage, the mobility and number of students pursuing higher education in China have increased strengthening the social linkage between China and BRI partner countries. The cultural linkages as measured in terms of CIs have also shown a significant increase. The increasing number of journalistic visits and state-sponsored press trips have also indicated an enhanced level of communication linkage in the post-BRI period in partner countries. Moreover, the intergovernmental linkages measured in terms of high-level state visits and military visits also indicated an increasing trend in many Asian countries. Therefore, all dimensions can be regarded as depicting a high degree of Chinese Linkage under BRI for the partner countries in Asia during the post-BRI period.

5   Conclusion

This chapter has put forth the theory of Chinese Linkage and Leverage under BRI to understand the multifaceted network of exchanges and collaborations that China creates and engages with the BRI partners. This theory fills the gap in the scholarly debate on China's influences and allows us to understand the mechanism of its potential political influence in the partner countries along the various dimensions. Furthermore, increased Chinese engagement with various actors such as Chinese firms, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), private–public partnerships, joint ventures, and other interactions have paved the path for strengthening people-to-people engagement, socio-cultural, and communication ties as well. Hence, the social, cultural, and communication aspects of the dimensions play a vital role in determining the degree of linkage to China in the partner countries.

While analyzing all Chinese Linkage dimensions in Asia, we have seen a high Chinese linkage for most cases such as Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Thailand, South Korea, and Kyrgyzstan among others along various dimensions. Hence, Asia can be regarded as a region of high Chinese Linkage given the increased Chinese engagement in the post-BRI period from 2013 to 2019. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy to mention that these operationalizations might yield different results based on different choices of variables and indicators used.

Moreover, since the BRI is a recent phenomenon and is still ongoing, more time is needed to capture and observe the fluctuations in the linkage and leverage of China. Also, there are several other external factors that impact the changing nature of the BRI projects and investments and how deals take place on the ground between China and the partner countries. Nevertheless, there is a need to conduct a comparative analysis of the Chinese Linkage and Leverage with other regions of influence of China's BRI such as cases in Africa, Europe, and Latin America as well. However, one of the limitations is that we cannot compare the Western Linkage and Leverage measure of Levitsky and Way with that of the Chinese Linkage and Leverage as both concepts are perceived in different contexts and entail different geopolitical environments.

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COVID-19, American Influence, and Economic Relations: An Empirical Analysis of China's Image in the European Union

Yi Feng and Zhijun Gao

Abstract As one of the major powers at the center of the global landscape, it is natural that China attaches great importance to its national image worldwide. COVID-19, which was first reported in Wuhan, has put China at the center of attention and controversies. The unprecedented pandemic and the strains of the relations with the United States, accentuated under the Trump Administration, have started to show consequences on China's relations with the rest of the world, especially with Western countries. In the context of an increasingly severe US–China strategic competition and the pandemic, China tries to strengthen its economic relations with Europe to cope with the constraints of the United States. In this chapter, we focus on an examination of how COVID-19, bilateral economic ties, and Americans' views shape China's image in EU countries.

Public perceptions of a foreign country make the micro-foundation of a country's foreign policy and affect its foreign relations. As an emerging power, China's reach has been increasingly felt worldwide. Amid the concerns and expectations of China's rise, how China is perceived in other countries has some fundamental implications for the nature of the ascension of China to the center of the world's power structure. In the context of the transatlantic nexus, EU's public sentiments about China are important sources of Sino-EU relations.

There have been concerns that China's rise will not be peaceful and will induce major conflict (Mearsheimer, 2001). In order to battle these concerns, China has endeavored to improve its external perception with a favorable image of "a responsible great power" (Ding, 2007; Wang, 2008) and of a "peaceful rise" (Alden, 2005; Antwi-Boateng, 2017). The foreign policy of a "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development" has been adopted to showcase China's ambitions to become "an influential

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great power in world affairs" (Antwi-Boateng, 2017, p. 183). The acceptance of China by the international community requires that it be a responsible stakeholder and achieve a sustainable "soft rise" (Wang, 2008).

Some scholars emphasize the importance of national image. Ding (2007) maintains that national images are "intangible but important national power resources" (p.628). Van Ham (2001) holds that national image and reputation are essential parts of a state's strategic capital. Wang (2003) argues that national image is closely aligned with the concept of soft power. The Chinese government regards improving the national image as part of its foreign policy (Ding, 2007) and its global strategy (Benabdallah, 2019). Chinese leaders seek to project the country with a favorable national image onto the international stage (Ding, 2007; Wang, 2003; Xie & Page, 2013).[1]

Given the importance of the national image, a natural inquiry would be what are the factors shaping China's image overseas? Based on our survey of the literature, the answer is not straightforward because it is determined by various sources, ranging from economic exchanges to political ideologies. Meanwhile, the importance of each factor in shaping the public opinion toward China varies by countries. For example, Xie and Jin (2022) find that countries' public opinions toward China depend on their levels of economic development. Using the data from Global Attitudes and Trends covering 59 countries between 2005 and 2018, they conclude that China's image tends to be shaped by economic factors in developing countries and by ideological factors in developed ones. As suggested by the modernization theory, developing countries are lacking in capital and are destitute of infrastructure, it is plausible that the economic benefits that resulted from Chinese lending and financing facilitate a positive view on China. However, in their developed counterparts where basic subsistence is not the top priority, people tend to pay more attention to political values. Hence, the large gap between China and developed world in the value system might constrain China from lifting its national image in Western countries (Xie & Jin, 2022).

Aside from economic and ideological factors, the external shocks may exert an immediate and massive impact on public opinion. The controversies surrounding China's handling of COVID-19 led to negative effect on people's perception of China. This impact is found to be particularly salient in Western countries. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in the summer of 2020 found that negative views of China reached historically high levels in almost all the advanced economies (Silver et al., 2020). Compared to 2019, views on China soured significantly as negative views increased by double-digits percentage points in the United Kingdom (19), Germany (15), the Netherlands (15), Sweden (15), and Spain (10). In addition, more than half of the respondents in seven European countries (Belgium and Denmark in addition to the five countries above) shared the view that China had not handled the COVID-19 outbreak well. The survey also showed that the

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[1] This part of the literature regarding China and soft power can be found in An and Feng (2022) as well as Feng and Zeng (2021).

respondents who had a low assessment on China's handling of COVID-19 were more likely to hold an unfavorable view of the country. These trends suggest the critical role of the pandemic in shifting public opinion of China.

Given this broad and dynamic context, the central interest of this research is threefold: First, we will explore how COVID-19, an unprecedented and lasting external shock, affects Europeans' view on China. The second aspect focuses on the economic sources of China's image in the EU. In 2021, China was EU's largest partner of trade in goods (European Commission, 2022); meanwhile, the EU was China's second largest merchandise trade partner, following the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Ministry of Commerce of China, 2022). China has also enhanced its economic relations with Europe through foreign direct investment (FDI) and contracted projects. From a theoretical perspective, trade, FDI and contracted projects would bring about economic outcomes to the local residents and communities. The gains and losses from those economic exchanges might influence people's attitudes toward China. Thus, we will examine whether the Sino-EU economic relations would result in a better or worse image of China in EU countries. The last aspect extends our horizon to the other side of the Atlantic – the United States. As the United States defines China as the most critical "strategic competitor," the Sino-US relations have fallen to its lowest point since the 1980s. Moreover, the White House's claim on the origin of COVID-19 triggered wide-spread criticisms over China's accountability for the pandemic. Given the close alliance across the Atlantic, we will investigate if the Europeans' views on China tend to be influenced by their major ally, the United States, across the Atlantic.

1   Determinants of China's Image in the EU

In the context of the EU, how local populations view China is a complex issue, for the various factors come into play. We classify the determinants of China's image in the EU into two broad categories. The first category is the external shock, namely, COVID-19, in this context. As people's sentiments can be massively impacted by the sudden changes of the environments, it is plausible that the outbreak of this unprecedented pandemic and controversy regarding China play a critical role in shaping Europeans' views on China.

The second category is the bilateral economic exchanges in the forms of trade, contracted projects, and FDI. Compared to the external shock, this category is supposed to be less volatile and more directly associated with tangible benefits and costs. The following analysis focuses on the commonalties and variations of China's image across the EU countries in the face of the pandemic and economic exchanges.
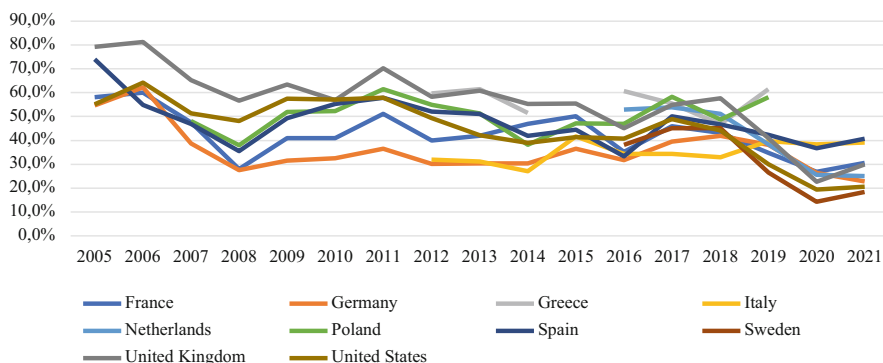
Fig. 1 Nine Countries' favorable views of China in comparison with the United States (2005–2021). Data source: Pew Research Center

1.1   External shock

With respect to the data on China's image in the EU countries, we calculate the percentage of the respondents who hold a very favorable or somewhat favorable opinion of China in the Global Attitudes Survey between 2005 and 2021. The survey is conducted and published by the Pew Research Center (n.d.).[2] Among the EU countries it covered, the survey results for nine countries are available for most of the years during the above time span. These nine countries include France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.[3] Fig. 1 displays the trends of their favorable views on China during this time span of 17 years. The national image of China was declining in almost all the countries. In the starting year of this survey, the average percentage of favorable views on China was 63.4%, which means that among every three respondents, nearly two of them perceive China positively. However, in 2019, the last year of "normalcy," the percentage came down to only 42.3%. Compared to 2005, it seems that China lost one-third of the respondents who viewed the nation favorably.

A key observation from the trends is the sharp decline of China's image in 2020, the year in which COVID-19 erupted. The average favorable views among these nine countries dropped to 27.2%, which was about 15% points lower than the year 2019. Despite a slight improvement to 32.8% in 2021, China's image in these

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[2] In addition to the Pew Research Center, a few other agencies conducted surveys on China's image in EU. Two widely used sources are Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences (GESIS) and German Marshall Fund (GMF) of the United States. However, the data for China's image in the Eurobarometer published by GESIS only cover the time span of 2016–2018; GMF's survey for China's image only covers eight countries between 2020 and 2021. Due to their data scarcity, we chose to use data from the Pew Research Center, which covers fifteen countries between 2005 and 2021. This sample size allows us to explore the determinants of Europeans' attitudes on China through conducting statistical analysis.

[3] The United Kingdom officially exited from the EU in January 2020.
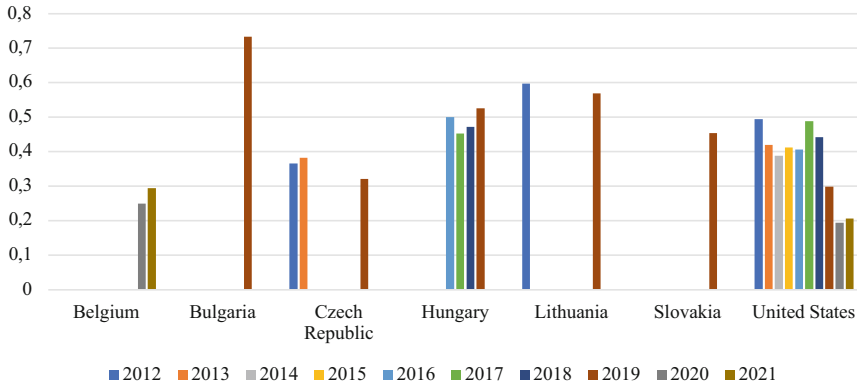
Fig. 2 Six Countries' favorable views of China in comparison with the United States (2012–2021). Note: The survey data for these six EU countries are not available prior to 2012. Data source: Pew Research Center

2 years appears to be more "negative" than any of the pre-pandemic years. This sudden decline suggests the possibilities of massive and devastating impact of COVID-19 on Europeans' perceptions on China.

Hypothesis 1 COVID-19 tends to exert a negative impact on China's image in the EU.

It is notable that the magnitudes of China's image decline varied among these countries. In the order of magnitude, the favorable views on China showed the largest decline of percentage points in the United Kingdom (-18.2), followed by the Netherlands (-12.8), Sweden (-12.3), Germany (-11.9), France (-7.9), Spain (-5.7), and Italy (-1.4). Among these countries, it is noteworthy that Sweden has consistently shown the most negative views toward China even prior to the outbreak of pandemic. Turcsanyi and Eckert (2020) attribute it to the increasing tensions in the bilateral relations. Under this circumstance, COVID-19 acted as a catalyst for the worsening of the China's image shared by the political parties and the Swedish public. Across the Atlantic, the United States also witnessed a downward sliding of favorable perceptions on China. The US respondents who viewed China favorably dropped by 10.5% points in 2020 compared to 2019. This simultaneous change of attitudes on China seems to imply the possibilities of the co-movements of the public opinion about China across the United States and EU. Given the leadership position of the United States, we arrive at the second hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2 When the views on China become more negative in the United States, the views regarding China among the EU countries would be more negative too.

It should also be noted that in the sample, we have limited observations for another six EU countries covered by the Global Attitudes Survey. They are Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia. Figure 2 offers a glimpse of how China was perceived in these countries. Among them, there appears

to be a large variation of their perceptions of China. Despite data scarcity, China's image was most positive in Bulgaria and least positive in Belgium. On average, it is noteworthy that respondents in the Czech Republic showed significantly less favorable views (35.67%) on China compared to other former communist countries such as Hungary (48.78%), Lithuania (58.37%), and Slovakia (45.46%) throughout the years. The potential causes lie in Chinese officials' confrontations with the Czech politicians and media on human rights and over the parliamentary delegates' visit to Taiwan in September 2020 (Jerden et al., 2021).

Still on the diplomatic front, China's image in Lithuania was rather positive with more than half of the respondents viewed China favorably. Nonetheless, the bilateral relations experienced a significant setback since the Lithuanian government expressed its approval of Taiwan's request to establish its representative office in the name of Taiwan, instead of *Taipei*, the capital city of Taiwan (Shirouzu & Sytas, 2021). Immediately upon Lithuanian government's official announcement in November 2021, China downgraded its diplomatic relations with Lithuania. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China stated that the Lithuanian government's act renounces its political commitment in the communique on the establishment of diplomatic relations with China and violates the one-China principle – the political foundation for the development of bilateral ties (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2021). Since then, the bilateral political and socioeconomic relations have been almost suspended. Hence, we might observe a turnaround of how Lithuanians view China when the data for 2020 and 2021 become available.

1.2   Economic Ties: Trade, Contracted Projects, and FDI

The outbreak of COVID-19 appears to have caused substantial damages on China's image in EU countries. However, it is critical to be aware that how Europeans perceive China may be shaped by other factors. The bilateral economic relation is widely seen as the foundation for and also the most vibrant component of the comprehensive Sino-EU relations. Among all types of economic relations, we will focus on trade, contracted projects, and FDI. Not only because they are the main forms of the bilateral economic relations, but also due to their effects on people's economic welfare. Hence, it is plausible that the changes in trade, contracted projects, and FDI might affect Europeans' perceptions of China.

With respect to trade, the total volume of bilateral trade went through a continuous growth since 1998. The rate of the growth was rather slow in the early years, but it began to accelerate after China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2001. Figure 3 displays the trend. After 2002, the speed of trade increases accelerated, reaching a peak in 2008, a year in which the punctuation of the bubble of the world economy led to a downturn in the trade between the EU and China in 2009. However, it should be noted that the reduction in China's imports of EU's goods experienced only a minor downward adjustment, from $133 billion to $128 billion, compared to a large 20% decline in EU's imports of China's goods,
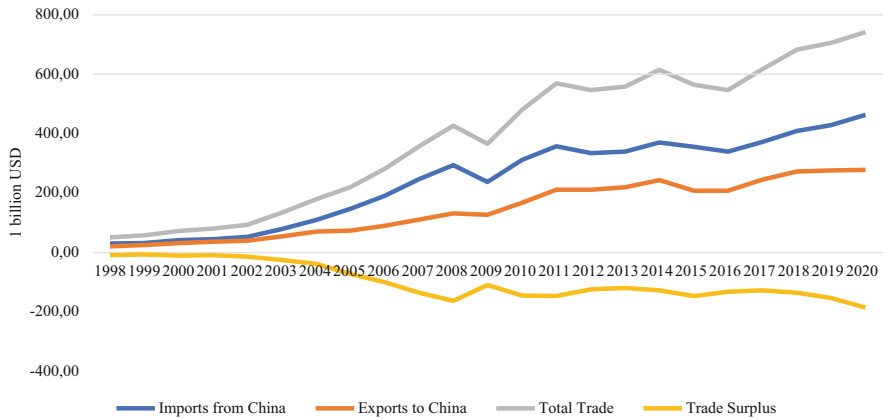
Fig. 3 Trends of China-EU trade and imbalances (1998–2020). Data source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (n.d.)

from $295 billion to $237 billion. The second peak in the EU–China trade occurred in 2011, reaching $569 billion. The next peak brought the EU–China trade to $615 billion in 2014 before a two-year decline. In 2018, the EU–China trade reached a new high at $682 billion. China's imports and EU's imports tend to move together since 2010 and the gap between them has narrowed. However, the EU's deficits against China started to increase again in recent years and reached its record of $185 billion in 2020, which was 14.11% larger than its previous peak in 2008.

From a theoretical perspective, when EU countries increase the imports from China, it might harm the import-competing industries. People who are employed in those industries might encounter wage stagnations or even job losses. Thus, keeping other factors as constant, some of those individuals' attitudes on China might turn to negative as imports increases. Meanwhile, when the trade surplus against China becomes larger, some people might have a perception that their country benefited from the bilateral trade relations since exports are usually associated with job creation and wage growth. This perception might lead to a positive view on China.

Hypothesis 3 Imports from China would negatively affect Europeans' favorable views on China.

Hypothesis 4 Trade surplus against China would positively affect Europeans' favorable views on China.

China's overseas contracts started in neighboring countries in Asia and later extended to Africa and Latin America. In tandem with the rise of its technological prowess, China's contractors entered to the European market. As Fig. 4 shows, it started from $0.12 billion of realized contracts in 1998 and experienced a continuously rising pattern until taking a dip in 2009, in the wake of the 2008 Great Recession. Four years later, the completed projects in 2013 were worth $4.28 billion, more than doubling the low of 2009. In recent years, there has been evidence of a
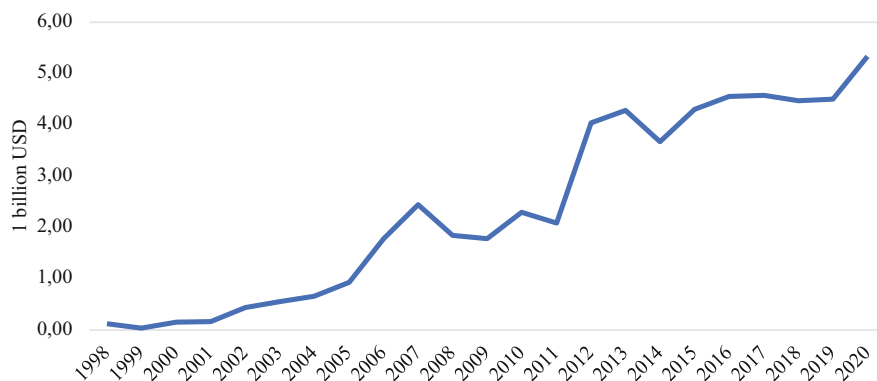
Fig. 4 Trend of Chinese fulfilled contracted projects in EU (1998–2020). Data source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (n.d.)

slowdown in China's completed contractual projects in EU countries. However, it is notable that the year 2020 witnessed a new record of $5.33 billion worth of fulfilled projects, which was 16.67% higher than its previous record in 2017. The pandemic has an adverse effect on Europeans' perceptions of China, but the data in Fig. 4 seem to indicate that contracted projects carried out by Chinese enterprises in the EU have continued to increase.

According to the *2019–2020 Development Report of Chinese Outward Contracted Projects*, Chinese contracted projects in EU countries were concentrated in the areas of petrochemical engineering, telecommunication, transportation, electric engineering, and construction (China International Contractors Association, 2020). The completion of these projects is supposed to improve the infrastructure and create job opportunities for communities. From this perspective, it would lift China's image among local populations.

Hypothesis 5 Chinese contracted projects would improve China's image in EU countries.

The trend of China's FDI in EU countries (Fig. 5) was similar to trade and contracted projects, rising over years; however, it has also displayed significant differences. For example, its sharpest rise was during the period of 2008 through 2011. In 2008, China's outward FDI to EU countries was $0.47 billion down from $1.05 billion in 2007. However, FDI net flow to EU increased to $2.97 billion the next year, reflecting an over sixfold increase compared to 2008; the momentum of increase in FDI from China ended only two years later with a record high of $7.56 billion in 2011. This large, unprecedented influx of China's capital in EU countries may have been the result of Chinese yuan taking the advantage of the Great Recession to acquire cheap assets in the debilitated EU market. Since then, Chinese capital took a breather in 2012 with influx of $6.12 billion and in 2013 with $4.52 billion, before reaching the next new high in 2014 with $9.79 billion net flow of direct investment to EU countries. Another record was set in 2016 with $9.99 billion.
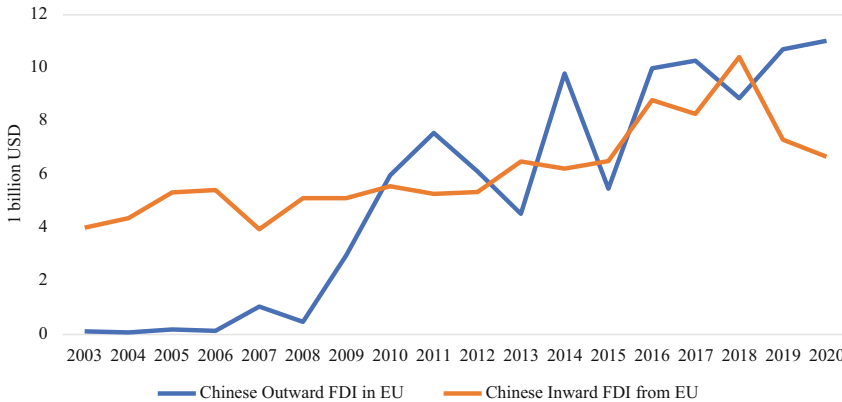
Fig. 5 Trends of China-EU bilateral foreign direct investment flows (2003–2020). Data Sources: Ministry of Commerce of China and National Bureau of Statistics of China (n.d.). The Ministry of Commerce of China (2021) shows that top five sectors of Chinese

The record lasted only for a year before China's EU-oriented direct investment for the first time passed the $10 billion mark at $10.27 billion in 2017. In 2018, a reversal brought the dazzling net flow of China's capital to $8.87 billion. However, it bounced back rapidly in 2019 and was not hampered in the pandemic year 2020.

OFDI stock in EU by the end of 2020 were manufacturing (34.7%), mining (18.6%), finance (14.3%), leasing and business services (9.2%), and wholesale & retail trade (6.1%). China's OFDI shares similarities with the Chinese contracted projects in terms of infrastructure enhancement, job creation, and tax revenue increases.[4] The total number of Chinese firms in EU reached 2800 by the end of 2020 and employed nearly 250,000 local employees (Ministry of Commerce of China, 2021).

Hypothesis 6 Chinese OFDI would contribute to an improvement of Europeans' favorable views on China.

EU countries' FDI outflows to China (or Chinese inward FDI from EU) were above the levels of Chinese FDI outflows to EU until 2010 and afterwards, the two series alternated in being at a higher level. After 2018, FDI flows from EU to China experienced a sharp decline into the pandemic years (See Fig. 5). Theoretically, the effect of FDI of the EU to China on EU's opinions of China might be somewhat different from the effect of Chinese FDI to EU. As more and more EU firms choose to establish subsidiaries in China, they might reduce the domestic investment under the short-term budget constraints. In this case, although the firms might achieve the

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[4] A key difference between FDI and contracted projects is that the former requires the investor owns 10 percent or more of the ordinary shares or voting power for an incorporated enterprise (International Monetary Fund, 2021). In this case, investors are empowered to exert a significant degree of influence on the management of the incorporated enterprise.

strategic goal of supply chain optimization, their reduction of investment in the home country might harm the economic welfare of domestic employees or job seekers. Moreover, the outbreak of COVID-19 exposed the vulnerability of supply chain in advanced countries. Due to the companies' offshoring activities in the era of globalization expansion, the domestic industries lack sufficient capacity to produce essential products (e.g., personal protective equipment) in the time of crisis. The shortage of consumer goods and medical products was regarded as a critical cause for the surging infection cases and deaths under COVID-19. Thus, compared to Chinese OFDI in EU, its IFDI might exert an opposite effect on China's image in EU.

Hypothesis 7 Chinese IFDI from EU would lead to a decline of Europeans' favorable views on China.

China's advances in economic relations with EU have been evident. One of our central research questions is whether the economic relations between China and EU have led to an improvement or deterioration of China's image in EU countries. Based on previous empirical analyses of other regions, trade, contracted projects, and FDI have not presented uniform effects on China's image in Africa (An & Feng, 2022) and Latin America (Feng & Zeng, 2021). Hence, their positive or negative effects on China's image might depend on the circumstances of the partner countries and the particular relations, economic and political, between China and its partners.

2   Research Design and Data

To test our hypotheses, we make use of the data of Global Attitudes Trends published by the Pew Research Center (n.d.). The available data covers fifteen EU member countries between 2005 and 2021.[5] We calculate a country's percentage of those who hold a positive opinion of China excluding the non-responses and use this variable as our dependent variable. Specifically, the dependent variable is derived from the response to the question in the Global Attitudes Survey:

> *"Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of China?"*

A unique response is selected from five choices: very favorable view, somewhat favorable view, somewhat unfavorable view, very unfavorable view, and DK. We excluded DK in the calculation of the percentage of favorable views of the respondents toward China, combining the two categories "very favorable view" and "somewhat favorable view."

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[5]These fifteen countries are Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Our independent variables include substantive variables and the control variables. The substantive or theoretical variables are those of our central interest, meaning imports, trade surplus, fulfilled contract projects, OFDI, IFDI, and dummy variables for 2020 and 2021 as an index for the pandemic[6] as well as the US positive views on China. The control variables comprise levels of economic development and country dummy variables. The full model is shown below, in which i refers to an EU country, t stands for any of the year between 2005 and 2021, and μ is the classic error terms in the regression techniques. Table 1 below provides a summary of all the variables in our statistical analysis.

$$\text{Opinion}_{it} = {}_0 + {}_1\text{Imports}_{it} - {}_2 + {}_2\text{Surplus}_{it} - {}_2 + {}_3\text{Contracted projects}_{it} - {}_2 + {}_4\text{OFDI}_{it}$$
$$- {}_2 + {}_5\text{IFDI}_{it} - {}_2 + {}_6\text{GDPpc}_{it}$$
$$- {}_1 + {}_7\text{COVID2020}_{it} + {}_8\text{COVID2021}_{it} + {}_9\text{US favorable views}_{it} + {}_{10}\text{Country}_{it} + {}_{it}$$

Endogeneity problems may exist. To alleviate the complications, we use the lagged independent variables. Considering the restrictions on trade and capital flows under the pandemic, *imports, surplus, contracted projects, OFDI,* and *IFDI* were lagged by 2 years ($t-2$), linking the recent China image to the pre-pandemic economic conditions. This means that the ending year of the above five variables is 2019. Since we also use the dummy variables *COVID2020* and *COVID2021* as an attempt to capture the impact of the pandemic, this treatment would help mitigating the endogeneity concern that the changes of those variables on economic activities might be substantially affected by the perception of China in EU. *GDPpc* is lagged by 1 year. Based on An and Feng (2022), Feng and Zeng (2021), Xie and Jin (2022), and Xie and Page (2013), we expect that GDP per capita will have a negative effect on China's image, namely, relatively poor EU countries will have a more positive image of China. Due to the presence of non-linearity of data, we take natural logarithms for all the variables except for the COVID and country dummies.

3 Statistical Analysis

Before conducting multivariate analysis, we examine the correlations of the variables in the model. As Table 2 shows, the opinion variable is negatively correlated *imports, surplus, contracted projects, OFDI,* and *IFDI.* The correlation matrix demonstrates that stronger economic ties with China are negatively correlated with

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[6]The use of the year 2020 and 2021 as an index for the pandemic effect may be considered a crude and broad indicator. Other measures could be the infection cases or deaths adjusted by population, but that would produce a skewed sample as the values for such variables will be all zeros before 2020. With a few more years of the data in the future, we may be able to use such more nuanced variables in a time-series cross-country analysis starting with 2020.

Table 1 Summary of variables

Variable	Definition	Unit of measurement	Time coverage	Data source
Opinion	Percentage of European respondents who answered very favorable or somewhat favorable to the survey question—"Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, some-what unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of China?" The respondents who answered "don't know" are excluded from the calculation	Percent	2005–2021	Pew Research Center
Imports	Total value of imports from China	10,000 USD	2003–2019	China Statistical Yearbook
Surplus	The difference between the total value of exports to China and total imports from China	10,000 USD	2003–2019	China Statistical Yearbook (secondary calculation)
Contracted projects	Total value of Chinese fulfilled contracted projects in the host country	10,000 USD	2003–2019	China Statistical Yearbook
OFDI	Total value of China's outward FDI flows to the host country	10,000 USD	2003–2019	Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment
IFDI	Total value of EU FDI utilized in China	10,000 USD	2003–2019	China Statistical Yearbook
GDPpc	Real gross domestic product (constant 2010 USD) by mid year population	1 USD	2004–2020	World Bank
COVID2020	Dummy variable which equals to 1 for all the observations in 2020, and 0 otherwise	1 or 0	2005–2021	World Health Organization
COVID2021	Dummy variable which equals to 1 for all the observations in 2021, and 0 otherwise	1 or 0	2005–2021	World Health Organization
US favorable views	Percentage of American respondents who answered very favorable or somewhat favorable to the survey question – "Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, some-what unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of China?" The respondents	Percent	2005–2021	Pew Research Center

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	Definition	Unit of measurement	Time coverage	Data source
	who answered "don't know" are excluded from the calculation			
Country	Dummy variable which reflects country-specific factors unaccounted for by other variables	1 or 0	2005–2021	N/A

The data compiled in *China Statistical Yearbook* for contracted projects and in *Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment* for China's outward FDI do not make a distinction between missing values and absence of contracted projects or OFDI in a certain country. An examination of the data leads us to adopt zeros instead of treating them as missing values. Specifically, for the contract data, the assignment of zeros applies to Bulgaria (2003), Hungary (2003, 2015), Lithuania (2003, 2005–2006, 2008, 2012–2014, 2018), Poland (2005), and Slovakia (2003, 2005, 2013–2016). For OFDI: Belgium (2005, 2008), Bulgaria (2006–2008), Czech (2003, 2005), Greece (2003, 2005, 2006, 2009–10, 2014), Lithuania (2003–2011, 2014–2015, 2017, 2019), Poland (2006), Slovakia (2003–2008, 2015–2016), and Spain (2003)

local people's favorable views on China. *GDPpc* shows a negative correlation with favorable views on China, which means that China's image tends to be more positive in relatively poorer countries than richer ones in EU.

In addition, *imports*, *contracted projects*, *OFDI* and *IFDI* are all positively correlated. For example, the correlation coefficient between EU countries' imports from China and Chinese fulfilled contracted projects reached 0.558. This moderate level of association shows that those countries that imported large amounts of Chinese goods also attracted more contracted projects. At the same time, the variable of *contracted projects* is positively correlated with *OFDI* (0.218) and *IFDI* (0.510). These results indicate that different forms of economic ties are complements, rather than substitutes, to each other. Hence, when China promotes its comprehensive economic relations with EU, for instance, through Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it might not result in the "offsetting" or trade-off effects among trade, contracted projects, and FDI.

Another observation from Table 2 is the positive correlation coefficient (0.528) between the U.S. favorable views on China and the Europeans' attitudes. It indicates that when the proportion of Americans who hold favorable views on China changes, the attitudes on China on the other end of the Atlantic shift in the same direction as well. To further look into this phenomenon of "synchronization," we disaggregated the Europeans' views at the country level and calculated each of their correlation coefficient with the United States. The results are shown in Table 3. The matrix demonstrates that Sweden (0.992), the Netherlands (0.984), and the United Kingdom (0.916) have the highest correlation coefficients with the United States.

In contrast, how Italians view China appears to be opposite (−0.567) to Americans and most other European citizens in the sample. Greece shares a similar tendency with Italy despite its substantially smaller magnitude (−0.111). Among all the advanced economies in Europe, Italy is the sole country that has signed the

Table 2 Correlation matrix

Variables	Opinion	Imports	Surplus	Contracted projects	OFDI	IFDI	GDPpc	US favorable views
Opinion	1.000							
Imports	−0.287	1.000						
Surplus	−0.223	−0.489	1.000					
Contracted projects	−0.179	0.558	−0.127	1.000				
OFDI	−0.206	0.366	−0.251	0.218	1.000			
IFDI	−0.150	0.806	−0.231	0.510	0.299	1.000		
GDPpc	−0.312	0.223	−0.088	0.204	0.178	0.351	1.000	
US favorable views	0.528	−0.128	0.048	−0.187	−0.081	−0.066	−0.052	1.000

Table 3 Correlation between US and EU countries' favorable views on China

	United States	United Kingdom	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Spain	Sweden
United States	1.000									
United Kingdom	0.916	1.000								
France	0.693	0.847	1.000							
Germany	0.585	0.719	0.814	1.000						
Greece	−0.111	−0.202	−0.469	−0.324	1.000					
Italy	−0.567	−0.608	−0.417	−0.074	0.326	1.000				
Netherlands	0.984	0.917	0.869	0.842	−0.201	−0.852	1.000			
Poland	0.254	0.151	0.287	0.360	0.450	0.443	−0.348	1.000		
Spain	0.636	0.737	0.752	0.634	−0.052	−0.345	0.611	0.535	1.000	
Sweden	0.992	0.984	0.958	0.814	−0.462	−0.915	0.970	−0.466	0.604	1.000

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China to join the BRI. This move implies the country's willingness to expand and deepen its collaboration with China. In addition, when the waves of COVID-19 broke out in Italy, the Chinese government dispatched medical teams flying to Italy to assist local organizations in containing the virus and provided medical supplies to local hospitals. Among all the nine countries Pew surveyed in summer 2020, Italy has the highest proportion of respondents that held positive views on China (38%) and China's coronavirus response (51%).[7] Jerden et al. (2021) show that more than 63% of Italian respondents agreed that China helped their country, which was substantially higher than their recognition of the help from the EU.

As the correlation coefficient is about bivariate association, it does not control for the potential effects of "confounding variables." The multivariate regression model helps address this limitation as it allows us to explore how different factors individually affects China's image in EU while keeping each other constant. In terms of the estimation strategy, we adopt the ordinary least squares (OLS) approach. Although we have the panel data setup, the number of countries is small, and only a number of countries have complete data for China's image between 2005 and 2021. The use of country dummies effectively deals with the potential problems related to the fixed effects. In order to avoid the dummy variable trap, we dropped France from the country dummies. This means that France will function as a benchmark when interpreting the parameter estimates of the country dummies. Our results based on different subsamples and model specifications are shown in Table 4 below.

In models 1 and 2, we test the hypotheses based on the subsample of four EU countries for which the data are relatively more complete during the time span (the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and France). The variable of *imports* demonstrates a negative and statistically significant association with the favorable views on China, which is consistent with our H3. Keeping other factors as constant, when the imports from China increased by 1%, the proportion of local residents holding favorable views on China would tend to decrease by 0.032%. It appears to support the theoretical argument that increasing imports would lead to harmful effects on domestic import-competing industries, triggering negative sentiments toward the exporting country. In contrast, when the *surplus* increases by 1%, the proportion of people with favorable views on China would go up by 0.052%. From an economic point of view, trade surplus does not necessarily contribute to an improvement of people's welfare in the surplus country. This result suggests that people might link trade surplus with an increase of "relative gain" for their country. Thus, out of nationalism, no matter whether they obtain materialistic benefits (e.g., wage increases) from the "relative gains," they tend to have a positive view on the trading partner.[8]

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[7]For all the nine surveyed EU countries, the median proportions for these two questions are 25% and 41%, respectively.

[8]This positive effect of trade surplus on China's image was also found in Feng and Zeng (2021) in their study of Latin American countries.

Table 4 Empirical results

DV: % of favorable views on China	Model 1 (G4)	Model 2 (G4 + US positive views)	Model 3 (G9)	Model 4 (G9 + US positive views)	Model 5 (G9 + US positive views + GDP per capita)
Imports	−0.032***	−0.022**	−0.035***	−0.023**	−0.021**
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Surplus	0.052***	0.060***	0.023**	0.026**	0.027***
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Contracted projects	0.014	0.462	−0.079	0.190	0.195
	(0.315)	(0.319)	(0.304)	(0.306)	(0.301)
OFDI	0.267*	0.442***	0.043	0.041	0.044
	(0.156)	(0.152)	(0.059)	(0.057)	(0.057)
IFDI	−0.201	−0.251	−0.215	−0.182	−0.154
	(0.269)	(0.246)	(0.218)	(0.209)	(0.212)
GDPpc	−0.205**	−0.193**			−0.028**
	(0.094)	(0.086)			(0.014)
COVID2020	−0.057	0.069	−0.115***	−0.044	−0.044
	(0.046)	(0.057)	(0.033)	(0.039)	(0.039)
COVID2021	−0.107**	0.012	−0.080***	−0.014	−0.021
	(0.044)	(0.055)	(0.030)	(0.036)	(0.035)
US favorable views		0.562***		0.347***	0.336***
		(0.171)		(0.116)	(0.113)
UK	0.293***	0.306***	0.250***	0.246***	0.243***
	(0.044)	(0.041)	(0.039)	(0.037)	(0.036)
Germany	0.005	−0.029	0.033	−0.005	−0.011
	(0.055)	(0.052)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.049)
Italy	−0.157**	−0.088	−0.052	−0.018	−0.035
	(0.065)	(0.063)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.033)
Spain			0.027	0.055	0.030
			(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.026)
The Netherlands			0.254***	0.258***	0.286***
			(0.065)	(0.063)	(0.068)
Greece			0.049	0.115**	0.068*
			(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.037)
Poland			0.032	0.072*	
			(0.037)	(0.038)	
Sweden			−0.148***	−0.090***	−0.043
			(0.041)	(0.044)	(0.059)
Constant	1.381***	1.002***	0.546***	0.331***	0.446***
	(0.370)	(0.357)	(0.031)	(0.078)	(0.063)

Table 4 (continued)

DV: % of favorable views on China	Model 1 (G4)	Model 2 (G4 + US positive views)	Model 3 (G9)	Model 4 (G9 + US positive views)	Model 5 (G9 + US positive views + GDP per capita)
Root MSE	0.072	0.066	0.075	0.072	0.072
Adjusted R squared	0.72	0.77	0.648	0.676	0.725
N	62	62	110	110	110

Notes: France was dropped to avoid the dummy variable trap in models 1–4; G4 stands for the group of four countries: the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and France; G9 represents G4 plus Spain, the Netherlands, Greece, Poland, and Sweden; Standard errors in the parentheses; * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.1$ in a two-tailed test

The sign of *OFDI* is consistent with our H6 – when Chinese FDI in the host country increases, it would contribute to an improvement of China's image. Its parameter estimate shows that as Chinese OFDI increases by 1%, China's image in EU would improve by 0.267%. Since OFDI usually brings about economic benefits to local communities, it might contribute to the residents' positive sentiments toward Chinese enterprises. The signs for *contracted projects* and *IFDI* are consistent with our H5 and H7, but their coefficients are not significant under the conventional confidence levels.

When it comes to the shock of COVID-19, it is interesting to find that while both *COVID2020* and *COVID2021* are negative, only the latter is statistically significant. Jointly the 2 years do indicate a negative effect on China's image in EU, keeping other factors constant. Among the country dummy variables, the British dummy variable appears to hold more favorable views toward China compared to France, while the Italian dummy variable shows an opposite association, which goes against earlier observations of the generally positive views of China among the Italians. Regarding the influence of the US on public opinions in EU, the coefficient for *US positive views* is positive and statistically significant. This result indicates that U.S. public opinions tend to affect the public opinions in EU, given the leadership position of the United States in the international system. In other words, when Americans increasingly hold a negative view of China, the Europeans in the Union will follow. It should also be noted when the US positive views included in the model specification, the *COVID* dummy variables lose their statistical significance. This indicates the prevalence of the influence of American public opinions on those in EU, regardless of the pandemic or not. This result supports our Hypothesis 2.[9]

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[9] Plausibly, it can be argued that instead of causality, namely, a U.S.-led public opinion among the Europeans about China, what we observe is merely an association, a co-movement of public sentiments across the Atlantic. Tentatively, we conclude that our regression result shows an effect of the US public opinion about China on the EU public opinion for two reasons. First, the United

In models 3–5, we added five countries (Spain, the Netherlands, Greece, Poland, and Sweden) to our sample. Note that the Poland dummy variable and GDP per capita exhibit multicollinearity. As a sensitive test, in Models 3 and 4, we exclude GDP per capita; in Model 5, we exclude the Poland dummy variable. The results are consistent across these regressions. The variable of *imports* maintains negative and significant association with China' image, and *trade surplus* continues to contribute to a larger proportion of favorable views on China.

Chinese OFDI keeps its positive sign but turns statistically insignificant. This result contrasts the salient effect of Chinese FDI on China's image among more developed European countries: namely, France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom, consistent with the possibilities of better utilization of Chinese FDI in these countries, but not necessarily in a larger sample.

In this larger sample, both *COVID2020* and *COVID2021* are negative and significant. Their coefficients indicate that the years 2020 and 2021 lead to a decline of favorable views on China by 0.115% and 0.08%, which provides further support for our H1. The "synchronized" shifting of US and EU's attitudes toward China is also found in this larger sample (models 4 and 5). Among all the nine countries, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands appear to show more favorable views than France; meanwhile, Swedish attitudes on China are rather negative. It would be interesting to delve into the country-specific causes for the variations on China's image in future research. The control variable of *GDPpc* indicates that people in relatively poor EU countries tend to have a better image of China compared to relatively rich EU countries, affirming the results in the previous four-country sample and supporting the results in other regions (An & Feng, 2022; Feng & Zeng, 2021; Xie & Jin, 2022; and Xie & Page, 2013).

4   Conclusions

Our statistical analysis of the survey data demonstrates that COVID-19 has generated adverse consequences on China's national image in nine European countries. However, this impact will likely disappear when controlling the US' favorable views of China, implying an association of the favorable (or unfavorable) views of China across the Atlantic. In addition, the bilateral economic links are found to affect European views of China: while imports from China leads to an increase of the people holding unfavorable views of China, trade surplus against China shows an opposite effect. China's outward FDI contributes to an increase in the percentage of the people who view China favorably among France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. The level of economic development shows a negative relationship with favorable views of China. Keeping the above factors constant, the United Kingdom

States has been the leader of the of West. Second, the Trump Administration initiated a policy shift toward China.

and the Netherlands consistently has a higher percentage of people holding favorable views of China keeping other factors constant.

The implications of all the above scenarios are threefold: First, compared to hard power, the national image is more fluid and volatile. It can experience swift and dramatic shifts in the face of external shocks. In this case, the country under the spotlight would encounter tremendous pressure. People's negative attitudes can bring about substantive damages and harms in international relations as well as in the domestic society. At the same time, given the influence of public opinions on policy formulation under the electoral regimes, the continuous souring of China's image might further constrain the space for the government policy toward China, which may have both consequences on international security and post-pandemic economic recovery.[10]

Second, economic relations among countries certainly affect a particular country's image overseas. In the case of China and EU, such implications have special meanings. China's ambitious BRI has its final destination in Europe, traversing Eurasia continent and the Pacific Ocean. Without support of the people of EU countries, such a global initiative will not be successful. In the context of profound differences in culture, ideology, and history between China and Europe, a positive image of China in Europe is consequential for the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. In the data, the leverage of economic relations between China and EU countries on China's image has much room to play, for worse or better.

Finally, under the era of great power competition, the US–China relation is likely to continue the downward momentum. COVID-19 and geopolitical conflict of Russia–Ukraine may accelerate the trend of "de-coupling" and "competitive coexistence." As traditional allies to the United States, the role of the EU will become increasingly vital in US strategic competition with China. The United States needs EU's assistance in fostering the technology innovation, addressing supply chain vulnerability, and renewing leadership on global issues. As public opinions of China have become increasingly moving in tandem across the Atlantic, it is reasonable to conjecture a substantive convergence of the China policy between the US and EU. Once this synchronization solidifies into a hard and monolithic reality, it would profoundly shape the world politics in the years and decades to come.

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[10] Media may also play an important role. The news coverage on diplomatic confrontations might evoke nationalism (Jerden et al., 2020) and affect policy changes and opinion shifts toward China (Rogelja & Tsimonis, 2020).

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China and European Strategic Autonomy

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Abstract European strategic autonomy has become a mainstream policy narrative and long-term strategic objective in the EU, with significant implications for China–EU relations. This chapter aims to clarify the implications of European strategic autonomy, analysing both the opportunities and challenges that it brings for China's relations with the EU. The chapter argues that from a Chinese perspective, European strategic autonomy is in line with China's expectation for a multi-polar world in which the EU constitutes an independent pole and maintains a balanced position between the US and China. Meanwhile, motivated by strategic autonomy, the EU's emphasis on political solidarity, its protection of economic sovereignty and ambition for geopolitics could also pose challenges to China–EU relations. In general, China should support European strategic autonomy with strategic new thinking to construct a multi-polar world order.

1 Introduction

For a long time, China has positioned the EU as an important pole in the multi-polar world and a potential power to balance the US unilateralism and hegemony (Zhang, 2013a). Consequently, a guiding principle for China's strategy towards the EU is to accelerate the process of multi-polarization and work with Europe to check the behaviour of hegemonic countries. As the 2014 China policy paper towards the EU stated, "China and the EU. . . are two major forces for world peace as they share important strategic consensus on building a multi-polar world. . .The EU is China's important strategic partner in China's efforts to pursue peaceful development and multi-polarity of the world" (MFA, 2014). Yet with the Biden administration' return to its alliance system and strengthening of transatlantic coordination with China, it is obviously more difficult for China to balance the US, and the foundation of China's strategy towards the EU seems to have been undermined.

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Meanwhile, the EU has not stopped its pursuit of strategic autonomy because of the return of Biden and the warming up of transatlantic relations. In a call with Biden, French President Macron said that cooperation with the US cannot be dependent, and for Europe to be credible partner to the US, it also had to be an autonomous partner with its own military and technological capabilities (Cohen, 2021). Within a few days, European Council President Charles Michel also delivered a speech on the inauguration of Biden, in which he frankly pointed out that the EU and the US have differences which won't magically disappear, the EU chooses its course and does not wait for permission to take its own decisions (Michel, 2021). Hence, the election of Biden was a relief to the EU but had not undermined the EU's determination to pursue strategic autonomy.

European strategic autonomy has gained increasing attention in academia, with most of the analysis conducted in the context of EU–US relations. What does European strategic autonomy mean for China–EU relations and China's strategy towards the EU in the context of China–US rivalry? How should China respond to the EU's pursuit of strategic autonomy?

Chinese academics have touched upon these questions, yet the implications of European strategic autonomy for China–EU relations and China's policy towards the EU remain to be articulated. This chapter goes beyond the traditional transatlantic perspective to analyse European strategic autonomy from a global perspective. It is argued that in the context of China–US strategic competition, an important subject of China's strategy towards the EU is to enhance China–EU relations by supporting European strategic autonomy while preventing it from developing in a confrontational way against China.

2   European Strategic Autonomy: From Transatlantic Perspective to Global Perspective

The discussions over European strategic autonomy emerged in the context of growing internal challenges, transatlantic rifts and global geopolitical competition. Recent years have seen the Euro crisis, the refugee crisis, terrorism, populism and Brexit, which have exposed the EU's lack of institutional capacity to cope with the crises. The Trump administration's "American First" policy undermined the foundations of transatlantic relations. Global geopolitical competition, in particular the China–US rivalry has also put tremendous pressure on the EU. In the face of such internal and external pressures, the EU and its member states started to rethink the EU's policies and its role on the global stage. Strategic autonomy thus emerged as one of the guiding principles for the EU to respond to the crises and adjust its policies. In the past few years, strategic autonomy has become one of the most popular catchwords in EU policy discussions with its substances and policy implications being continuously developed.

The concept of strategic autonomy was first used by the European Council in a 2013 conclusion in which the EU called on its member states to develop and sustain their defence capabilities in order to strengthen the EU's strategic autonomy (Council, 2013). In 2016, the EU Global Strategy clearly set strategic autonomy as one of its core objective, stating that "an appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy is important for Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its borders" (EEAS, 2016). Although these two documents mentioned strategic autonomy, no clear definitions were given. It was not until 2016 that the EU Council gave a simple definition in a document on the implementation of the CFSP, declaring that strategic autonomy entailed "the ability to act and cooperate with international and regional partners wherever possible, while being able to operate autonomously when and where necessary" (Council, 2016).

Initially, a concept used in the area of security and defence, strategic autonomy was gradually picked up in other policy areas and gave rise to several related notions. In September 2017, French President Macron presented the idea of "European sovereignty" in a speech at Sorbonne University and proposed to enhance European sovereignty in six key areas, including defence, migration, the Mediterranean and African, ecological transition, digital technology as well as industrial and monetary economic power (Macron, 2017).

Macron's idea of European sovereignty was perceived a typical French interpretation of European strategic autonomy and resonated well with Commission President Juncker at the time. In the 2018 State of the Union address, President Junker declared the time for European sovereignty had come and it was time for Europe to "take its destiny into its own hands" (Juncker, 2018)" When Ursula von der Leyen became Commission President in 2019, she promised to reshape the EU into a "geopolitical" force, while High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Josep Borrell repeatedly called on the EU to learn and use the "language of power" and maximizes its geopolitical impacts (Borrell, 2020b). These related concepts and notions follow the core logic of strategic autonomy and have added new impetus to the discussions.

Comparing to the policy circle, scholars have conducted more in-depth research into the definitions, goals and means of strategic autonomy. Italian scholar Nathalie Tocci defined European strategic autonomy as the ability to "live by its laws, rules, norms and values both by protecting these internally and by being a partner to an international order based upon rules it has contributed to shaping" (Tocci, 2021). Others have described strategic autonomy as "the ability to set priorities and make decisions in matters of foreign policy and security, together with the institutional, political and material wherewithal to carry these through – in cooperation with third parties, or if need be alone" (Lippert et al., 2019). Some have also proposed to replace strategic autonomy with "strategic sovereignty" which should allow the EU to "decide their policies for themselves and bargain effectively within an independent system" (Leonard & Shapiro, 2019). Although scholars have a different interpretation on strategic autonomy, there has also been some consensus, deciphering European strategic autonomy as the ability of the EU to set and pursue its own policy agenda and objectives with its own tools or in cooperation with partners.

Discussions over European strategic autonomy can be divided into two perspectives: transatlantic perspective and global perspective. The traditional transatlantic perspective focuses on the defence area and transatlantic relations, a central question concerned is the EU's security dependence on the US and whether the EU should enhance its independent defence capability. Security cooperation has been a backbone of the transatlantic alliance, and autonomous defence had been occasionally mentioned in the process of European integration. Recent years this debate re-emerged in EU policy agenda in the form of strategic autonomy, which was mainly driven by two factors: on one hand, the US is pivoting strategically to the Indo-Pacific, reducing its attention and presence in Europe and pressurizing European allies to assume more responsibility in defence; on the other hand, the Trump administration's "American First" policy had brought uncertainties to transatlantic relations, posing challenges to transatlantic security cooperation while also presenting opportunities for the EU to take strategic autonomy seriously.

From a global perspective, strategic autonomy is not only about defence policy and transatlantic relations, but also about geo-economic, geopolitics, technology, public health and climate change as well as relations with China, Russia and multilateral organizations. In other words, both the geographical scope and policy area of strategic autonomy have been broadened under the global perspective. A major question concerned here is how to manage global interdependence and promote EU values and interests in an increasingly competitive international environment. If strategic autonomy in transatlantic perspective means the advancement of EU defence capability, in global perspective it entails the EU to use its hard and soft power tools to effectively defend its interests and values in a competitive world. In this sense, Macron's conception of "European sovereignty" and the idea of "Open Strategic Autonomy" promoted by the European Commission is more in line with strategic autonomy under a global perspective.

The EU's understanding of strategic autonomy is shifting from a transatlantic perspective to a global perspective, and there are several factors behind this transformation. Firstly, China–US strategic competition and the EU's dependence on both the US and China have put the EU in a dilemma, forcing it to turn to the so-called "Sinatra Doctrine", which enables the EU to deal with China–US competition in its own way and look at the world from its own point of view (Borrell, 2020c). Secondly, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has raised the EU's concern over its dependence on external markets for strategic supplies, pushing the EU to rethink how to protect its sovereignty in an era of global interdependence. Finally, a global perspective on strategic autonomy is more acceptable to Atlanticist member states that are worried about the negative connotations of a transatlantic perspective on transatlantic relations.

3   European Strategy and China–EU Relations

Since mentioned in the EU Global Strategy in 2016, strategic autonomy has become one of the mainstream concepts in EU policy discourse, carrying policy implications not only in the area of defence, but also in trade, finance, technology and public health. In the words of European Council President Charles Michel, European strategic autonomy is "goal number one for our generation" and the "real start of the 21st century" (Michel, 2020). From a global perspective, whether the EU could achieve the goal of strategic autonomy does not only depend on the EU's own efforts and transatlantic relations, but also hinges on how the EU manages its relations with powers like China and Russia. Actually, the rise of China's global influence and the intensification of China–US competition are important external factors driving the EU's pursuit of a "Sovereign Europe" (Jin, 2020). Therefore, strategic autonomy is not just a matter for transatlantic relations, it will also go hand in hand with the readjustment of the EU's China policy, bring both opportunities and challenges for China–Europe relations.

3.1   Strategic Autonomy and Opportunities for China–EU Relations

From a Chinese perspective, European strategic autonomy offers opportunities for China–EU relations at multilateral, trilateral and bilateral levels.

Firstly, at the multilateral level, European strategic autonomy is conducive to China's pursuit of a multi-polar world jointly with Europe. Under the notion of strategic autonomy, the EU's subtle change of attitude towards multi-polarity is noteworthy. Multilateralism and multi-polarity are concepts that both China and Europe use when talking about global order, which is also a key factor shaping their relationship. Yet due to their different nature of power and identity, China and the EU have different understandings and perceptions of multilateralism and multi-polarity. In general, multi-polarity is more linked to power politics championed by realism, while multilateralism is more associated with international rules advocated by liberalism. Respectively, China embraces multi-polarity in its policy while the EU turns more to multilateralism (Zhang, 2013b).

Partly driven by the idea of strategic autonomy, the EU has not hesitated, as it did, to use multi-polarity in its policy language, which signifies a reducing gap between China and Europe on multi-polarity. With the return of geopolitics, the EU has gradually realized that the world is inevitably moving towards multi-polarity, and to promote its interest in a multi-polarized world, the EU cannot rely only on its normative power, but also hard power.

Therefore, the EU has not shied from using the language of multi-polarity and power politics in its policy discourse. Von der Leyen's ambition of a "Geopolitical Commission" and Borrell's advocate of the "language of power" are both signs of

change in the EU's policy orientation. As Borrell also pointed out, "the world today is becoming more multipolar and less multilateral. The challenge for Europe is to reconcile both dimensions..." (Borrell, 2021). European strategic autonomy is the EU's response to such a challenge. On one hand, the EU strives to grow its capability and become an important pole of the multi-polarized world. On the other hand, the EU seeks to promote its norms and shape the international order with its enhanced capabilities. In this sense, European strategic autonomy is conducive to the process of multi-polarization and in line with China's conception of a multi-polar world.

Secondly, on China–US–EU trilateral level, strategic autonomy enables the EU to maintain a certain degree of balance between China and the US, hence alleviating China's strategic pressure. After the Cold War, China, US and Europe gradually formed a complex triangular relationship, yet the "expectation-capability gap" of the EU has prevented the EU from playing as a single and credible international actor in this triangular relationship. It is no big problem for the EU to develop close cooperation with China while allying strategically with the US when China and the US enjoy a friendly relationship. But when China–US relationship worsens, the EU will be faced with the pressure to choose sides. The EU sees US–China rivalry as "the dominant organizing principle for global politics", worrying that it might become a playing ground for the geopolitical competition between China and the US (Borrell, 2020a). In order to pursue strategic autonomy in China–US–EU triangular relations, Josep Borrell coined the term "Sinatra Doctrine" as a European way to respond to China–US competition. According to him, the doctrine is based on two pillars: continuing the cooperation with China while at the same time strengthening the EU's strategic sovereignty (Borrell, 2020c). This implies that the EU wants to chart a third way between China and the US, without being pressurized to choose sides.

While the Biden administration has worked hard to consolidate the transatlantic relations and enhanced coordination with the EU on China, it does not necessarily mean the EU would always side with the US on China. A strategically autonomous EU means that transatlantic coordination on China will not simply duplicate the old model in which the EU followed the lead of the US, rather, the EU would also be an agenda setter that coordinate with the US on China based on its own interests and values. In its first online meeting with EU foreign minister, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on the EU to "push back on China together and show strength in unity", yet he did not get direct responses from the EU foreign ministers as the bloc was looking for a looking for a strategic balance in relations with Beijing and Washington (Emmott, 2021a). The US has also come to realize that it could raise concerns and worries in the EU if it pushes the EU too hard to confront China. This is why Antony Blinken tried to assure European allies that the US would not force NATO allies into "us or them" choices on China (Emmott, 2021b).

Finally, on China–EU bilateral level, European strategic autonomy allows the EU to maintain an independent China policy and reduce the impacts of the US factor in China–EU relations. For a long time in history, the US has been a structural factor that shapes China–EU relations. But in the pursuit of strategic autonomy, the EU's China policy will demonstrate a larger degree of independence due to the EU's

different perceptions of and interests in China. Although the EU has hardened its position on China in recent years and there are growing consensus with the US, the EU and the US still have divergent perceptions on China. As a declining hegemony, the US tends to see China primarily as a geopolitical and security threat, with a view to contain China's rise and maintain its hegemonic position. As a normative power, the EU regards China neither as a primary threat nor as a comprehensive rival. Its strategic perception of China is multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. Under the US influence, the EU has come to pay more attention to security issues and competitiveness in China–EU relations. However, geopolitics and security are not its primary concerns, and economic interests still play an influential role in the EU's perception of China.

The EU has its own interests in China, which are not necessarily identical with those of the US. In March 2021, the US President Biden was invited to participate in an EU summit, which was seen as an important move to revive the transatlantic relationship and strengthen coordination on China policy. Yet when asked about China policy, German Chancellor Merkel emphasized that the EU and the US shared the values of democracy and rule of law, but this did not mean the two sides agree on everything including how to respond to China (DW, 2021). Different interests and perceptions have also led the EU to maintain a certain degree of independence from the US in its China policy, with trade policy being one of the most significant examples. While there is much talk about decoupling from China in the US, the EU prefers to seek reciprocity rather than decoupling in its trade policy towards China. Despite warning from the US, the EU's announcement of the conclusion of negotiation for an investment agreement with China at the end of 2020 was widely seen as a move by the EU to pursue strategic autonomy in its China policy.

At the summer of 2021, US President Biden made a European tour to attend summits with G7, NATO and the EU. An important mission of this tour was to strengthen relations with European allies and build a united front against China. Although China was mentioned in all three summits and some cooperation measures on China were announced, those summits also revealed the limits of the US on the EU's China policy. After NATO issued a statement which contained hard-line positions on China, Merkel commented that NATO should not neglect China, but also not exaggerate the China threat. She thus called on NATO to adopt a dual approach of deterrence and dialogue with China (Spiegel, 2021). Macron also cautioned NATO not to confuse its goals on and bias the relationship with China which has little to do with the North Atlantic and is much larger than a military issue (Herszenhorn, 2021). The attitudes of these European leaders show that while Europe has enhanced cooperation with the US on China, it has distanced itself from the US's "new cold war" approach and left space for autonomous cooperation with China.

It is important to note that European strategic autonomy might reshape the US policy towards China as well. In October 2020, the EU launched a new dialogue mechanism on China with the US. This dialogue was not a product of US pressure but an initiative from the EU. While the main purpose of the dialogue is to coordinate and cooperation on China with the US, the EU also seeks to shape and influence the

US China policy. And judging from the foreign policy narrative of the Biden administration, there are signs that US China policy is partly influenced by the EU. In its first foreign policy address, Blinken defined relations with China as "competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be" (Blinken, 2021). Comparing to the Trump administration's China policy, this definition is apparently closer to the multi-faceted approach towards China which embraces elements of cooperation, competition and confrontation. In the joint summit statement in 2021, the US and the EU declared to "closely consult and cooperate on the full range of issues in the framework of our respective similar multi-faceted approaches to China, which include elements of cooperation, competition, and systemic rivalry" (Council, 2021). To some degree, this could be seen as a sign that the US has partly accepted the EU's narrative about relations with China.

3.2 Strategic Autonomy and Challenges for China–EU Relations

Although strategic autonomy is still a controversial concept within the EU, its policy implications have started to emerge and are being felt both inside and outside the EU. In the process of pursuing strategic autonomy, the EU has carried out policy transformations in fields of politics, economy and geo-strategies. Such policy transformations may not directly target China, they could pose practical or potential challenges to China–EU relations. In terms of the current policy debates in the EU, the challenges mainly come from three aspects: the consolidation of political solidarity; the protection of economic sovereignty and the ambition for geopolitical influence.

Firstly, the consolidation of political solidarity may exacerbate the EU's worries over China's endeavour to strengthen relations with some of its member states and constrain its member states' policies towards China. In the debates of strategic autonomy, political autonomy is considered as a prerequisite, while the lack of political solidarity constitutes one of the biggest obstacles. Political autonomy is defined as "the ability to independently define common priorities and take actions", including joint assessment of challenges, formulating a joint response and common strategic culture (Helwig, 2020). In this sense, strategic autonomy implies the consolidation of internal solidarity and more coherence in the EU's China policy.

In the discussions of strategic autonomy, China is increasingly framed as a major challenge to the EU's political autonomy. On one hand, China has been criticized to "divide and rule" the EU and weaken EU solidarity. In particular, the China-Central and Eastern Cooperation mechanism (also called 17+1) is viewed as China's "Trojan Horse" within the EU (Slim, 2021). The EU is concerned that China is using economic statecraft to achieve political goals of splitting the EU, making it harder for the EU to formulate a common China policy. This concern expressed by former

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel who once demanded China to follow a "One Europe" policy rather than trying to divide Europe (Poggetti, 2017). On the other hand, the EU is putting increasing pressure on its member states, especially some Central and Eastern European member states to take a common position on China. In its 2019 policy paper, the EU emphasized that its member states cannot effectively achieve their aims with China without unity and called on all member states to ensure consistency with EU laws, rules and policies in cooperating with China (Commission, 2019). In this context, some Eastern European countries, such as Lithuania and Estonia, are leaning closer towards common EU position and expressing preference to deal with China through a 27+1 format (SCMP, 2021).

Secondly, the EU's protection of economic sovereignty may lead to increasing securitization of the EU's economic and trade policy towards China. The concept of economic sovereignty emerged from the debates over strategic autonomy and is the operationalization of strategic autonomy in the field of economic policy. As the EU exercises tremendous influence in the Single Market and international geopolitical competition is spilling over into the economic field, protection economic sovereignty has become a priority in European strategic autonomy. The EU's economic sovereignty is facing multiple challenges, including demographic and technological trends while China and the US represent "specific and particularly difficult problems" (Pisani-Ferry & Wolff, 2019). In the eyes of the EU, the Trump administration's tax war and China's economic coercion measures are both seen as threats to its economic sovereignty (Hackenbroich, 2020).

In order to protect its economic sovereignty, the EU has established and sharpened a number of policy tools. In the field of investment, the EU established an investment screening mechanism in March 2019, Chinese investments, especially those from Chinese state-owned enterprises become the main targets of EU screening, leading to a sharp decline of Chinese investment in Europe (Kratz et al., 2020). For member states especially in Central and Eastern Europe which have not yet established a screening mechanism, the EU has also urged them to do so. In the field of trade, the EU has enhanced its instruments of anti-dumping and anti-subsidy, while an anti-coercion instrument is also in process. Such instruments have raised concerns over potential protectionism in the EU, bringing new challenges to China–EU trade relations. In the field of supply chain, the EU is working to enhance supply chain resilience and diversification, thus reducing dependence on China in strategic areas.

Thirdly, the EU's geopolitical ambition could reinforce China–EU competition in geopolitics. Traditionally, the EU sees itself as a normative power with little military presence in Asia. The lack of fundamental geopolitical conflict is an important feature that distinguishes China–EU relations from China–US relations. However, as the EU aims to become a geopolitical power, the traditional narrative about China–EU relations might change gradually. As great power competition intensifies, the EU is also undergoing a "geopolitical turn", enhancing the EU's geopolitical influence and has become a consensus among European elites.

In the transformation towards a geopolitical power, geo-strategic and geopolitical elements will increasingly feature in the EU's policy towards China, which

challenges China–EU relations in two ways. On one hand, the EU is increasingly sensitive to geopolitical factor in its relations with China, which may lead the EU to see China as a geopolitical challenge. The EU is particularly concerned over China's presence in areas that are geopolitically sensitive to the EU, worrying that China would pose "the greatest geopolitical challenge to the EU in its near abroad, specifically the Western Balkans, the MENA region, and the newly emerging geopolitical playing field of the Arctic" (Legarda, 2020). Under a geopolitical thinking, the EU is also seeing China's Belt and Road Initiative as a geopolitical project and has come up with its own connectivity strategy in order to strengthen the EU's role as an indispensable geopolitical and geo-economic actor.

While being vigilant about China's geopolitical influence, the EU is also extending its geopolitical ambition to areas that are geopolitically sensitive to China, in particular the Indo-Pacific region which has become a geopolitical hotspot in recent years. Following France, Germany and the Netherlands, the EU put forward its own Indo-Pacific Strategy in April 2021, which serves as a guideline for the EU to play a more active role in the region. In addition to traditional economic cooperation, one of the most significant features of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy is the decision to increase security and defence cooperation with the region. To meet security challenges, the EU claimed that European navies should maintain a meaningful presence in the region (Commission, 2021). This could be seen by China as bringing further uncertainty to an area that is geopolitically complicated.

4   China's Strategic New Thinking towards Europe

European strategic autonomy has become a new reference point for the EU to frame its China policy. Consequently, China's strategy towards the EU should also reflect this new reality and demonstrate new thinking. How to deal with a strategically autonomous EU is going to be a major task of China's diplomacy in a long time to come. In the context of European strategic autonomy, this chapter argues that China's strategic new thinking towards the EU should incorporate the following elements.

First of all, China should raise the standing of the EU in its foreign relations hierarchy and handle China–EU relations from a strategic perspective. After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1975, China–EU relations was for long regarded as a kind of "derivative relationship" as it largely depends on their respective relations with the US and the Soviet Union (Yahuda, 2008). The establishment of a strategic partnership in 2003 marked a mile stone in China–EU relationship, yet the limitation of the EU as a strategic actor has led to a "reality–expectations gap" in the bilateral relationship (Chen, 2006). Although the EU still has a long way to go in terms of real strategic autonomy, its ambitions are expected to narrow the "reality-expectations gap" in China–EU relations. A strategically autonomous EU is also in line with China's vision of a multi-polar world and will play a more important role in China's foreign relations. This is not just because of the

need to cope with the pressure of China–US strategic competition, but also because China–EU relations have transcended bilateral and trilateral levels to acquire global significance. Therefore, a new thinking towards the EU requires China to get rid of the US factor and transform China–EU relations from a "derivative relationship" into an independent strategic partnership.

Secondly, China should support European strategic autonomy and become a partner in the EU's pursuit of strategic autonomy. The EU's ambition for strategic autonomy is partly driven great power politics, but it also requires the EU to manage relations with great powers like China. Politically, China has repeatedly expressed its support for European strategic autonomy. In a phone call with Merkel in April 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed that China's development is an opportunity for the EU, he expected the EU to make independent judgements and achieve real strategic autonomy (Xinhua, 2021b). In a China session during the Munich Security Conference in May 2021, Chinse Foreign Minister Wang Yi made it clearer that China views its relationship with Europe from a strategic perspective and sees the EU as a partner rather than a competitor. According to him, China would continue to support European integration and the EU's efforts to achieve strategic autonomy and play a greater role on the international stage (Xinhua, 2021a). As France and Germany have been taking the lead in the discussions over strategic autonomy, China has attached particular importance to its relations with these two European countries. All these are strong political signals that China wants to see a strategically autonomous EU, yet it must further show that support in reality could start from economic cooperation. In order to recover from the pandemic, the EU adopted a 750 billion Euro recovery plan in July 2020, which was hailed by European Council President Michel as a major step towards European strategic autonomy (Council, 2020). As a top trade partner (in goods) of the EU, China has an important role to play in the EU's recovery. In particular, the China–EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) is largely a product of European strategic autonomy and could become a useful tool for China to support European strategic autonomy. Therefore, China and the EU should work together to create conditions for the approval of the CAI.

Finally, China should carefully manage its ideological differences with the EU to prevent European strategic autonomy from developing in a confrontational manner against China. Ideological factors and values have become increasingly important in China–EU relations in recent years and two news trends have emerged in this regard. In the field of ideology, the EU has traditionally sought to reserve differences and "agree to disagree", but it tends to highlight ideological differences and "disagree to agree" with China on the matter of ideology. Meanwhile, in terms of human rights diplomacy, the EU is also moving from a traditional dialogue-based approach to a more confrontational approach. In this regard, the EU's human rights sanctions against China in March 2021 marked a new height in the EU's principled approach towards China. In this background, China must prepare for the normalization or even escalation of ideological conflicts. Nevertheless, it is still imperative for China to carefully manage ideological differences with the EU, which is key to preventing

European strategic autonomy from developing into a confrontational way against China.

5   Concluding Remarks

Strategic autonomy has become the mainstream policy narrative and long-term objective of the EU, with its policy implications manifested both inside and outside of the EU. Focusing on strategic autonomy, the EU's external policies including China policy are undergoing deep transformations, bringing challenges and opportunities for China–EU relations. From a Chinese perspective, European strategic autonomy is in line with China's vision of a multi-polar world and enables the EU to maintain an independent policy and a balanced position between China and the US. Meanwhile, the EU's consolidation of political solidarity, its protection of economic sovereignty and ambition for geopolitical influence may also pose challenges to relations with China. Overall, European strategic autonomy is not directly targeted at China, and it is rather the EU's response to serious internal and external challenges. In order to ensure the stable development of China–EU relations, China must embrace new thinking in its strategy towards Europe, supporting European strategic autonomy not only in words but also in deeds.

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Prospects of European-Chinese Contest for Influence in the Western Balkans: The Case of Serbia

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Abstract Immediately after the breakup of former Yugoslavia, the US has emerged as the single most important external actor in the regional dynamics of the Balkans. Using NATO as a vehicle, in strategic terms, it became a security overlay; the Kosovo war being a peak of its role in this context. It has effectively operated key international missions and operations (SFOR and IFOR in Bosnia, KFOR in Kosovo) and induced the creation of important regional organizations and initiatives, most notably the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI).

Over the last two decades, however, the EU has been emerging as a key external player in the Balkans: it initiated (at the Koln summit in 1999) the creation of a Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe; established its largest ever civilian mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo), while substituting IFOR and IPTF in Bosnia with EUFOR (Operation Althea) and EUPM, and conducting two missions in North Macedonia (then-FYROM; Concordia—military mission, and Proxima—police mission). Additionally, after the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/298, the EU took upon the role of the main facilitator in Belgrade–Priština dialogue. It has also aspired to include new member states from the Western Balkans, through the Stabilization and Association Process and accession negotiations. During this period, it has also emerged as the single most important trading partner for the region.

The rise and growing international assertiveness of China, however, threatens to challenge the dominant EU role in Central and Eastern Europe in general and Western Balkans in particular. The case of Serbian–Chinese relations, as illustrated by the economic partnership, infrastructure investments, police cooperation, Serbian openness to Chinese new technologies, and political cooperation in international fora (not least on the issue of Kosovo) might indicate that the EU role is far from secure in the foreseeable future. Apparent lack of the EU strategy to reinvent its regional role, as well as growing interest in the region of other external actors (most notably, but not limited to, the US, Russia, and Turkey), all point toward the possibility of the

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reshaping of regional power structures, with uncertain outcomes. Approaching the issue from a dominant realist understanding of great power competition and spheres of influence while taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of diverse theoretical approaches, the author analyzes the relevance of the Serbian case for the broader matter of European–Chinese relations.

Chinese economic upheaval and its potential to spill over into political and military assertiveness have consistently pervaded the majority of academic and policy discussions since the beginning of the century. While in the field of International Relations the issue of Chinese rise has, arguably, most often been observed in the context of power transition perspective, various theoretical approaches and political positions have been producing diverse interpretations of China-related issues, either lamenting the endangered liberal international order, championing the spread of free trade and entrepreneurship as key features of globalization, or warning about the prospects of a renewed great power competition which might push the world toward yet another devastating global conflict.[1] However, there seemed to be a fundamental agreement on basic facts: that China is rising rapidly and its rise is bound to bring about significant changes to the international system—changes that are most likely to transcend the merely economic aspects of global relations.

One of the anticipated changes concerns the polarity of the global system: if the United States has effectively been the unipole since the collapse of the Soviet Union, then a hypertrophied China would fundamentally change the nature of the system, transforming it into a bipolar one and bring back the memories of the security dynamics of the early Cold War. If, as some argue, an unsatiated and compellingly nuclear Russia is one of the poles in a system of emerging tripolarity, this would mean that China is a potential benefactor or a victim in a balancing game, similar to the one Nixon's administration hinted at in the last century. And in a potentially more diffused and multipolar world, which would comprise not only numerous world powers, but several relatively detached regional orders, China might have more than a few theatres to exercise its newfound assertiveness worldwide, challenging the positions of rival powers such as the US and its allies, or the European Union and its most powerful members.

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[1]F. Attinà, 'The World Order Lifecycle and World Power Competition' in F. Attinà (ed) World Order Transition and the Atlantic Area: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Analysis (Cham: Springer, 2021): 11–38; Y. Feng, 'Friction, Competition or Cooperation? Menu of Choice for the United States and China — A Power Transition Perspective' in F. Attinà (ed) World Order Transition and the Atlantic Area: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Analysis (Cham: Springer, 2021): 39–66; P.K. MacDonald and J.M. Parent, Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment (Ithaca [NY] – London: Cornell University Press, 2019); R. Foot, 'Restraints on Conflict in the China–US Relationship: Contesting Power Transition Theory' in A. Toje (ed.) Will China's Rise Be Peaceful? The Rise of a Great Power in Theory, History, Politics, and the Future (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 79–99.

Internal debates on the possibilities of a peaceful rise and the type of assertiveness the country would pursue have been ongoing in China since the beginning of the century. Under the influence of national historical and political legacy, as well as regional and global contingencies, various views have dominated the public discourse and strategic thinking at different points in time.[2] External observers have also assessed the issue in varying ways: while Graham Allison claimed that the change at the commanding heights of the global system would certainly lead to conflict between the former hegemon and the rising one, Christopher Coker argued that this is far from inevitable, but nor entirely improbable – depending on whether the US and China would follow the 'logic of great power war'.[3] Differing positions and predictions notwithstanding, there has been no dilemma about the fact that rise is imminent.

By analyzing hard indicators such as foreign policy speeches and documents of the Xi Jinping era, observers have concluded that, while there are no definitive signs that China has discarded the idea of peaceful rise, it is certainly preparing for various scenarios. In his historic speech at the 19th congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping announced that Chinese posture, particularly from 2035 on, would be more forward looking, enabling China to become 'a global leader in terms of comprehensive national power and international influence' by 2049.[4] Official strategic document from 2019, the 'Defence White Paper', stipulates that China would not refrain from resorting to military means in order to project its power globally and protect its vital interests: 'the PLA actively promotes international security and military cooperation and refines relevant mechanisms for protecting China's overseas interests. To address deficiencies in overseas operations and support, it builds far seas forces, develops overseas logistical facilities, and enhances capabilities in accomplishing diversified military tasks'.[5]For now, however, the bulk of Chinese military activities seem to be concentrated in its immediate proximity, such as the South China Sea. In other regions of the world, Chinese influence is dominantly exerted through cultural and economic means, as illustrated by the growing network of its Confucius cultural centers and the ever-increasing number of infrastructure-

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[2]H. Kissinger, *On China* (Toronto: Allen Lane Canada – Penguin Group: 2011): 497–513.

[3]G.T. Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (Boston [MA]: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017); C. Coker, *The Improbable War: China, The United States and Logic of Great Power Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[4]Glaser, B. S. and M. P. Funaiole, 'Xi Jinping's 19th Party Congress Speech Heralds Greater Assertiveness in Chinese Foreign Policy', CSIS, October 26, 2017. Available at: https://www.csis. org/analysis/xi-   jinpings-19th-party-congress-speech-heralds-greater-assertiveness-chinese-foreign-policy [Accessed June 1, 2020].

[5]A.H. Cordesman, China's New 2019 Defence White Paper: An Open Strategic Challenge to the United States, but One Which Does Not Have to Lead to Conflict. (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2019): 3.

related loan and investment projects developed within the Belt and Road Initiative (formerly One Belt, One Road) for global connectivity.[6]

Among the regions which undoubtedly serve as a theater for global competition and where China has a shot at challenging the West's positions, Eastern Europe, and since 2016 increasingly the Western Balkans, stand out: 'the BRI does not simply encourage Chinese companies to go overseas but, somehow more precisely, it points to the Eurasian continent including East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe'.[7] Immediately after the breakup of former Yugoslavia, the US has emerged as the single most important external actor in the regional dynamics of the Balkans. Using NATO as a vehicle, in strategic terms, it became a security overlay; the bombing of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the Kosovo War being the peak of its role in this context. It has effectively operated key international missions and operations (SFOR and IFOR in Bosnia, KFOR in Kosovo) and induced the creation of important regional organizations and initiatives, most notably the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI).

Over the last two decades, however, the EU has been emerging as a key external player in the Balkans: it initiated (at the Koln summit in 1999) the creation of Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe; established its largest ever civilian mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo), while substituting IFOR and IPTF in Bosnia with EUFOR (Operation Althea) and EUPM, and conducting two missions in North Macedonia (then-FYROM; Concordia—military mission, and Proxima—police mission). Additionally, after the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/298 the EU took upon the role of the main facilitator in Belgrade–Priština dialogue.[8] It has also aspired to include new member states from the Western Balkans, through the Stabilization and Association Process and accession negotiations. During this period, it has also emerged as the single most important trading partner for the region.

However, its most powerful tool in the Western Balkans—enlargement policy—began to languish after the 2013 accession of Croatia. This was a signal for third actors to step in, and among them China was the most assertive and best equipped. It has developed a specific tool for cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries, the 16+1 mechanism, offering many of them, particularly the EU non-members, resources they knew they could not obtain for Brussels. Within

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[6]M. Popovic, E. K. Jenne and J. Medzihorsky. 'Charm Offensive or Offensive Charm? An Analysis of Russian and Chinese Cultural Institutes abroad', *Europe-Asia Studies* 72.9 (2020): 1445–1467; B. Hu, Q. Pan and S. Wu., 'The Overall Development of the Belt and Road Countries: Measurement, Ranking, and Assessment' in W. Zhang et al. (eds) *China's Belt and Road Initiative*: *Changing the Rules of Globalization* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 201–224; P. Łasak and R.W.H. van der Linden, *The Financial Implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Route to More Sustainable Economic Growth* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

[7]Ghiselli, A., *Protecting China's Interests Overseas: Securitization and Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021): 79.

[8]M.E. Smith, *Europe's Common Security and Defence Policy: Capacity–building, Experiential Learning, and Institutional Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 51–86.

years, and especially after 2016 and Xi Jinping's visit to Belgrade, Serbia has emerged as the single most important Chinese partner in the Western Balkans, attracting more loans and investments that other regional countries combined. There are no completely reliable data, but researchers have estimated the overall value of projects in Serbia to over 10 billion USD as early as 2019.[9] At the same time, despite slow progress, Serbia has remained on the course of European integration, thus becoming a theater for the contest of influence between China and the European Union.

1   Contemporary Development of Serbian–Chinese Relations

Serbian–Chinese relations after World War II were critically marked by several groups of factors, all of them rooted in geopolitics and ideology: the fact that Serbia was part of the newly constituted, communist-led Yugoslav federation; that China underwent its own revolutionary transformation in 1949; and that, particularly since the late 1960s, China has played an increasingly important role in the global competition between the superpowers in the bipolar system—the United States and the Soviet Union. It took further six years for the two countries to finally establish diplomatic relations, which occurred as late as January 1955. Relations with the superpowers naturally represented a catalyst for the political dynamics between major regional powers such as Yugoslavia and China: nominally non-aligned but effectively strongly embedded into Western-supported strategic architecture of Southern Europe, Yugoslavia maintained ambivalent relations with those regional countries aligned with the Soviet Union, such as Bulgaria and Hungary, as well as those occasionally more closely tied to communist China, such as Albania or Romania. Ideological rifts caused by Chinese dogmatic policies of Cultural Revolution and 'Great Leap Forward' rendered diplomatic relations between the two countries virtually nonexistent during most of the 1960s. It was not until 1970 that relations were fully restored, with the Chinese leadership expressing interest in the Yugoslav experience of 'socialist self-government' and Yugoslavia supporting the People's Republic of China taking over the UN seat from Republic of China (Taiwan).

Series of political arrangements signed between the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and People's Republic of China in late 1970s demonstrated the political willingness and set the normative framework for future cooperation in areas such as trade and culture. However, not much actual impact has been made: the growing Chinese economy and stagnating Yugoslav one have not naturally been

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[9]Conley, H.A. and J.E. Hillman., 'The Western Balkans with Chinese Characteristics', CSIS, July 30, 2019. Available at: https://www.csis.org/analysis/western-balkans-chinese-characteristics [accessed January5, 2020].

particularly compatible and geographical factors induced both countries dominantly focus on their own regions. By the last decade of the 20th century, Yugoslavia first experienced an economic downfall and then a violent breakup, which largely excluded Serbia (as part of newly formed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) from global politics. Still, it is exactly at this point that, largely under the influence of a small but influential coalition member, radical left party called the Yugoslav Left, Serbian government pushed for closer cooperation with the People's Republic of China. Unlike Russia, considered a traditional ally of Serbia, which sided with the bulk of Western policies toward Serbia during the 1990s, China has mostly remained abstained and neutral, pursuing the course of generally cordial relations. The event that somewhat changed the scene and prepared the stage for the forthcoming strategic reshuffling, is the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by NATO on May 7, 1999, during the Kosovo conflict.[10]

Three Chinese state media journalists died in the incident which reinforced both countries' perspective that they are seen as lasting enemies by the West, pushing their policies together in the mid- to long term.

The beginning of the new century brought about significant shift in Serbian international position: after the ousting of Slobodan Milošević at the end of 2000, the new pro-Western government was formed, and European integration became the key strategic goal of the country. Still, Serbian relations with the EU have been consistently hampered by what European structures considered inadequate level of Serbian cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (in breach of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 827 from May 1993), and what Serbia concerned inappropriate Western support to Kosovo's bid for independence (in breach of the UNSC Res. 1244 from June 1999). As the integration process advanced steadily, although at a snail's pace, overall political relations between Serbia and the EU and its crucial member states effectively deteriorated. This culminated after February of 2008 with Kosovo's unilaterally declared independence being recognized by all EU members except Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Romania, and Slovakia. European integration remained a proclaimed strategic objective of Serbian foreign policy, but the new circumstances prompted the country to go on and hedge against the idea of going all in on the European hand.

This is how the space was opened up for third actors' influence in the country and the wider region, and what brought players like Azerbaijan, Turkey, France, Russia, and, most notably, China, to the table. This is also how Serbian foreign policy doctrine of 'Four Pillars' was born.[11] Serbian leadership, headed by the Democratic Party, perceived as staunchly pro-European, proclaimed that the country was going to pursue its foreign policy goals relying on four 'pillars': the European Union, the United States, Russia, and China. Since China was the truly innovative part of such an equation, given that it was largely excluded from regional politics, a new

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[10]P. Porter, *The False Promise of Liberal Order: Nostalgia, Delusion, and the Rise of Trump* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020): 124.

[11]M. Lišanin, 'Spoljnopolitičkiprioriteti Srbije', *Političkarevija* 31.1 (2012): 201–212.

framework for enhanced cooperation was needed, and it emerged in the form of an agreement on strategic partnership, signed in 2009, expanded in 2013, and brought to a level of 'comprehensive strategic partnership' in 2016. Chinese focus on Serbia and the Western Balkans was initially a part of the 16+1 cooperation framework, created in 2012 and encompassing China and 16 Central and East European countries. After the inclusion of Greece in 2019, the initiative was rebranded as 17+1; however, once Lithuania decided to pull out of the mechanism, calling it divisive in the context of European values and unity, China retained the original number of sixteen European partners. (Some authors believe that 17+1 projects have indeed been divisive toward the EU, and purposefully so.)[12]Chinese–Serbian relations, however, soon outgrew the scope of the format and Serbia became among the largest Chinese partners in the wider region and by far the largest within the Western Balkans. Since at least 2016 and Xi Jinping' scrucial visit to Serbia, Serbian and Chinese officials have been referring to mutual relations as 'steel friendship'. Indeed, in the political sphere, they have supported each other's claims to territorial integrity, with Serbia relying on China (alongside Russia) to prevent accession of Kosovo to the United Nations and other international institutions. Cooperation, however, was in no way limited to the sphere of high politics.

Since 2016, China has made several major investments in Serbia, with Zijin Mining acquiring RTB Bor mining and smelting complex being arguably the most important one. Alongside Smederevo steel mill, owned since 2016 by Chinese Hesteel Group, the complex has become the largest gross exporter in Serbia, although both facilities are under the public's eye due to transparency and environmental concerns.[13] Chinese steel production in Smederevo has occasionally been the point of EU concern: steel remains one key points of European–Chinese contention, and the EU has expressed fear that Chinese steel produced in Serbia might end up swamping Europe at dumped prices.[14] In the field of critical infrastructure, Chinese companies like China Communications Construction Company and its subsidiary China Road and Bridge Corporation are in charge of numerous projects, most notably the Belgrade—Budapest railway reconstruction, as well as several highways and freeways in Western, Northern, and Central Serbia. Early in 2021, Power Construction Corporation of China signed a 4.4 billion EUR Memorandum of Understanding on the construction of Belgrade metro with two French companies, Egis and Alstom. Such projects are ordinarily funded by loans from the Chinese

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[12]H.A. Conley et al., *China's "Hub-and-Spoke" Strategy in the Balkans* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020).

[13]T. Prelec, 'FDI in the Balkans: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly', in: Giorgio Fruscione (ed.): *The Balkans: Old, New Instabilities. A European Region Looking for its Place in the World* (Milan: ISPI, 2020): 112.

[14]T. Braj, 'Kina koristiSrbiju u sukobusa EU', *DW*, July 13, 2016. Avaliable at: https://www.dw.com/sr/kina-koristi-srbiju-u-sukobu-sa-eu/a-19397006 [Accessed April 20, 2022].

Exim Bank or the Chinese Government, which essentially secures doubly beneficial deals for the Chinese side, while providing Serbia with funding free from political conditioning, which is usually not the case with resources coming from the Western institutions.[15]

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Chinese aid to Serbia exceeded assistance from other partners, especially from the EU in the early phases of the disaster and the outset of mass vaccination campaigns. Both Serbian and Chinese political elites have underscored the importance of successful joint public health campaigns, with Serbia opening up the borders for vaccination of citizens of neighboring countries and donating numerous batches of vaccines to countries in the region and beyond. Such' vaccine diplomacy' stirred fears—as it turned out—unsubstantiated—that Serbia might use it for revisionist strategic causes in the regional security context.[16] What it has, however, been used for, is advancing the public image of China at the expense of the EU—admittedly, due to a great extent to the EU's own troubles in managing the issue.[17] Initial successes led to ideas of expanded cooperation in the field of health industry, with announcements of joint Chinese–Serbian–UAE vaccine facility being built in Serbia.

In addition to institutional erosion, environment, and regional hard and soft power reshuffling, potential dangers of falling into a debt–trap have occasionally been emphasized in the case of Serbia, although as of 2022 there are no indicators that Serbian debt toward China might raise to the erstwhile levels of Sri Lanka, or even Montenegro.[18] Areas that cause particular concern in the West—not just the EU, but the US as well—are those related to the domain of defense and security. Serbian reliance on Huawei for urban surveillance hardware or procurement of Chinese arms, such as drones in 2021 or air defense systems in 2022, incite fears that Serbia not only intends to alter regional strategic balance, but also signals a wider shift away from European and toward Chinese political model.[19] Still, Serbia keeps procuring

[15] M.J. Babic, J. Garcia-Bernardo and E. M. Heemskerk, 'The Rise of Transnational State Capital: State- led Foreign Investment in the twenty-first century', *Review of International Political Economy* 27.3 (2020): 433–475.

[16] M. Ruge and N. Popescu. 'Serbia and Coronavirus Propaganda: High Time for a Transactional EU', *ECFR*, June 4, 2020. Available at: https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_serbia_and_coronavirus_propaganda_high_time_for_a_transactional[a ccessed June 30, 2020].

[17] S. Vladisavljev, 'Why Serbia Embraced China's COVID-19 Vaccine', *The Diplomat*, Febraury 01, 2021. Available at: https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/why-serbia-embraced-chinas-covid-19-vaccine/[accessed February 28, 2021]; A. Small, 'The Meaning of Systemic Rivalry: Europe and China beyond the Pandemic', *ECFR Policy Brief 321*, May 2020.

[18] L. Jones and S. Hameiri., 'Debunking the Myth of 'Debt-trap Diplomacy': How Recipient Countries Shape China's Belt and Road Initiative', *Chatham House Research Paper*, August 2020.

[19] P. Roblin, 'Missile-Armed Chinese Drones Arrive In Europe As Serbia Seeks Airpower Edge', *Forbes*, July 9, 2020. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/sebastienroblin/2020/07/09/missile-armed-   chinese-drones-arrive-in-europe-for-serbian-military/?sh   =   312f468779d2 [accessed July 30, 2020]; V. Vuksanović, 'Chinese Drones in Serbian Skies', *RUSI*, January 5, 2021. Available at: https://rusi.org/commentary/chinese-drones-serbian-skies[accessed March 3, 2021]; B. Stojkovski, "Big Brother Comes to Belgrade", *Foreign Policy*, June 18, 2019.

incomparably more arms and military equipment from the EU and NATO countries than it does from China. Before suspending all military exercises indefinitely amid Russia-West tensions and pursuant to its doctrine of military neutrality, Serbia has also conducted vast majority of such activities jointly with the EU and NATO countries, whereas it has never conducted a joint military exercise with China. It is therefore safer to assume that its decisions to turn to China in some of the critical fields of cooperation are either a function of domestic politics or an indicator of its traditional hedging strategy.

2 Serbia as an Aspiring EU Member and a Theater of European–Chinese Contest

Despite original enthusiasm for the immediate aftermath of 2000 democratic changes, the Serbian quest for full membership in the European Union has largely been hobbling.

Seventeen years after the adoption of the initial membership Feasibility Study, and contrary to the 2018 Juncker Commission target timeframe for the Western Balkan states' integration being set for 2025, it seems that membership is not in sight for Serbia or other countries of the region. Mutual relations between Serbia and the EU are arranged by the provisions of Stabilization and Association Agreement, signed in 2008. The document underscored European integration as the key strategic course for Serbia, nesting its economy firmly into the European block. Current indicators of economic exchange confirm this: trade relations between the two countries have been consistently growing, exceeding 4.5 billion EUR in 2021, with China as the second most important import partner (after Germany), and an increasingly important export partner. Serbian export to China doubled since 2020, with China as the seventh biggest export destination for Serbian goods in 2021 (trailing Germany, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Romania, and Russia).[20] The European block (EU members and aspiring candidates from the Western Balkans, summed under the CEFTA—Central European Free Trade Agreement) still accounts for around 80% of total Serbian foreign trade.

Serbia was granted EU candidate status in 2012 and accession negotiations officially kick started in 2014. However, both the absence of substantial progress and socio-political reform in Serbia, as well as growing enlargement fatigue and skepticism toward the idea of receiving new members in many EU members, made

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Available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/18/big- brother-comes-to-belgrade-huawei-china-facial-recognition-vucic/[accessed June 30, 2020]; A. Vasovic, 'Serbian Purchase of Missile Defence System Shows Ties Deepening with China', *Reuters*, August 3, 2020. Available at: https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-serbia-arms-china/serbian-purchase-of-missile-defence-system-shows-ties-deepening-with-china-idUKKBN24Z196[accessed August 3, 2020].

[20]Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Monthly Statistical Bulletin, 12/2021 (Belgrade: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2022): 53.

the process last considerably longer than initially expected. As of December 2021, Serbia has opened 22 out of 35 negotiating chapters (two out of six clusters under the new enlargement methodology), temporarily closing only two. Regardless of the fact that Serbia–EU relations have been steadily developing in the fields of economic cooperation, cultural and academic exchange, or freedom of movement, lack of clear progress in accession negotiations, along with the looming issue of Kosovo, have exposed European Union's geopolitical vulnerability and opened up the space for third actors' assertiveness in the region, inducing Serbia to tilt its foreign policy from clearly pro-European to a multi-vectored one.

With the terrain set by the initial, ideologically driven contacts of the Milošević era, and by the pragmatic turn toward the 'Four Pillar' foreign policy in 2009, Serbian pivot to China has been transpiring gradually rather than suddenly. Once it became clear that Serbian–Chinese relations are the fastest developing in the region, various strands of criticism emerged within Serbia, in its immediate neighborhood, and beyond. Two main groups of critiques are the ones concerning the impact of Chinese politico-economic assertiveness upon the fragile condition of Serbian democracy and rule of law, and the ones designating the two countries' cooperation as subversive toward the EU values and its overall standing in the region.[21] Indeed, the Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced an already overwhelmingly positive image of China in Serbian public opinion, mostly at the expense of the EU: research from April 2021 showed that 56% of the population believed that China was the most helpful country to assist Serbia in curbing the consequences of the pandemic (ahead of the EU with 17%), while 83% considered it a friendly country and 77% expecting further improvement of mutual relations.[22]

Serbian openness to investments and loans from Chinese companies and institutions, support to Chinese positions on the issues of Tibet and Xinjiang, procurement Chinese-produced arms, reliance on Chinese digital infrastructure or evading to side with the common EU foreign policy declarations regarding China all drew significant criticism from the European Union, but without particular punitive or other measures set to induce major changes in Serbian foreign policy behavior. Despite keeping a close eye on Chinese regional assertiveness, the EU seems to have no effective tool to counter it, at least while developing its own comprehensive relations with China, particularly in the field of global trade.[23] After almost nine years since the initiation of the process, late in 2020 the EU and China have concluded in principle the negotiations for a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), one of the most ambitious trade documents in post-WW2 history, intended to improve

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[21] V. Vuksanović, 'Light Touch, Tight Grip: China's Influence and the Corrosion of Serbian Democracy', *War on the Rocks*, September 24, 2019. Available at: https://warontherocks.com/2019/09/light- touch-tight-grip-chinas-influence-and-the-corrosion-of-serbian-democracy/[accessed September 30, 2019].

[22] Institut za evropskeposlove, *StavovigrađanaSrbije prema Kini* (Beograd: Institut za evropskeposlove, 2021): 7, 10, 12.

[23] European Commission. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: EU-China – A Strategic Outlook. JOIN (2019) 5*, March 19, 2019.

the balance in the EU–China trade relations by establishing financial rules and opening up Chinese markets for European investors. Agreement adoption and ratification are yet to be executed, but it is increasingly hard for the EU to limit potential candidates' economic relations with China while investing considerable resources in nurturing its own dealings with the world's second largest economy. A sense that something is to be done, however, persists.

Launched late in 2021, EU's enhanced infrastructure connectivity strategy, the 'Global Gateway', aims to 'mobilize 300 billion EUR (around $337 billion) over a five-year period to invest in digital and transport infrastructure, energy generation and transmission, and health projects', and while not explicitly designed to counter the Belt and Road Initiative, it is widely seen as having that exact purpose.[24] As Kuchins puts it, 'China's policy toward [Russia and] Europe must be viewed through two prisms: (1) the broader expansion of Chinese economic and political power across the Eurasian supercontinent; and (2) its ties with China–US relations'.[25] China is aware that its relations with the US significantly shape the global strategic context and that on that chessboard the EU and the US are more closely aligned with each other than with China. The prospect of the EU and the US acting as a completely unitary block in the international system, however, seems like the worst case scenario for China, and one which would immediately begin playing put in its regions of interest such as Eastern Europe.[26] In the official statement from the 2021 EU–US summit, coordination of policies was announced, while the two partners underscored that they have 'similar multi-faceted approaches to China, which include elements of cooperation, competition, and systemic rivalry'.[27] European and American positions and interests still occasionally diverge, and both of them operate within their own respective contexts of interdependence with China, which, in combination with Chinese material capabilities, prompts them to tolerate a certain level of their rival's assertiveness in less critical domains, even in the regions where they have traditionally exerted decisive influence.[28]

As for Serbia, 'given that EU membership is a long–term prospect, in the short and medium term, [it] will try to extract as much benefit as it can from doing business

[24]F. Kliem, 'Europe's Global Gateway: Complementing or Competing With BRI?', The Diplomat, December 7, 2021. Available at: https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/europes-global-gateway-complementing-or- competing-with-bri/[accessed February 2, 2022].

[25]Kuchins, A.S., (2021) 'China's Policy towards Russia and Europe: Eurasian Hookup' in D.B.H. Denoon (ed.) *China's Grand Strategy: A Roadmap to Global Power?* (New York [NY]: New York University Press): 191–211.

[26]J. Ringsmose, J. and S. Rynning, 'China Brought NATO Closer Together', *War on the Rocks*, February 5, 2020. Available at:https://warontherocks.com/2020/02/china-brought-nato-closer-together/[accessed March 30, 2020].

[27]European Council, *EU-US summit statement: 'Towards a renewed Transatlantic partnership'*, June 15, 2021. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/15/eu-us-summit- statement-towards-a-renewed-transatlantic-partnership/[accessed June 20, 2021].

[28]M. Peel, H. Warrell and G. Chazan., 'US Warns Europe Against Embracing China's 5G Technology', *Financial Times*, February 16, 2020. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/19fa7046-4fe5-11ea-8841- 482eed0038b1[accessed March 30, 2020].

with China and other geopolitical players'.[29] Many of its China–related projects are being dismissed as sheer products of Chinese regional influence, usually labeled as 'malign'.[30] Still, without means to effectively curb Chinese presence, especially financial and economic one, with low possibility of a fully revived accession process for Serbia and other countries of the Western Balkans, and with current members' differing views on cooperation with China, the EU—from a geopolitical point of view—has little use of aggravating the regional competition with China.[31] A managed rivalry seems to be the best outcome both sides can strive for in the immediate future.

3   Explanation of Chinese Policies in the Balkans: Toward a Conceptual Framework

As it was demonstrated, increased Chinese presence in the Western Balkans is a segment of its wider strategy of power projection which, in turn, is a function of Chinese protracted economic rise. Various approaches to the study of IR offer diverse views of the possibility of cooperation in the context of significant power redistributions within the global system, such as the one brought about by the ascent of China. Most realist approaches focus on conflict management, arguing that structural power shifts produce the elevated risk of confrontation between the erstwhile hegemon and its challenger. Liberal internationalists focus on the possibility of transformation and cooperation as a means of transcending the confrontation. When the challenger is an authoritarian power which questions the very legitimacy of existing arrangements underpinning the global system, liberals will focus on the problems of safeguarding the 'rules-based international order'. The neo-Gramscian perspective, found at the cross-section of critical theory and World–systems theory, aspires to transcend the traditional liberal–realist divide by shifting the focus toward non-material aspects of international hegemony. This enables it to grasp the less coercive elements of Chinese expansion strategies while differentiating between the types of agencies exercised by the great powers and smaller states in the system.

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[29]V. Vuksanović, 'In Serbia, the Chinese Trojan Horse Tactic Works – For Now', *CHOICE*, July 23, 2020. Available at: https://chinaobservers.eu/in-serbia-the-chinese-trojan-horse-tactic-works-for-now/[accessed July 30, 2020].

[30]E. Seiwert, 'Serbian–Chinese ties — a potential threat for EU?', *EUobserver*, December 19, 2019. Available at: https://euobserver.com/opinion/146953[accessed January 30, 2020]; Shullman, D. (ed.), *Chinese Malign Influence and the Corrosion of Democracy: An Assessment of Chinese Interference in Thirteen Key Countries* (Washington, DC: International Republican Institute, 2019).

[31]M. Lišanin, 'China's Expansion Could Meet Challenges in Balkans in 2022', *Balkan Insight*, January 12, 2022. Available at: https://balkaninsight.com/2022/01/12/chinas-expansion-could-meet-challenges-in-balkans-in-2022/ [accessed January 27, 2022].

Realist school of thought famously focuses on issues connected to system polarity, balance of power, and prospects of system–shattering great power conflicts. In that sense, it is naturally prone to contemplating the Rise of China and its consequences. Developing what he calls 'predation theory' of power shifts, Shifrinson argues that 'rising states prey upon or support decliners with varying degrees of assertiveness depending on (1) the decliner's utility as a partner against other great powers (its strategic value) and (2) its military tools for securing its interests (its military posture) and thus its ability to threaten rising states'.[32] In the context of Chinese—US relations, this would mean that the US which retains the bulk of its military strength and assumes a cooperative enough posture which would enable China to confront other rivals in regions of interest (such as the EU in Eastern Europe) might actually end up being an unintended partner in reshaping world order, thus helping manage its own decline. Issues involving third actors like the EU or Russia aside, such developments do seem far–fetched given the scope of China–US competition on East and Southeast Asia. In other words, depending on the region of focus, prospects for predation or a cooperative power shift vary tremendously. Accordingly, In Mearsheimer's offensive realist view, as outlined in the concluding chapter of the second edition of *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, China is likely to keep growing and at point begin emulating the American pursuit for hegemony. It will first try to achieve undisputed domination in its own region, pushing external rivals out in the process. Once powerful enough, it will realize that it has vital interests in more distant regions, and that projecting military force might be a necessary way to protect them.[33] This does not mean that an all-out military conflict among the great powers will be absolutely unavoidable, but it does mean that it will be an entirely plausible option.

Liberal thinkers typically see China as a challenger to the liberal international order, contending, however, that the order has been so beneficial to most—including the challenger itself—that China would not try to entirely dismantle and revoke it. Per John Ikenberry, 'both the United States and China make pragmatic use of global rules and institutions to advance their interests and protect their sovereignty. China and the United States may be drawn into dangerous security conflicts within East Asia. But at the global level, China's struggles with the United States are primarily about gaining a voice within global institutions and manipulating the rules and regimes to suit their interests. China is seeking to revise the political hierarchy and enhance its position and status within the global system. But it is not engaged in world–scale revisionist struggles over rival models of modernity or

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[32] J.R.I. Shifrinson, *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts* (Ithaca [NY]: Cornell University Press, 2018): 13.

[33] J.J. Mearsheimer, "Can China Rise Peacefully?", *The National Interest*, October 25, 2014. Available at: https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/can-china-rise-peacefully-10204[accessed August 4, 2020].

even divergent ideologies of an international order'.[34] Sebastian Rosato disagrees with the idea of talking about Chinese participation in institutional arrangements as a signal of undeniable benevolence: since it is impossible to predict a rival's intentions with sufficient level of certainty, it is safe to assume that even a malign China would, under current circumstances, have an incentive to participate in global institutions.[35] Thus, in order to both understand Chinese strategy, as well as counter it, the West needs to compete but must not make revolutionary moves: it should just offer more liberal order and safeguard it better. In the end, its competence in maintaining the order should decide the outcome of the competition. 'Any design for future order must aim to co-opt the PRC where possible, as with evolving development norms; seek cooperation where desirable, as on global climate governance; and compete vigorously, when necessary, as with the future of technology governance or on existing maritime rules.'[36]

Dismissing traditional realist balancing notions as inadequate, but moving away from liberal neglect of the very concept of balance of power, Han and Paul argue that the lack of wide-ranging hard balancing strategies against China may be explained by two sets of factors: a strong sense of interdependence among major powers, which far exceeds the one seen between, for example, the US and USSR during the Cold War; and the fact that Chinese expansion strategies have largely relied upon peaceful means, such as economic and infrastructure connectivity pursued through the Belt and Road Initiative.[37] William Wohlforth, a neoclassical offensive realist, tends to agree. According to him, the currently observable power shift differs significantly from the ones we have known from earlier historical periods in three main ways: '1. the near certainty that all–out systemic war is off the table as a mechanism for hegemonic transition; 2. the fact that the rising challenger to the system's dominant state is credibly approaching peer status on only one dimension of state capability, gross economic output; and 3. the historically unprecedented degree of institutionalization in world politics coupled with the uniquely central role institutions play in the dominant power's grand strategy'.[38]

There is no doubt that, depending on the assumed point of view, both realists and their critics make valid points. This is where critical and alternative approaches patiently wait for their chance to offer unorthodox perspectives. Gramscian and

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[34]G.J. Ikenberry, 'A New Order of Things? China, America, and the Struggle over World Order' in A. Toje (ed.) *Will China's Rise Be Peaceful? The Rise of a Great Power in Theory, History, Politics, and the Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 51.

[35]S. Rosato, *Intentions in Great Power Politics: Uncertainty ant the Roots of Conflict* (New Haven [CT]–London: Yale University Press, 2021): 259.

[36]R. Lissner, and M. Rapp-Hooper (n.d.), *An Open World: How America Can Win the Contest for Twenty– First–Century Order* (New Haven [CT] – London: Yale University Press): 69.

[37]Z. Han and T.V. Paul., 'China's Rise and Balance of Power Politics', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 13.1 (2020): 1–26.

[38]W.C. Wohlforth, 'Not Quite the Same as It Ever Was: Power Shifts and Contestation over the American–Led World Order' in A. Toje (ed.) *Will China's Rise Be Peaceful? The Rise of a Great Power in Theory, History, Politics, and the Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 58–59.

Neo-Gramscian perspectives, with their focus on the concept of hegemony understood as a particular combination of coercion and consent, provide 'insights into the social basis of hegemony, its construction as a social artefact and its inherent points or moments of contradiction. Moreover, by considering how hegemony itself is a product of leadership, i.e., a consequence of individual and collective human acts, the Gramscian reading of this concept draws our attention to both its contestability and the impossibility of reducing it to a preponderance of material resources'.[39] Robert Cox expands on the Gramscian ideas by introducing the idea of international organizations as the mechanism of hegemony in a world order—a notion very well understood by the Chinese political elites, as obvious from their strategic posture.[40]

These approaches seem to bear the significant potential to grasp Chinese policies pursued within the scope of the Belt and Road Initiative, since they acknowledge the agency of local elites and societies of countries covered by the BRI programs, which is a dimension that eludes both realist and liberal analysis. In a similar vein, Garlick's concept of complex eclecticism, hinging to a large extent on the Neo-Gramscian foundations, follows the logic of overcoming paradigmatic faults in order to understand neglected dimensions of Chinese pursuit of global presence through the BRI.[41] Chinese strategy is complex and syncretic: so must be the theoretical concepts utilized to grasp it. As Doshi observes, 'if a hegemon's position in order emerges from "forms of control" like coercion, consent, and legitimacy, then competition over order revolves around efforts to strengthen and weaken these forms of control'.[42] In other words, strategy of a struggle for hegemony must encompass ideas about how to weaken the hegemony of your rival while pushing your own advantages in order to establish control over others. Complex as it is, however, Chinese strategy—at least implicitly—promises not to rescind the foundations of the order, but to strengthen and enrich them. For instance, China is flaunting a notion of order in which the principle of territorial integrity would be a sacrosanct pillar of global relations—an idea which may alienate stateless and non-state actors, but attract governments of countries which crucially shape regional dynamics worldwide.[43] Countering an adversary with sufficient resources and a positive agenda like China will thus prove much more difficult for the EU than confronting a debased

[39] R.D. Germain, and M. Kenny, 'Engaging Gramsci: international relations theory and the new Gramscians', *Review of International Studies* 21.1 (1998): 6; J. Joseph, 'On the Limits of Neo-Gramscian International Relations: A Scientific Realist Account of Hegemony' in A.J. Ayers (ed) Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations Theory: Modern Princes and Naked Emperors (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 101–124.

[40] R.W. Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 12.2 (1983): 171–173.

[41] J. Garlick, *The Impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative: From Asia to Europe*, (London: Routledge, 2019): 44–48.

[42] R. Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy do Displace the American Order* (New York [NY]: Oxford University Press, 2021): 20–21.

[43] R.D. Griffiths, 'States, Nations, and Territorial Stability: Why Chinese Hegemony Would Be Better for International Order', *Security Studies* 25.3 (2016): 534–538.

spoiler like Russia—and even this has not been unproblematic in the Western Balkans, where historical and cultural factors play an exceptionally important part in local perceptions of the global struggle for primacy.

4   Conclusion: Whither Great Power Competition in the Balkans?

At the beginning of the century, as the US was decreasing its regional presence—a remnant of its involvement in the Yugoslav wars, the European Union, through its enlargement and neighborhood policies, assumed the role of a strategic overlay in Eastern Europe. At the time of European Union–Western Balkans Summit in 2003, the Thessaloniki agenda was adopted and endorsed, proclaiming the deepening of the region's relationship with the EU and underscoring the prospect of membership for all countries of the region. Two decades later, only Croatia had become a full member of the club, with other countries' accessions stuck in a limbo, induced both by domestic reform shortcomings and external EU enlargement fatigue and failure to proactively manage regional dynamics. Such situation benefited the third actors who had interest in filling the power vacuum. According to Bechev, non–Western external actors in the region, most notably Russia, China and Turkey, have benefited from several factors: '(1) the weakening pull of the EU; (2) the stalling and in some cases reversal of the process of democratization; and (3) local players' preference for diversifying their international links'.[44] Among all of them, China has proven to be the most capable for strategic penetration, and from 2012 to 2016 it has emerged as one of the key geo–economic players in the region.

An opportunity Beijing took, argues Shopov, emerged due to a 'combination of novel strategic outreach and a permissive geopolitical environment'.[45] It is without a doubt that European inertia and American shift of focus contributed to Chinese success in the region, but it would be a mistake to deny the extent to which this was a desired course and local agency by regional actors, particularly in Serbia. Russian invasion of Ukraine ends and relations with China reemerge as the focal point of European Union policy, the cards in the Western Balkans will have been dealt quite differently than they were a decade ago. It would be reasonable for the EU to consider how to 'build its resilience to direct threats and collateral effects from the

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[44]D. Bechev, 'Making Inroads: Competing Powers in the Balkans' in G. Fruscione (ed.): *The Balkans: Old, New Instabilities. A European Region Looking for its Place in the World* (Milan: ISPI, 2020): 50.

[45]Shopov, V., 'Five Mounting Challenges for China in the Western Balkans', *ECFR*, June 17, 2020. Available at: https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_five_mounting_challenges_for_china_in_the_western_balkans[accesse d June 30, 2020].

US–China rivalry' in a timely manner, although there are no guarantees that such an effort, even if undertaken, would be successful.[46]

Chinese strategic focus is overwhelmingly directed toward its immediate neighborhood. Some observers notice that 'as Japan's claim for an East Asian Monroe Doctrine proposal fueled further concern over Japanese expansionist ambitions in Asia among Americans in the 1930s, so it is the case that currently there is growing fear and trepidation among American policy makers and commentators that China is determined to shut the US out from Asia and form a new regional order based on its own version of the MonroeDoctrine'.[47] And while China is willing and capable of exerting its influence in regions further away, it is hardly imaginable that such exertion would encompass resorting to military means in areas like Eastern Europe. With Russia also perplexed by its own strategic quagmires in the 'near abroad', its tactics in the Western Balkans also remain limited to non-military spoiling methods like energy security conditionality. The United States, having given most of its levers of regional influence in the Western Balkans to the EU, remains interested in regional dynamics but limited to means of foreign policy and intelligence— particularly having in mind the modest economic exchange with countries of the region.

There are views that 'as U.S.–China relations are becoming adversarial, and as China's relations with the EU are shaken, it will become increasingly difficult and risky for Belgrade to continue attempting to navigate the middle and maintain its ties with Beijing'.[48] Nevertheless, with much of European strategic focus back on Russia since late 2021 and particularly since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, as economic and financial consequences of the conflict keep increasing the need for investments and resources, the EU–Chinese relations might just get a revamp, thus enabling Serbia to keep pursuing its hedging strategy.

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[46]Hackenbroich, J. 'China, America, and How Europe Can Deal with War by Economic Means', *ECFR*, May 13, 2020. Available at: https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_china_america_and_how_europe_can_deal_with_war_by_economic_ means[accessed June 1, 2020].

[47]K. Unoki, *International Relations and the Origins of the Pacific War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 178.

[48]Vuksanović, V., 'The Dragon Lands in Belgrade: The Drivers of Sino-Serbian Partnership', *The National Interest*, March 19, 2022. Available at: https://nationalinterest.org/feature/dragon-lands-belgrade- drivers-sino-serbian-partnership-201,294 [accessed March 26, 2022].

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Conclusions: Lessons Learned for the Future of World Politics

Yi Feng and Fulvio Attinà

Abstract The main lesson from history is that transition is a long process of confrontation involving the great powers and their followers, that is, countries that come together in opposing coalitions that project distinct views of the next world order. Based on this, the chapters of this book provided research-based lessons derived from the study of how China aims to influence world politics and its change.

The chapters in this book provide knowledge of the conditions that are at the heart of understanding how China is influencing changes in today's world politics and how ready it is to perform the task of rebuilding the world order. The chapters of the first part focused on the philosophical and ideological roots of China's worldview and on China's powers resources and political goals which have substantial implications in contemporary global affairs. The chapters of the second part examined China's engagement with the main problems of today's world politics. They bring to the surface the ever-changing participation of Chinese leaders in decision making towards such issues over the past decades. Generally, and understandably, such participation has been characterized by a willingness to act as a responsible power without failing to defend its interests and objectives. The chapters of the third part provided knowledge on China's management of intergovernmental relations with the countries of Europe and Asia which are at the centre of China's projection of power at today's stage of world politics.

The main lesson from history is that transition is a long process of confrontation involving the great powers and their followers, that is, countries that come together in opposing coalitions that project distinct views of the next world order. Based on

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The beginning of the 21st witnessed a rapid increase in China's power and reach across the world. This momentum is now facing challenges from two unrelated crises that occurred during the start of the second decade of the century: COVID-19 and the war between Russia and Ukraine. While the former tests China's internal political system, the latter tests China's foreign policy and its relations with other countries. The position that the Chinese government is taking on these issues will have far-reaching consequences over a long period of time. This book, composed of various chapters dealing with some of the most salient contemporaneous issues, provides some consistent answers from different perspectives to the role that China will play in the future.

In this book, Song and Ai convincingly embed China in the context of Confucianism with an emphasis on the inherent connections with communitarianism. The core of Confucianism with a focus on the community, the collective goods, and a hierarchical system can be found in the word and action of the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese government. Harmony is a lofty goal, which, however, is illusive and difficult to achieve, even with enormous costs. For example, China has been implementing a highly restrictive policy about COVID-19, despite huge costs on individual life and the country's economy. At a time when most of the Western countries reopen with economic and commercial activities back to life, Chinese economy is faced with uncertainties. As the prospects of completely controlling COVID-19 become increasingly questionable, the governing party will be under even greater pressure to re-evaluate its policy priorities. The disconnection between the idealism of "harmony" and lack of proper mechanisms for its actualization is an eternal and ontological essence facing Chinese leadership in many issues discussed in this book. The Confucian emphasis on harmony and order has been used as political weapons by various leaders throughout China's history, but without guaranteed success. With respect to the rest of the world, we can project that this model of the China-led "communitarian goods" will continue to be reflected in Chinese outward policies.

Tammen, Kugler and Zeng investigate the near future of the world through the lens of power transition theory. Many decades ago, during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, power transition theory predicted China to be the leading candidate for the hegemon ending Pax Americana. It demonstrated that China would rise economically to be the largest GDP producer in the world. Now as more and more scholars adopt the conclusion of power transition theory formulated decades ago that China will be the next hegemon, Tammen, Kugler and Zeng's chapter is again one step ahead in the trajectory by pointing that whether the "China century" will be futile or sustainable will be dependent on one country: India. With its human and natural resources and resilient culture, the country may decide the process and outcome of the hegemonic evolution involving the United States and China. In the case of violent power transition, the role played by third parties can be critical. When growing into the next level economic powerhouse, India will be able to constrain the trajectory of China's rise as well as influencing the status quo led by the United States and the West as well.

Despite the nature of hegemonic competition between the United States and China, areas of cooperation do exist. One such area is global warming and environment protection. When it comes to the public good of the world, China seizes opportunities to advance its image as a responsible power. The trade-off will be the benefit of gains in leadership and the costs associated with the provision of the public good. As a global leader or leader to be, a country must take the responsibility to provide the public good for the world. Fulvio Attinà's chapter delineates the nature of reduction in global warming as a public good and the process of the coordination among various players – national governments, sub- and supra-national organizations, and international institutions – to stall the rise of global temperature. He confirms with other scholars that replacing carbon energy sources with renewable energy sources is feasible and cost effective, given public and private investments in R&D, but as he also clearly states, the problem lies in the domestic political arena and depends on the choices of the great powers in reconfiguring the world political order. China's choice has complex outcomes. China has the largest world share of CO_2 emissions, though its per capita emissions are lower. The immediate reduction of its CO_2 share implies a huge cut in its economic growth, and meanwhile, Chinese government has made consistent effort to increase the production of reusable energy through solar and wind power. This forward-looking approach is consistent with China taking a position emphasizing a future solution and committing itself to it while at the same, maintaining its economic growth. The trade-off between the benefits of a public good to the world and the costs of provisions act as a challenge to China, as its decision will be fundamentally based on its national interest.

Economic infrastructure is another product that has features of public goods. For many years, China has benefited from the world's economic liberal orientation through trade and investment. During the new century, in tandem with the newly gained economic power as a beneficiary of international liberalism, China started to act more assertively across the world. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is China's most ambitious global strategy, and the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) has emerged as a financial vehicle to ensure the success of BRI. In this book,

two chapters address the implications of AIIB and BRI, respectively. Silvia Menegazzi examines AIIB in the context of the Chinese narrative about development cooperation, the multilateral institutional framework, and the strategic priorities that guide these initiatives, and Gul-i-Hina van der Zwan investigates the economic, social and cultural ties between China and BRI partners in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. Both chapters display China's keen interest in building partnership through the worldwide Belt and Road initiative, regardless of ideological orientations of the participating countries. While China advocates BRI as an enterprise to build a common community economic, political, social, and cultural, which reminds us once again of implications of communitarianism, the United States and its allies see it as the road and belt that China pursues to establish an alternative world order. There is no pure economics without political considerations, not at the international level and particularly for the hegemon or major powers. BRI and AIIB, led by China, will project China's agenda increasingly onto a landscape that has been so far dominated by the United States and the West. The concept of the global public good is emphasized by China in these international projects, but clearly, they serve China's domestic economic interests and foreign policy. The conflict between the United States and China and the unique domestic political processes of the participants will question the ultimate success of these initiatives.

International relations reflect power relations. Because of a change in power, a country may change its position on certain issues in the world. Jan Karlas in this book demonstrates how and why China changes its position on treaties regarding weapons of massive destruction (WMD) from that of an opponent to one of advocates. The treaties on WMD may be considered a public good for the world. The leader or leading countries, based on their own security or secured positions in negotiation, will want to show them as the guarantor of the peace for the world. As an emerging superpower, China's positional change on the treaties limiting weapons of massive destruction is consistent with its intent to make it known that China is responsible power, though this happened after China secured sufficient second-strike capabilities. However, when the costs of provisions of a public good dominate their benefits, China will think twice. As Karlas points out, China has not taken an affirmative position on negotiations regarding conventional weapons because China needs to develop and maintain these weapons for tactical purposes, for example, in the context of Taiwan and border disputes with neighbouring countries. One situation that will repeat itself in the future is that we will expect to see China take international podiums to emphasize the importance of global public goods and to provide them to improve its global leadership on worldwide issues such as global warming, nuclear weapons, pandemics, development, inequality, and poverty reduction.

Like the reduction of global warming and restrictions of weapons of massive destruction, fighting and eradication of global infectious disease has characteristics of a public good. Francesca Cerutti's timely contribution in this book delineates the rationale and process of China's involvement and participation in global health issues and in the work of World Health Organization. Like the roles it played in the negotiations of weapons of massive destruction, Francesca Cerutti finds that

China changed its position from an outsider to a stakeholder in global health issues in collaboration with international institutions such as World Health Organization. China tries to improve its soft power by increasing its engagement in the global health community. However, the guiding principle, the process practiced by China, and the outcome that has emerged may put China as more of an outlier than a model to be emulated. Like other situations where a public good is concerned, China's way of controlling COVID-19 is determined by its political system. China wishes to showcase the China model of zero tolerance based on the government capacity and political control; however, the verdict is still out that China's way of fighting COVID-19 will give China the ultimate victory. As in other cases, China runs into controversy by its different approaches and management. With most of the countries open or significantly open, China is still under the enormous pressures of completely controlling COVID-19, causing mounting damages to its economy and increasingly eroding national morale.

China also emphasizes the win–win concept in trade, investment, and contractual projects. In some cases, China has made tremendous progress in developing economic ties with other countries, replacing the U.S. as the largest trade partner of some African, Latin American, Asian, and European countries. Is China's effort to improve its image through economic transactions successful? Feng and Gao conclude that among EU countries, imports from China have led to a negative image of China, though trade surplus against China has earned China a better image; at the same time, foreign direct investment has resulted in better image of China among major Western European countries, but not among the rest of EU countries. Therefore, business transactions do not always guarantee a positive image. Another finding in their chapter is that the opinions of China among EU countries are generally positively associated with the opinions of China in the United States. This result indicates that in the future, even if economic relations between China and EU countries may continue, the gains in a positive image of China among EU countries because of economic ties may be offset by the negative opinions of China in the context of a difficult relationship between the United States and China.

European countries and the developing world are third parties in the US–China relations. Obviously, European countries and US non-European allies in general will side with the United States and developing countries will be a mixed group. In the context of the US–China relations, third parties have different implications under balance of power theory and power transition theory. While the former predicts that imbalance of power is likely to result in war, the latter maintains power preponderance prevents war. For the former, allies or third parties are essential in restoring balance of power; for the latter, they are not quite critical as fundamentally it is the hegemon and the challenger that determine the outcome. Nonetheless, China has been actively involved in building relationship with African, European and Latin American countries as well as managing a more sensitive process with its neighbouring Asian countries over territorial conflict and regional security.

Shaohua Yan's chapter on the strategic autotomy normatively analyses the position that Chinese government has taken and should pursue in the future. As Shaohua Yan points out, EU's "strategic autonomy" has positive and negative

implications for China. It is consistent with China's advocacy for a world of multipolarity, dividing the monolithic alliance structure led by the United States, while at the same time, a unified and autonomous EU may take a collective but adversarial position against China with respect to issues on security, economy and ideology. However, we hold that European strategic autonomy is not a static concept, but a dynamic reality. The EU–China relations are also determined by the US-led international status quo and China's attempt to alter it. If EU countries benefit from the alteration of international norms advanced by China, then they will welcome China taking the leadership in international affairs; conversely, if they see such changes are detrimental to their interests, then they will stand against China in alignment with the United States. As different EU countries stand to gain or lose differently in their relations with China, their responses will also vary. Ultimately, the power relations among EU countries, based on their pros and cons concerning the revisions of the status quo led by the United States and its allies, will jointly determine the outcome of EU-China relations in the context of the US–China relations.

Mladen Lišanin's contribution to this book demonstrates a dynamic process of China–Serbian relations, which can be emblematic of China's involvement with a country that is not an ally of the United States. Elsewhere, China has demonstrated its willingness to enhance relations with the countries that have difficulties with the United States, for example, Venezuela and Ecuador (under President Correa) in Latin America, and Iran and Syria in the Middle East. The challenges that Serbia faces in its relations with the EU and lack of commitment from the United States to help leave room for China and Serbia to develop a strategic partnership. However, as Mladen Lišanin concludes, if the conflict between the United States and China intensifies, countries like Serbia may distance itself from the conflict, while the Western countries and the allies of the United States in Asia and elsewhere will close ranks joining the United States against China, with many developing countries choosing neutrality an a few taking sides with China.

Power transition happens with or without changes in the dominant mode of value, customs and institutions. Conflict between the hegemon and the challenger will intensify in the process of power transition if they do not share the same guiding principle. It is evident that the United States and China have deep and even unbridgeable differences, for example, in the political and economic systems. In contemporary world politics, China and others, the so-called Rest as distinct from the West, profess a willingness to change the world order in harmony with their own interests and strategies and in opposition to Western countries that reorganized the world after the last world war. China is by far the most recognizable state that is not only willing to challenge the US-led order but is also capable, at least in part, of acting against the US-led coalition and order. Though China has put in much effort to establish the united front, to date, it has not formed an organization to prepare a world-large coalition. The small group of BRICS countries may be the frontrunner, but there are no strong signals in this direction. Many of them are committed to promoting a multipolar and multilateral world of equal sovereign states to solve the problems of the Westphalian sovereignty principle that they see at risk and to

respond to the collective, world-scale problems of globalized world. Designing the project that combines multipolarity and multilateralism within the institutional framework of tomorrow's world order is a major issue for these countries who aspire to form the coalition of the Rest.

Forming the political institutions and policy agenda to respond to priority problems on a global scale is indeed the crucial issue for all countries aiming to preserve sovereignty and peaceful coexistence in the present world. Today, the number of problems on a world scale is greater than in the past. Like-minded governments must agree on the choice of the most urgent ones that can be addressed through feasible and legitimate policy responses. To focus on the concept of integral sovereignty rather than conceiving the world order as based on certain restrictions on sovereignty to address problems on a world scale is to miss the goal of rebuilding the world order. In explicit terms, sharing an understanding of the nature of priority problems and possible policy responses and sharing the blueprint of political institutions is essential to forming a viable coalition for the future.

With its political system characteristic of "authoritarian communitarianism," sufficient doubt and uncertainty exist to challenge the notion that China will match this inspiring role model to the rest of the world. However, as an emerging superpower, China has the capacity of influencing the politics and economy of the world. Its dynamic relations with the United States result in variegated ramifications extended to every corner of the world. Its various positions on international issues, from global warming to global public health, from control weapons of massive destruction to the financing and construction of infrastructure for worldwide commerce speak volumes of China's willingness and action to deflect or challenge the influence of the United States. At the same time, a country, alien to western thoughts of schools and looming large to take the control of the world, must generate a myriad of concerns, fears, anxieties to some countries in the international system that benefit from the status quo. That we are living in a changing world order is more of an understatement rather than of a hyperbole.