MAPPING CHINA JOURNAL

2020

MAPPING CHINA

ABOUT MAPPING CHINA

Mapping China is a young professional network and NGO dedicated to a political science-based analysis of contemporary China. Mapping China was founded in 2016 as an academic network connecting Masters and Doctoral students as well as young professionals working on China with a social science approach to foster exchange and knowledge among the new generation of China watchers. Although founded, based and registered as a non-profit (a so-called e.V.) in Germany, Mapping China now connects students and young professionals from all over the world. Mapping China offers students and young professionals a publication platform for their own academic work on China in order to engage in an academic discussion within a wider audience early on in their academic career.

ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

This peer-reviewed Journal is explicitly aimed at publishing work written by early career researchers with an interdisciplinary background in Area Studies, Political and Social Science or in International Relations who have been working on or want to work on China and who are looking to publish their first research for a wider audience.

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Note of the Editors
By

Straton Papagianneas, Tatjana Romig and Julia Tatrai

Mapping China was founded in 2016 as an academic network connecting Master and Doctoral level students as well as young professionals working on China with a social science approach to foster knowledge exchange among a new generation of China analysts and observers. Although founded, based and registered as a non-profit (a so-called e.V.) in Germany, Mapping China now connects students and young professionals from all over the world.

In December 2017 the inaugural issue of Mapping China Journal (MCJ) was published focusing on integration processes and challenges linked to Chinese engagement in three regions of the world: Asia-Pacific, Africa, and the EU. The numerous submissions to this project and subsequent exchanges reflect the willingness of a new generation of young China scholars to participate in the dynamic discourse on contemporary China. The second edition of Mapping China Journal (2018) offered a fresh take on the developments and challenges under the current leadership of the People's Republic of China. Since 2019, the MCJ has been a journal open to all topics – something which we slightly adapted again in 2020.

2020 was a year of the unexpected, and its challenges also affected the editorial work of this year's Mapping China Journal. We are therefore very proud to publish this year's edition after all and want to thank everyone who dedicated time and energy to this project throughout this challenging year. We also want to take a moment to highlight that the MCJ has not achieved gender parity this year – something we regret deeply and fear to be a visible manifestation of what gender research has highlighted this year: women are still disparagingly affected with regards to care work, which becomes especially visible during crises.

China has been in the news front and centre ever since COVID-19 became more than a phenomenon only known to avid China watchers at the beginning of the year. A lot has happened this year - from ousted President Trump calling the virus "China virus", to the US leaving the WHO, as well as China challenging the status quo in the Taiwan strait. We have seen a number of our truths being challenged; political system alone, for example, seems disqualified to explain why some countries did better or worse in dealing with the virus. Nonetheless, China's rise might have been impacted and its soft power certainly took a hit. Other, less news-worthy events already seem

to be forgotten, like Xi Jinping's speech on carbon neutrality or the continuing internment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

This is why, in addition to our regular journal edition which invited submissions at the beginning of 2020, we also announced a second call for essays in autumn as a special edition to this year's journal. Those essays look explicitly at the rapid transformations of both real-life politics and political or regional studies as areas of research in 2020. We particularly want to thank both the authors and peer reviewers for the extensive hours they put in to make this special issue happen.

Martin Thorley has taken our original special call for essays for a spin and looks at the engagement with China in the age of COVID-19 for the Western world. He makes a particular point on the importance of China experts taking note of elite domination within the PRC and warns of the risk of China illiterates becoming unwilling participants in reality construction.

In a timely essay on the US-Chinese educational exchange, **Leigh Lawrence** fears that COVID-19 and the cancellation of exchange programs between the two countries is only the most recent visible manifestation of what has been a steadily decaying relationship since Donald J. Trump won the US elections in 2016. Recovering much lost trust will have to take effort on both sides.

There were several countries this year that not only had to fight COVID-19 but also engaged in wide-spread political and social protests. **Gabriel F. Y. Tsang** is looking at one of them: Hong Kong, which has been in turmoil since the extradition bill protests of 2019. Tsang does not see COVID-19 as a hindering influence on PRC's conscious strategy of "mainlandising" Hong Kong; to the contrary, crowd control enforced as part of virus contagion has helped to actualize the PRC's wish for unification.

As part of our regular journal edition, **Ivan Lidarev** is examining a long-standing conflict between China and one of its most important neighbours: India. Based on field research in both China and India, he argues that in addition to the militarisation of the de-facto border between the two countries, three critical aspects feed into the security dilemma between the two countries: the relationship between the territorial dispute and the questions around Tibet, the potential impact on India's unstable Northeast, and the involvement of the United States.

Staying in the realm of international politics, **Sophie Cheung** explores the Chinese government's foreign policy slogan "a community of shared future for mankind" through extensive discourse

analysis. Her findings show that Beijing aims at creating a strategic narrative to position itself as a responsible leader in an interdependent international system.

While China's role in the international arena remains a hot topic, its domestic developments also deserve attention. **Max Paul Greve-Gao** dedicates his research to the case of migrant workers in China. In his article, he merges theoretical concepts of class and precarisation to then retrace the class formation process of migrant workers. His research shows that this theoretical framework offers a fresh perspective on questions surrounding social dynamics and class formation in China.

While COVID-19 is continuing to cause social and economic damages across the world, especially in Europe and the US, China's economy has slowly started to rebound. The allure of the Chinese market needs no explanation. However, as **Tina Schär** argues in her essay, foreign companies and governments alike should be wary of how China uses its leverage for political ends. Consumer-boycotts, started organically or by the government, are a powerful deterrent for anyone interested in the Chinese market to not meddle in its "internal affairs". Recounting the Carrefour boycott as an example, she argues that its political utility for the Chinese government makes it a key tool in its management of foreign affairs. In hindsight, the Carrefour boycott was only a taste of what was to come, as companies, ranging from the NBA and Arsenal to Zara and Dolce & Gabbana, will know all too well.

Another author who uses the past to explain the present is **Jie Li**, who discusses the 1990s PRC scholarly debate on post-Soviet Islamic resurgence. In his essay, he explains that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent "Islamic resurgence" in newly independent Central Asian republics, made Chinese scholars and officials alike worry about a similar scenario in Xinjiang. He argues that this debate in the 1990s produced the solutions, strategies, and underlying ideas that China has used to handle its ethnic and religious affairs in the following decades. In this, the 1990s debate marks the start of a fundamental shift in the PRC's treatment of its minorities, the consequences of which are felt by millions today.

Lastly, **Hidde Wams** looks at an issue that has gained increasing attention in the EU, namely Chinese Foreign Direct Investment in EU seaports. With this essay, he wants to signal how much influence China has already established in the EU through investments in key EU infrastructural sites. Explaining how China exerts its influence through its national champions, he argues that China's economic statecraft poses a serious challenge to the EU's strategic autonomy. The answer to this issue, he writes, may not lie in EU-China relations, but internal EU relations. If the EU is

serious about viewing China as a systemic rival and its ambitions of strategic autonomy, the EU needs more, and not less, integration.

While all featured essays and papers in this journal examine vastly different aspects of Greater China in domestic, regional, and international politics, together they showcase the variety and complexity of research on contemporary China. The year 2020 has made it clear that knowledge of China is vital to our understanding of the world. As such, the Mapping China Journal is committed to contributing to the academic and social dialogue and strengthen the voices of young researchers.

CONTENT

MCJ NO. 4 SPECIAL ESSAY EDITION

CHINA STUDIES THROUGH THE LENS OF CRISIS

M A R T I N   T H O R L E Y

No 1

The Emperor's New World? Engagement with China in the Age of COVID-19

ABSTRACT

This piece considers post-pandemic expert analysis of contemporary China. It argues that the CCP has achieved a high degree of "decontestation" in the domestic arena given its considerable power over organs by which to frame citizens' perceptions of reality. COVID-19 has emphasised this feature, marking a strong contrast between independent scrutiny of government decisions elsewhere, and continued ambiguity around the party-state's initial response and the utilisation of vast resources to frame the pandemic for its domestic audience. Foreign organisations and individuals that engage the party-state without "China literacy" risk becoming unwitting performers in the CCP's reality construction. At the same time, the consequences of the PRC's domestic vicissitudes increasingly impact beyond its border. The essay argues that those working in fields related to contemporary China should carefully consider the role of elite domination and associated reality construction.

AUTHOR

Martin Thorley currently holds the position "Postdoctoral Research Fellow" at the College of Social Sciences and International Studies, University of Exeter, UK. He is working on a two-year project entitled "Western Perceptions of China". His PhD research drew upon elite theory and an investigative research approach to examine international engagement with the PRC, primarily Sino-British engagement. He expects to sit his PhD viva in early 2021. He previously spent just under eight years in China, attending Tianjin University and establishing a business with a Chinese ex-official in Beijing.
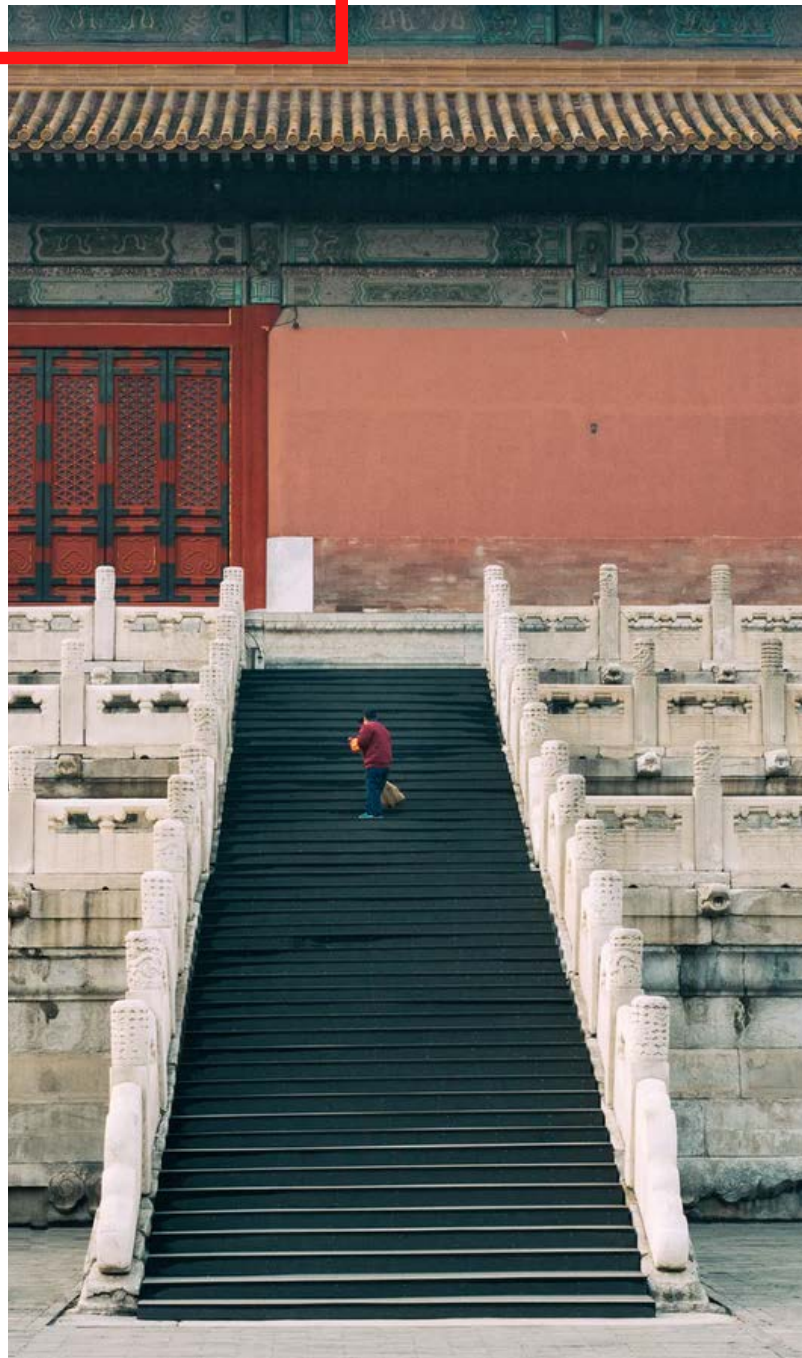
Martin Thorley

The Emperor's New World?
Engagement with China in the Age of COVID-19

By

Martin Thorley

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis brings into sharp relief the question of Chinese Studies and its utility.[1] Of course, academic research need only define itself by pursuit of knowledge alone, but there are times when a field of study possesses the means to make a vital, direct, and wide-reaching contribution to society at large. In the current environment, Chinese Studies has that capacity. This short essay considers Chinese studies in light of COVID-19, the party-state response in Wuhan, and the subsequent global pandemic. Acknowledging the increasingly interwoven nature of domestic and international spheres (evidenced in research by Carroll (2010) and Thatcher (2007), for example), it argues that in the comprehensive reassessment of engagement with the People's Republic of China (PRC) that will follow the worst of the pandemic, those with expertise on contemporary China must consider the consequences of elite domination in the PRC. There is a pervasive ignorance amongst outside observers of the realities of power exertion in the PRC, sustained in part by a form of engagement dominated by commercial interests and metrics. The price of such ignorance is two-fold. International actors risk performing as part of the CCP's reality construction for its domestic audience. By extension, they further entrench power without oversight within the country. Where power is exercised without effective scrutiny, the capacity for catastrophe is great, and in a globalised world the consequences will increasingly reach beyond the PRC's border.

The immediate analysis of the response to COVID-19 will benefit by a division into two streams. There will be robust and deserved criticism of individual domestic responses to the crisis around the world, not least in the UK and the US, where serious mistakes by leaders exacerbated the catastrophe. But separately, questions about entanglement with the PRC will have to be raised as the world contemplates the cost of the integration into the global system of a party-state where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) holds a monopoly on truth. Beyond ideology, culture, and ethnicity, this is a question regarding construction and perception of reality, and control of the levers by which that perception is sustained. It involves the highest echelons of the CCP and increasingly, their commercial partners in the West.

In his landmark work, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, Michael Freeden (1996) describes ideologies not as static value sets but as a conceptual competition where "decontestation" centres around attempts to impose the terms of an ideology over wider debate. The objective is to put those terms beyond contestation. Whilst key concepts 'help to make sense of an individual's perception of reality', one can also assert that 'communication and relationships of power are mediated by linguistic competition' (Szele 2012:128). In this sense, the PRC represents an enigma when viewed from home and abroad. Domestically, the CCP has achieved a near unprecedented level of decontestation in such a complex society, securing a significant amount of control over citizens' reality perception. In the Party's grip on education, media, and communication channels, to name but a few, it holds on to the ability to generate, scrutinise, or challenge its own conception of reality in a significant, organised manner. How does such a domestic configuration interact with the international realm?

No longer can one sustain a view of the world that sees nation states as 'Cartesian…, largely self-contained…, each possessing certain essential and distinctive identity and occupying a more or less clearly demarcated territorial space' (Pan 2018:341). The US's role in the 2008 financial crisis serves as a stark reminder of the interconnection between nation and international community. There remains a blind spot, however, when it comes to the particular challenges posed by the continuing integration of the PRC into the international system. This is especially true when one considers the degree of decontestation achieved by the CCP, discussed above. Governments around the world have in many cases faced sustained criticism for their responses to the pandemic as actors from various political standpoints discuss the response across multiple media platforms. In the PRC, coverage must ultimately accord with the Party's conception of reality, undergirded by the central pillar that the Party's continued rule of the country must not be brought into question. Consider, for example, the difference in treatment of the journalists and experts routinely critical of government COVID-19 policy in the West with the most prominent critic of the official response in the PRC. Ren Zhiqiang went missing before it was revealed he was under investigation for 'serious violations of discipline and the law' (Davidson 2020). He has since been sentenced to eighteen years in prison for charges relating to corruption (Buckley 2020). For a further illustration of the disorder where realities meet, look to Hong Kong, for example, which sits not only at the edge of China's landmass geographically, but at the periphery of the CCP's authority over truth and meaning. It is unsurprising that unrest has set in where the CCP attempts to impose its own construction of reality in a location where a plurality of views and contestation existed before.

Martin Thorley

In the case of COVID-19, party-state actions such as silencing doctors, and party-state features such as reluctance amongst local cadres to report faithfully to superiors, appear to have created conditions in which a regional outbreak was able to spread across borders (Xiong & Gan 2020; Myers 2020). The relationship between power concentration and regulatory failing is an important one. In the case of the former, citizens that do attempt to carve out space for discussion, are quickly confronted with the Party's red lines, which have become more numerous and more prominent in recent years. A cursory review reveals what appears to be significant Party interference in media, education, and law amongst many other fields (Bandurski 2013; Clarke 2016; Weatherley & Magee 2019). This uncommon capacity of authorities to shape narrative and restrict dissent is coupled with significant regulatory weaknesses in fields such as food production, chemical storage, and nuclear energy (Graham-Harrison 2015; McGregor 2010; Ryan 2015). In the transnational age, the already unacceptable dangers of power concentration in the PRC's domestic arena increasingly spill out to an even wider group in the international community. China scholars will play a crucial role in how the world restructures its relationship with the PRC post-COVID-19.

As the hard sciences gather data to understand and eventually bring COVID-19 under control, they still depend on the "garbage in, garbage out" rule: Incorrect or poor-quality data results in erroneous conclusions. A better understanding of China would have led international experts to ask more questions of the initial PRC data that framed the first stages of the global response to the virus. A recent leak suggested that this data underreported COVID-19 numbers by half due to 'bureaucratic and politically-motivated errors' (Vallejo 2020). It seems international experts were not familiar with the party-state's relationship with reality and its malleability within the domestic arena to fit the Party narrative. Individual countries that have failed to respond adequately to the challenge of COVID-19 have rightly faced fierce criticism in their own media, and, it may be argued, the US administration's poor response was the primary reason the US President lost an election. This contrasts sharply with the PRC, where the Party has leveraged the media, reshaping public perceptions of the outbreak's early stages to 'fit an internal narrative of a strong China led by an efficient Communist party' (Graham-Harrison & McKie 2020). We must expect further international consequences of the PRC's domestic political landscape and engage in a way that reflects understanding of the vicissitudes of party-state rule. Here, a fact is only valid if it does not undermine the fundamental truth of the CCP's legitimacy to rule. We must note that the Party elite aspires not only to be judge, jury, and executioner, but also teacher, journalist and police officer. This is not to conflate wider Party membership with Party elite, let alone citizenry with political masters. Despite considerable elite control of the wider narrative, isolated bubbles of dissent still

The Emperor's New World? Engagement with China in the Age of COVID-19

occasionally rise up.[2] For those who venture too far from the Party's conception of reality, the risk of censure is high, and the chance of success is low; unsurprising when the object of their criticism sets the rules of the game. Simply put, life is made difficult for those who wish to be explicitly critical of power in the PRC today.

In light of this domestic landscape, a misreading of the conditions within the PRC by international actors is detrimental not only to their own interests. They are in danger of becoming unwitting performers (or in some cases, willing accessories) in the CCP's reality construction for its domestic audience. Their presence thus becomes an endorsement of unreality and an asset to be leveraged by a political entity that faces no effective scrutiny or oversight. As those with expertise on China, we must ensure the debate on the PRC's international relationships does not slip back into the more prosaic currents of cultural and ideological difference. Decontestation and truth monopoly remain little acknowledged fundamental elements of the PRC's cultivation of mainland society. COVID-19 is a spectacular demonstration of how the domestic quickly becomes international and vice-versa.

In making sense of the pandemic, China specialists must draw attention to the relationship between the party-state and its reality in light of the growing economic power the country possesses. This responsibility weighs particularly heavy on the field since much additional international engagement is dominated by commercial concerns and thus heavily influenced by the maximisation of shareholder value above all else. The unprecedented degree of decontestation achieved by the Party in a complex society signifies a victory for the Party elite. The consequences of this victory reach far beyond the territory of the bureaucratic state, into the education of the young, public media consumption, interpretation of the law, and the reshaping of history. All of these realms benefit from a plurality of Chinese voices, yet in the modern-day PRC, these debates are largely arbitrated by the Party in arenas that are dependent on its patronage. Rarely does a single political entity possess, without substantial oversight, the instruments to shape reality to such a degree within its polity. This reality construction and maintenance is a serious undertaking that, to borrow from sociology, must be 'sustained by institutions, explained by legitimations, and maintained by social

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[2] Take history as one example drawn from many. The party-state's conception of history dominates all others in the PRC, resting primarily upon Party control of education and media. But there are isolated cases of challenges to the Party's narrative, for example, Yang Jisheng's (2008) book, *Mubei* 墓碑 (*Tombstone*), on the Great Chinese Famine, and Yuan Weishi's article contesting taught history in China for the magazine, *Bingdian* 冰点 (*Freezing Point*) (Pan 2006). Brave though they were, Yang's book was banned in the Chinese mainland and Yuan's article led to the closing down of the magazine (before it reopened with a new editor).

Martin Thorley

and symbolic mechanisms' (Vera 2016:5). Here lies a rich seam that China specialists must not ignore as they attempt to make sense of COVID-19, its origin, and aftermath.

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The Emperor's New World? Engagement with China in the Age of COVID-19

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L E I G H   L A W R E N C E

What Does 2020 Suggest for the Future of Sino-US Educational Exchange? A Cautionary Perspective

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the recent deterioration of Sino-US relations through the lens of international education. Although the pandemic was a pressure point of declining relations, actions taken by both governments suggest that educational exchange, a key tool of soft power initiatives, has been weaponized and 'hardened' to achieve discursive narratives or favourable power dynamics.

From the vantage point of the year 2020, the author cautiously looks towards the future of Sino-US relations with the understanding that positive diplomacy begins and ends with education. As such, it should be a main policy priority for both nations.

AUTHOR

Leigh Lawrence is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Education at St John's College, University of Cambridge (UK). Her research focuses on moral education reform in China's 21st century 'New Era' under Xi Jinping. Leigh received her MA from Yale University (USA) in East Asian Studies and BA from Arizona State University (USA) with special affiliation with Nanjing University (PRC). Leigh was a 2019 US Fulbright Scholar and Visiting Scholar at Nanjing Normal University (PRC) and 2014 Boren Scholar to China (PRC). Outside of academic work, her passion is culinary diplomacy, which she encourages through her baking blog 'Ping-Pong Pastries: Cultural Diplomacy through Culinary Arts.'
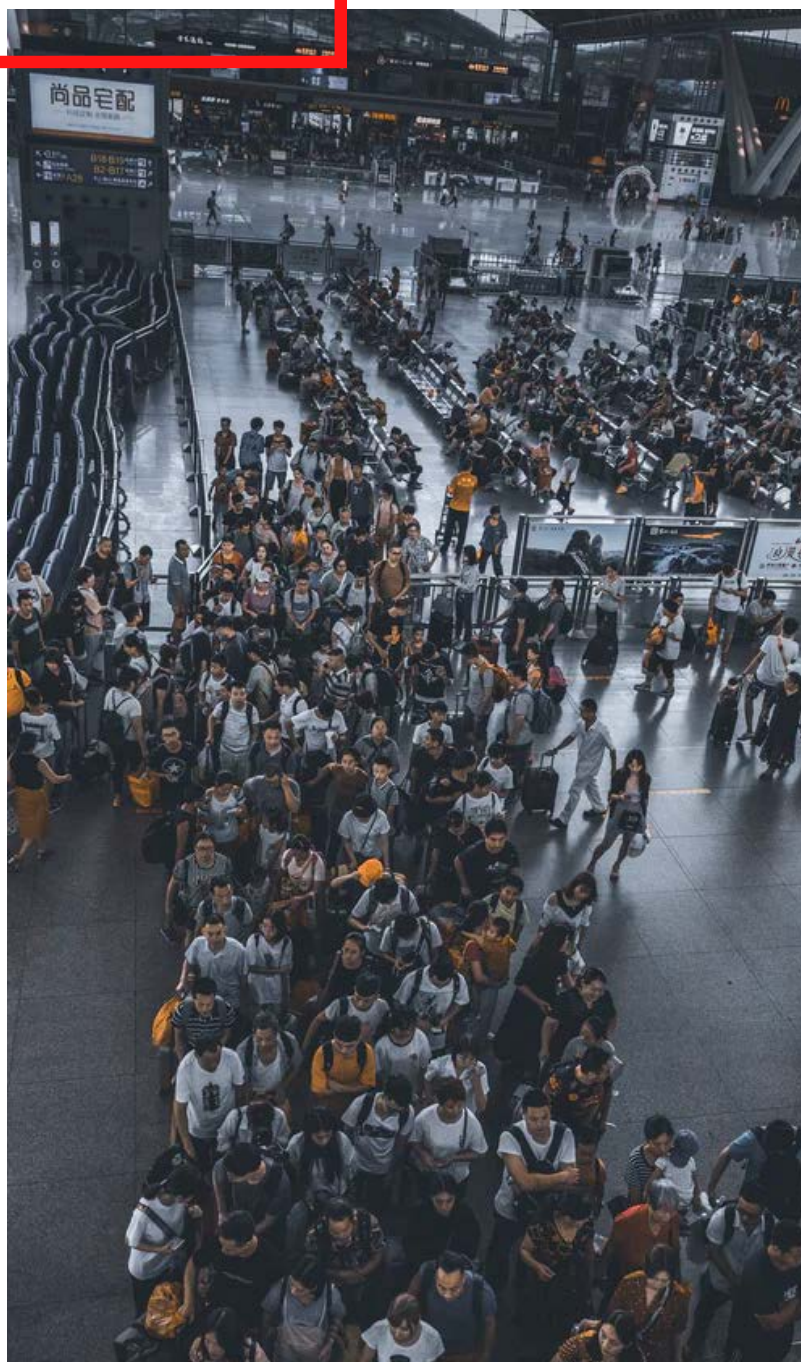
Leigh Lawrence

What Does 2020 Suggest for the Future of Sino-US Educational Exchange?
A Cautionary Perspective

By

Leigh Lawrence

The year 2020 has brought unprecedented circumstances that challenged our existing social and political systems. The globalized world, once rife with international travel and exchange, quickly shuttered its doors in a haphazard attempt to stem the flow of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. However, the insidious nature of the virus not only infected people, but also quickly spread to alter our established norms and societies. While it is expected that our medical and biological knowledge will outmatch this virus one day, the long-term consequences for our social and international institutions are less clear. The pandemic, although merely a blip in the centuries-long Sino-US diplomatic relations history, may be the straw that broke the camel's back, expediting an existing trend of worsening relations between the two nations. The pandemic has also highlighted areas of weakness, and priorities, of both nations. As such, this year can be viewed as a bellwether for the future of Sino-US relations, not only representative of a short interim period but indicative of how both nations view, manage, and prioritize their relationship during a crisis.

学如逆水行舟，不进则退

[Study is like rowing upstream: no advancement is regression]

Education, particularly international education, has suffered as a result of ongoing stringent virus contagion measures. International education is a broad concept, including study abroad, academic exchange, language or cultural immersion, and more. International education has no requirements or parameters, making each student's personal experiences unique and meaningful. The act of stepping off a plane in a novel destination, soaking up first glances of the people, language, weather, food, and clothes is international education, as is embracing the awkwardness and uncertainty of navigating new cultural norms and the warmth and generosity of host colleagues, friends, or quick acquaintances across the world.

The People's Republic of China [(PRC) hereinafter 'China'] and the United States (US) have a tenuous yet interconnected international education relationship. Both nations have long since realized the importance and benefit of educational exchange – even before the PRC was established. For example, the first established Sino-US education exchange, the Chinese Educational Mission, took place in the 19th century (Xi 2015).

In the following century, opportunities for the exchange of ideas and philosophies grew, such as through American scholar John Dewey's famous tours in China. Dewey's tours later became an inspiration for many Chinese educational philosophers such as Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi, among others (Sun 1999). Dewey's tours also influenced his understanding of China, providing first-hand knowledge outside of established Eurocentric narratives (Wang 2007). These initial forays into Sino-US international education highlighted its mutual benefit for both researchers and those who are researched to facilitate domestic advancement while expanding international understanding.

Unfortunately, the turbulent 20th century strained Sino-US relationships, with education bearing the brunt of icy relations. While Nixon-era Sino-US rapprochement re-established formal relations, it was the slow but steady investment in international education that opened doors. As Chinese and US students pursued educational exchange, their person-to-person diplomacy and cross-cultural understanding became a foundation of our current globalized world.

前人栽树后人乘凉

[The ancestor plants the tree so sons can enjoy the shade]

The education system is a main propeller of prosperity for states (Amirbek & Ydyrys 2014). The US and China both engage in numerous forms of educational exchange, from private study abroad to publicly funded academic and cultural programs. On an individual level, study abroad is a widely sought-after experience for employers in the US and China, valued not just for the academic knowledge gained abroad but also for the inherent people skills, such as open-mindedness, curiosity, and perseverance, that can be fostered from such experiences.

On a national level, international education is a crucial tool in Sino-US soft power initiatives. Termed by political scientist Joseph Nye, soft power relates to the concept of encouraging others to change, persuade, or influence their interests (Nye 2004; Yang 2010). International education has become an adept tool for curating and expanding domestic goals under mutual values of encouraging education. For example, educational initiatives such as China's Confucius Institutes allow China to portray a more palatable, less 'foreign' version of Chinese language and culture to wary Western countries. The Confucius Institutes' direct ties to China's central government underline their importance in international and domestic economic, political, and social interests (Huang & Xiang 2019).

Leigh Lawrence

Nye's initial definition of soft power has grown with the globalized world, expanding to encompass cultural diplomacy, fiscal initiatives, person-to-person diplomacy and international exchange. Soft power and cultural diplomacy are key tools aiming to achieve goals through attraction and influence, rather than coercion. A unique characteristic of soft power is that it its results are difficult to quantify, as its benefits extend beyond economic and political incentives. While evidence-based policy is a useful measurement tool, gauging the actual impact of soft power initiatives, as well its impact on future policies, remains an insurmountable task (Seymour 2020).

Soft power has developed from an ideology to a tangible goal for many governments. The US and China are both invested in soft power initiatives, many of which are enabled through international education. China's focus on soft power initiatives, particularly through education, is a strategic act of globalization and internationalization (Yang 2010). The Chinese state relies upon the benefits of international influence to buttress its 'hard power' initiatives through continued development and engagement with the West. Unfortunately, education is often at the whim of mercurial diplomatic shifts, either wielded as a punishing tool for declining relations or a positive reward for joint cooperation. This tit-for-tat policymaking has inhibited both nations from establishing a long-term collaborative rationale. Reactive policies, much like what we have seen during the pandemic, should be replaced with proactive ideas that focus on mutual benefits now and for years to come.

患难见真情

[In adversity, true feelings are shown]

The global pandemic impacted education in more ways than merely closing physical schools. International students were quickly recalled (myself included), exchange programs shuttered their doors, and the future of international education hung in the balance. Some may argue the pandemic constituted only a short pause in international education's infallible presence within our globalized world. While exceptional circumstances beget exceptional actions, actions taken by both the United States and China indicate the pandemic was not the culprit, but an excuse to permanently alter the Sino-US international education landscape.

Both nations implemented rapid-response policies as the extent of the pandemic grew. Yet many policies were not simply pandemic-conditional, but the culmination of years of growing resentment and antagonism. The pandemic provided a scapegoat for both states to deliver "low blows" under the guise of exceptional and unprecedented circumstances of the global health crisis.

Despite the virus being first identified in Wuhan, China quickly adopted effective contagion methods; the result was a swift return to normalcy. An unfortunate side-effect of these methods was that they effectively stymied Sino-US education exchange, for example limiting travel, blocking visas, and suspending exchange programs.

Although not explicitly a direct result of the pandemic, one example is China's National Security Law (NSL), implemented June 1st, 2020, which placed stringent consequences on speech, protest, and movement in Hong Kong (China Daily 2020). Since then, many international universities have sounded alarms regarding the far-reaching extents of the NSL, including its potential to harm students at Western universities. The NSL's vague yet threatening stipulations, such as "criminalizing regular teaching," are tantamount to direct Chinese interference in British domestic affairs (Tsang 2020). The same outcry has occurred at US universities, where professors worry about the safety of students and ability to teach freely while remaining acutely aware of the limitations on free speech (Craymer 2020).

The NSL illustrates an unprecedented development blurring the lines between education, governance, and international relations. While red-lines in Chinese academia have always been vague, the NSL marks a watershed change in the scope of the Chinese government's jurisdiction and severity of punishment. Combined, these factors make independent research on China a potentially dangerous act which may encourage self-censorship while inhibiting opportunities for Sino-international collaboration and partnerships based on fear and uncertainty. China's domestic policy changes during the pandemic have fundamentally altered China as an educational destination. The safety of students and opportunities for uncensored academic engagement both in and about China are now directly at the whim of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), illustrating just how important positive diplomatic relations are for future educational exchange.

In addition, China has recently cracked down on both foreign and domestic investigative journalists and academics, revoking visas and threatening their safety (Hernandez 2019; Wibawa 2020). The pandemic will almost certainly continue to influence this trend, as China grapples with balancing strong societal cohesion amid crisis and social reform; therefore, negative or unflattering press is a danger to the State's legitimacy. For students or educators, China exists in a climate of uncertainty, fraught with the potential to be inimical to freedom of speech and research. The grey lines surrounding what is permitted and what is not encourage self-censorship among students and

Leigh Lawrence

teachers. This climate of uncertainty and fear for personal safety is crippling to academic research *on* and *in* the PRC.

While many in the US decry China for its overarching and draconian measures, structural changes to US international education were occurring in parallel across the Pacific, raising concerns and hesitations from Chinese students, parents, and education administrators. First, the United States quickly soared to the unenviable position of the nation with the highest number of deaths related to COVID; by 15 December, over 300,000 Americans had died.[1] This number, paired with the vacillating government response indicates the infection and death rate will continue to rise, making it a potentially unsafe educational destination while the pandemic remains virulent.

Domestic culture has also changed during the pandemic. Numerous instances of anti-Chinese rhetoric, racism, and violence have occurred against the Chinese American and Asian community in the US (Human Rights Watch 2020). In an effort to shift blame and villainize China, President Trump has repeated phrases such as the 'Chinese plague' and 'Wuhan virus,' empowering racist dialogue and discrimination (Aratani 2020). These actions fostered a climate of fear for Chinese students, wary of not only the virus itself but also the rhetoric it promoted. A recent survey indicated fewer than one in five Chinese higher education students are interested in studying abroad after the pandemic, citing reasons such as safety concerns, travel bans, and funding (Xiong et al. 2020).

In addition to racist and violent attacks, the US arbitrarily revoked thousands of Chinese student visas (BBC 2020) and has targeted and interrogated students based on their nationality (Feng 2020). In retaliation against the NSL, President Trump indefinitely suspended the US Fulbright Program in Mainland China, a serious blow to educators, students, and Sino-US soft power diplomacy (Zheng 2020). During the pandemic, Chinese students in the US were forced to deal with maintaining their health and safety whilst being subject to socially constructed stigma created by diplomatic power struggles (Ma & Zhan 2020).

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[1] Data retrieved from Johns Hopkins University & Medicine Coronavirus Resource Centre
https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map

What Does 2020 Suggest for the Future of Sino-US Educational Exchange? A Cautionary Perspective

幸灾乐祸

[Schadenfreude]

Actions taken by the US and China during the pandemic suggest both sides may be seizing the 'crisis of opportunity' (Kingdon 1984) to advance their interests. China continues to increase Sino-foreign education exchange and programs (CGTN 2020) and encourage international education within its own borders. This may allow China its long-sought opportunity to establish itself as a top education destination as well as closely monitor educational research, students, and educators. Yet in that same vein, China has slowly been increasing its 'censorship borders' within its domestic territory and abroad (Mozur 2018). These borders are not only spatial, but also apply to ideological and temporal limitations placed on Chinese and foreign students, educators, and researchers. In the West, the United States has both railed against China's actions while withdrawing education opportunities in an attempt to exude power and international strength and shift the blame of pandemic disaster onto a foreign enemy.

The prognosis of post-pandemic Sino-US educational exchange is not promising. While the future is undetermined, examining ongoing contexts suggests the pandemic has been a crisis of opportunity for both nations to expedite changes that have been in the making for years. Had the pandemic not happened, the US and China would likely still be on a similar trajectory, as pre-pandemic Sino-US relations were increasingly hostile (Pei 2020). The unpredictable and unprecedented start of 2020 provided an outlet for both nations to manipulate public unrest and instability to reassert power at the expense of educational exchange. These actions have created a climate of competitive self-harm, both punishing present-day scholars and jeopardizing long-term diplomatic progress.

吃一堑，长一智

[One only learns from one's mistakes]

In recent years, the American and Chinese administrations, led by President Trump and General Secretary Xi, were like oil and water: they simply did not mix. While both administrations touted similar values and expound on the virtues of cross-cultural education, their actions indicated their true interests lie in establishing dominance, and international education was manipulated as a hard power means of achieving, or suppressing, ruling-party discursive narratives and power. Both nations have weaponized soft power initiatives and compelled them to become tactics of hard power ideology by restricting access and intellectual freedoms.

幸灾乐祸

[Schadenfreude]

Leigh Lawrence

While the pandemic has further strained the tenuous Sino-US relationship, there is still potential for reconciliation. This would require a significant change from today's circumstances, and not just in the form of a vaccine. A change in national leadership or societal values, from the US or China, is needed to realign positive relations and bolster confidence in educational exchange programs. Educational exchange is the canary in the coalmine of positive diplomacy, and the events of the past year have endangered international education and the benefits it has provided since 1970s Sino-US rapprochement.

Although the Biden administration is the ideological antithesis of the outgoing Trump administration, the new ideas and change in political priorities is not a panacea and will not immediately resolve existing Sino-US tensions. China has argued that the key to ameliorating the strained relationship is to 'accurately assess the other's intentions' (Fu 2020). To assess, one must learn; improved Sino-US diplomacy begins and ends with education. Both nations can pursue competitive cooperation through the guise of soft power initiatives, but that can only happen with an investment in honest and sincere bilateral exchange and education. At the moment, few signs suggest that will happen without sincere and concerted efforts from both administrations. Strong relations are an investment, not a cure, and the education governments provide, or allow today secures positive relations for tomorrow.

Education is in itself a political act, but it should not be co-opted by governments in a way that limits intellectual freedom or exploration. Based on this past year's events, how can one envision a positive future for Sino-US educational exchange? How can students, teachers, or scholars prepare or plan for study abroad? Confidence, both individual and national, is instilled through education, experiences, and mutual respect. Both nations must quickly recognize that educational exchange is not a problem; it is a solution.

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GABRIEL F. Y. TSANG

Multifaceted Mainlandisation in Hong Kong During the Pandemic

ABSTRACT

As a conscious director of mainlandising Hong Kong for internal security and economic outreach, the central government enigmatically manipulates the reciprocation of different classes regardless of certain constitutional constraints. The progress of mainlandisation was intensified during and after the increasingly radical anti-extradition bill protests in 2019, and did not cease during the pandemic. This article expounds that the outbreak of the coronavirus crisis and the crowd control hence enforced assisted the subterranean and opportunistic works of the Chinese government to pacify Hong Kong and promote patriotism. The Hong Kong government and pro-government locals, as stakeholders, also practically helped actualise the central wish for unification correspondingly.

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Gabriel F. Y. Tsang

Multifaceted Mainlandisation in Hong Kong During the Pandemic

By

Gabriel F. Y. Tsang

Mathew Y. H. Wong's (2020) most recent research paper raised the issue of how socioeconomic factors ideologically shifted the public statements that Hong Kong politicians shared with the opposite camp despite their identifiable left/right preference. His data analysis, based on the local elections held between 1998 and 2016, reveals that the 'integration with mainland China' has become an emerging concern in place of the 'traditional focus on democracy and freedom'(Wong 2020: 208). Local prosperity and stability, as a critical reason for the integration, is a usual ace that the pro-establishment / pro-government camp used to triumph over the parliament minority, holding controversial power to resist liberal and righteous discourses during and after the increasingly radical anti-extradition bill protests in 2019. This resistance corresponds to the Chinese leaders' belief in Marxist economic determinism and their ongoing strategy of steadily incorporating Hong Kong into the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Despite the pandemic, the Chinese government's plan for mainlandising Hong Kong (referring to 'rapid integration, the large influx of Mainlanders, and Beijing's interventionist approach toward Hong Kong's affairs since 2003' (Yew & Kwong 2014: 1095)) has not ceased, but accelerated instead. Not from a perspective of political rivalry, the following parts will briefly puzzle out how various stakeholders are taking advantage of this public health crisis to move forward an aggressive implementation of overall jurisdiction especially in response to the year-long social unrests caused by the controversial extradition law amendment. The central government (nominally under collective leadership) is deemed a conscious director of mainlandisation that enigmatically manipulates the reciprocation of different classes regardless of certain constitutional constraints.

The subterranean and opportunistic sides of the Chinese government

The Third Bureau of the United Front Work Department, which reports directly to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, takes charge of coordinating various parties to keep Hong Kong on the track of the central government's political agenda. It confidentially connects the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (HKMAO), the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government, the Hong Kong SAR government, the Hong Kong police, the pro-establishment camp, local entrepreneurs, pro-China media, and so on for collaborative actions towards a patriotic discourse and against democratic voices at precise moments (Loh 2018). While the Hong Kong government banned gatherings of more than four people (Chiu 2020), on 21st April, 2020, the

HKMAO used strong words to comment on the independently operated legislature of Hong Kong, especially singling out Dennis Kwok, legal sector lawmaker, for 'paralysing' the Legislative Council with 'malicious' filibustering (Wong, Cheung & Sum 2020). This high-profile intervention prepared legitimacy for passing a tailor-made security law for Hong Kong (to prevent, stop and punish acts in Hong Kong related to subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign interference) at the National People's Congress on 27th May, 2020 (Tsoi & Lam 2020). Constitutionally violating the principle of Basic Law, which authorises the Hong Kong government, not Beijing, to advance Article 23.[1] The new law drew public attention not simply to the width and depth of its harm to the 'one country two systems' operation of Hong Kong, but also to how discursive politics overrides legal autonomy, mass willingness and professional opinions. It forms ideological intimidation from the source of top-down manipulation and secretive communication oriented by the Central Committee (Buckley, Bradsher & May 2020) to superficially resolve social unrests through new legal norms and meanwhile to consolidate the paternal power of mainland China.

The response of the Hong Kong SAR government

The 12th June 2019 Hong Kong protest, which ended with tear gas, rubber bullets and bean bag rounds, did not change the Chief Executive's decision of modifying the controversial extradition law; its failure turned some of the yellow-ribbon (pro-democratic) public's mind to recognise the uselessness of peaceful actions. The 2019 Yuen Long attack on 21st July and the Prince Edward station attack on 31st August furthered a disbelief in the righteousness of the police, regarded as colluding with the administrative side of the government, the aboriginal power of the New Territories, and triad organisations, and resulted in mass destruction of MTR stations, shops with a pro-government stance (such as Maxim's), shopping malls (such as Festival Walk), public facilities (especially traffic lights), banks (including HSBC and Chinese banks), most of the universities, and so on (Cheung, Lam & Leung 2020). The government had attempted to practise the *Prohibition on Face Covering Regulation* but failed to stop the unceasing valiant reactions to the government's repressive and structural violence (Ives & Wong 2019).

Under the umbrella of the COVID-19 pandemic (especially due to the SARS experience in 2003) and the crowd control hence enforced, the Hong Kong government promptly took a series of actions to pacify the public up to the central government's standard. On 18th April, 2020, the police arrested barrister Martin Lee Chu-Ming, media tycoon Jimmy Lai Chee-Ying and 13 other

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[1] However, as Tsoi and Lam explain, "The Basic Law says Chinese laws can't be applied in Hong Kong unless they are listed in a section called Annex III." (2020) It was only through Annex III that the central government could obtain the legitimacy to bypass Hong Kong's parliament and introduce the security law.

Gabriel F. Y. Tsang

supporters of the opposition camp (Lee & Oanh Ha 2020). On 15th May, 2020, the Independent Police Complaints Council published an unpersuasive report instead of a truly independent one that most of the public requested, and, on the same day, the first protester to plead guilty to the charge of rioting was sentenced to four years of imprisonment (Pao 2020). On 22nd May, 2020, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority cancelled a controversial question about whether Japan did more good than harm to China in the period 1900-1945, in response to the criticism from the Chief Executive, the Secretary for Education and the state-run presses, despite opposition of 97% interviewed History teachers (RTHK 2020). This kind of eventual coincidence exposes an ironic contrast between the slow response of the Hong Kong government to the COVID-19 crisis (such as tardily blocking immigration and purchasing medical materials) (Barron 2020) and its quick, rigid, precise and suppressive decisions made to control mass behaviours and speech. Its political mysophobia had effectively turned down professional arguments, reminiscent of Dr. Li Wenliang being reprimanded for warning about the new virus (AFP 2020). Relevant political rhetoric, side-tracking strategy (which means distracting the public from urgent and significant but intractable issues) and bureaucratic administration under internal institutional pressure have been duplicating those of the Chinese government, turning the official ideology of Hong Kong to be socialistic and Sinocentric.

The cooperation of the patriotic public

Apart from the yellow ribbon, there are blue-ribbon Hong Kong citizens, mainly composed of policemen and their relatives, businessmen, new immigrants from mainland China and older-generation locals, who support the Hong Kong and Chinese governments with a wish for the return of social security and stability. Regardless of general dissatisfaction with the government's performance, such as the failure in guaranteeing the local supplies of surgical masks during the pandemic (Cheung & Wong 2020), they counteract anti-governmental opinions and partially sustain the public validity of the Hong Kong government through their daily speech and actions, and also through their establishment and maintenance of pro-government media (such as Silent Majority and Speak Out Hong Kong) and supportive organizations (such as Hong Kong Coalition, Defend Hong Kong Campaign, Politihk Social Strategic, Caring Hong Kong Power, and Hong Kong Youth Care Association Limited.)

When 150 mainland China-born people are issued with a People's Republic of China Permit to come to Hong Kong every day, and mainland Chinese entrepreneurs are taking over the Hong Kong enterprises financially affected by the social movements and the virus, such as Sincere and

Multifaceted Mainlandisation in Hong Kong During the Pandemic

Bossini respectively acquired by Realord Group Holdings Limited and Viva China both on 15th May, 2020 (Yu & Poon 2020), the influx of new citizens and investors with different values not simply moves forward a demographic and commercial mainlandisation, but also assists the United Front tasks that two governments and pro-establishment parties are dedicated to completing. It will continue after the pandemic, constantly validating a new definition of Hong Kong with Sinocentric understanding of 'one country, two systems', 'Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong', 'a high degree of autonomy', 'remaining unchanged for 50 years', and so on, such as Beijing's interpretive focus on 'one country' as the prerequisite for Hong Kong people's autonomy since 2014 as Central News Agency observed (2019). The merge of the older-generation Hongkongers and the newer-generation Hongkongers (from polarised background, either impoverished grassroots or social elites) with different belonging and recognition is still challenging but, under a dominant wish for redefinition, irreversible. Surrounded by popular anxiety about Hong Kong becoming a mainland city, local individuals, especially those with power, shall reflect on how to effectively negotiate with a penetrative and authoritarian system, which functions beyond its governmental origin.[2]

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[2] This probably cannot take an easy form, such as Jack Ma's speech that satirised Chinese regulators and hence resulted in the suspension of Ant Group's record-breaking US$34.5 billion IPO, and definitely requires subterranean wisdom.

Gabriel F. Y. Tsang

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MCJ NO. 4

IVAN LIDAREV

Insecurity in the Himalayas:
The Impact of the Territorial Dispute Between China and India on their Security Dilemma

No 4

ABSTRACT

The article examines how the China-India territorial dispute affects the security dilemma between Beijing and New Delhi. The conventional view holds that the militarisation of the defacto border between the two sides is the key contribution of the territorial dispute to the China-India security dilemma. The article partly accepts this view but argues that there are three other aspects of the dispute which drive the security dilemma between China and India. These three drivers are: 1) the close connection between the dispute and the so-called "Tibet issue"; 2) the nexus between the dispute and the security of India's unstable Northeast region; 3) the involvement of the United States in the dispute. On all these aspects of the dispute Chinese and Indian security interests and policies are opposed to each other and thus security gain for one side results in a security loss for the other, feeding the security dilemma between them.

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Ivan Lidarev

Insecurity in the Himalayas:
The Impact of the Territorial Dispute Between China and India on Their Security Dilemma

By

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I. Introduction

The China-India territorial dispute has long troubled relations between Beijing and New Delhi. The dispute has regularly affected the security of both Asian powers in spite of continued attempts to resolve it or marginalize its impact on bilateral relations. It has not only produced a brief war between China and India in 1962, but has also continued to generate regular tensions, armed standoffs and even military crises on the border, most notably in 1986, 2017 and 2020. It has also led to a competitive buildup of troops, arms and infrastructure on the border. Against this background, it is fair to conclude that the dispute clearly generates insecurity and military competition around the border and thus contributes to the security dilemma between China and India. However, it is not clear *how exactly* it does so.

This article seeks to answer the crucial question: *How does the China-India territorial dispute affect the security dilemma between Beijing and New Delhi.* Most writings on the subject automatically assume that the militarization of the Sino-Indian border, with the threat of military conflict that it breeds and the uncertainty about the intensions of the other side, generates a security dilemma between the two sides (Garver 2002; Holslag 2009; Sui 2014; Lu 2016). The following article does not refute this assumption but rather aims to modify it. It argues that it is not just the buildup of troops and arms on the border, but also the dispute's larger security implications that drive the Sino-Indian security dilemma.

In particular, this work holds that three aspects of the dispute contribute to the security dilemma between the two sides: 1) the close connection between the dispute and the so-called "Tibet issue"; 2) the nexus between the dispute and the security of India's unstable Northeast region; 3) the involvement of the United States in the dispute. Each of these pits the irreconcilable security interests of one side against the other, generating a spiral of insecurity in which the security gains for one side inevitably produce security losses for the other. Thus, these three aspects of the dispute drive the security dilemma between China and India.

Three points should be made about the article. First, it is important to examine the article's main research question, how the China-India territorial dispute affects the security dilemma between the two. This question enables us to gain better understanding of both the security dilemma and how it is influenced by the territorial dispute. As this influence is often inaccurately assumed in literature as primarily military, the question also serves to challenge a widespread misperception.

Second, the article aims neither to explain the complex China-India territorial dispute and its dynamics, nor to examine the China-India security dilemma in its entirety. Third, the article is broadly based on the author's doctoral research, including substantial field research in both China and India. It draws on published primary sources, such as articles and books written by Chinese and Indian diplomats and former officials, on secondary literature such as academic publications, articles, opinion pieces, and books by Chinese and Indian scholars, as well as on the author's interviews with scholars, retired diplomats, and retired military officers in China and India.[1]

Before proceeding, it is necessary to briefly present the territorial dispute. The China-India territorial dispute has plagued Sino-Indian relations since the 1950s and was the main cause of the 1962 war between the two sides, which China decisively won, without substantially altering the territorial status quo on the ground. The dispute concerns both the whole 3488 km long China-India border (Ministry of Home Affairs, India n.d.)[2] and large pieces of territory divided into three sectors, Western Sector, Middle Sector and Eastern Sector (please see the map below).

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[1] On the Chinese side, the author undertook interviews in Fudan University, Peking University, China Foreign Affairs University and Tsinghua University, as well as in four thinktanks, The China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Pangoal Institution and the Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS). On the Indian side, this article is based on interviews in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi College, and several thinktanks, including the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA), Observer Research Foundation(ORF), Centre for Policy Research (CPR),Delhi Policy Group (DPG),Institute for Chinese Studies (ICS), Carnegie India, Vivekananda International Foundation(VIF), and the Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA).

[2] Please note that there are fierce disagreements between the two sides about the length of the de facto border between China and India based on the differing claims of the two sides. However, most independent sources accept the figure 3488km.

Ivan Lidarev

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA),

Source: The author, based on a map by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

The largest disputed territories are Arunachal Pradesh in the Eastern Sector, held by India and claimed by China as South Tibet (*Zangnan* 藏南), and Aksai Chin in the Western Sector, held by Beijing and claimed by New Delhi. In spite of decades of negotiations and several pushes to resolve it, the dispute has remained unsettled and has been further militarized in recent years with the deployment of troops and the building of infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de facto border which separates the territories controlled by the two sides.[3]

The rest of this article is divided into seven sections. The first three sections examine the concept of security dilemma, the China-India security dilemma, and the connection between the territorial dispute and the China-India security dilemma. The remaining sections analyze three aspects of the territorial dispute that influence the security dilemma: the "Tibet issue," its connection to India's Northeast, and US involvement, followed by a brief conclusion.

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[3] Where LAC actually lies is also disputed, with the two sides having different perceptions of its location.

II. The Concept of the Security Dilemma

To examine the impact of the China-India territorial dispute on the security dilemma between the two Asian giants**,** it is necessary to briefly present the concept of security dilemma and some of its most important theoretical aspects.

The security dilemma is a model of competition and conflict in international relations in which 'an increase in one state's security can make others less secure' in Robert Jervis' famous formulation (Jervis 1976:62). According to the model, one state's efforts to enhance its security make another state less secure and prompt it to respond with countermeasures to increase its own security, countermeasures which infringe on the security of the first state and push it to take further steps to increase its security, with the same result as earlier. This process generates a spiral of insecurity in which each state seeks security but ends less secure (Glaser 1997: 171-174).

As the security dilemma is a realist model, most closely associated with the traditions of defense realism and neoclassical realism, it is based on realism's key assumptions, namely the existence of an anarchic, self-help world of states with no higher authority to regulate relations between them. This anarchic world generates uncertainty in a state about other states' intensions as well as fear of them, both the direct origin of the security dilemma according to most scholars (Herz 1951; Jervis 1976; Jervis 1978). The major exception of this understanding is Herbert Butterfield, one of the creators of the concept of the security dilemma, who instead holds that the security dilemma originates from fear and human nature (Butterfield 1951).

The security dilemma is regulated by both material and psychological factors called modifiers which increase or decrease its severity. While many such modifiers have been identified in literature, several have been widely accepted among theorists. The material, or structural, modifiers most frequently identified by scholars include geographic proximity, alliances, the balance between offense and defense determined by military technology[4] and the differentiability of offensive and defensive weapons (or postures) (Jervis 1978:186-211; Taliaferro 2000:137; Snyder 1996:167–192; Tang 2009:620-621).

The psychological modifiers most often described in literature include fear, worst-case scenario mentality, history of loss, and misperception (Jervis 1976:67-76; Tang 2009:622-623; Glaser 1997:182-183). There have been debates about the impact of different modifiers on the severity

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[4] The defense-offense balance determines whether the offense or the defense in a military conflict has an advantage.

of the dilemma. In particular, scholars have debated the balance between offensive and defensive capabilities and their differentiability (Lynn-Jones 1995:660-661; Glaser and Kaufmann 1998:44-83). Similarly, there have been debates whether the security dilemma inevitably produces a spiral of escalation that automatically ends in armed conflict. (Tang 2009:616-620).

For the purposes of this study, it is crucial to point out that the security dilemma is not purely a military phenomenon but also a political one. Not only is security a political-military phenomenon in the realist tradition, but the uncertainty which lies at the heart of the security dilemma is fundamentally an issue about the political intentions of the other side. Just as important, political factors shape the modifiers that regulate the security dilemma. While there are many such factors in literature, two alliances and the presence of potentially restive ethnic groups (Snyder 1984; Posen 1993), are particularly relevant for understanding the relationship between the territorial dispute and the security dilemma between China and India.

On the basis of this brief theoretical overview, this article defines the security dilemma as a self-reinforcing military and political spiral generated by uncertainty and fear in which security gains for one state produce security losses for another. This broad formulation does not aim to be theoretically rigorous or exhaustive but rather to serve as a working definition that allows us to examine all the aspects by which the China-India territorial dispute affects the security of two sides.

III. The China-India Security Dilemma

Is there a security dilemma between China and India? This section briefly presents the debate on this question and then argues that there is indeed a security dilemma between the two Asian neighbours.

Most of the large literature on Sino-Indian relations holds that there is a security dilemma between China and India (Garver 2002; Holslag 2009; Dittmer 2001; Wei 2004; Lu 2016). While most authors recognize that there are several factors which drive this security dilemma, they often tend to focus on a single one, such as naval competition in the Indian Ocean (Raja Mohan 2012), the nuclear arms race (Yang 2016; Kampani 2014), competition in South Asia (Malik 2011; Hu 2017), tensions over water resources (Christopher 2013) and, of course, the unresolved territorial dispute (Sui 2014).

However, there are also dissenting voices. Some authors disagree that there is a security dilemma between China and India. For instance, Srinath Raghavan argues that most scholars mistake the Sino-Indian competition for a security dilemma and, after examining the history of China-Indian relations, concludes that China-India security relations are driven not by a security dilemma but by the domestic politics of the two sides and by regional geopolitics (Raghavan 2019).

Others believe that Sino-Indian relations cannot be understood through the allegedly simple prism of a security dilemma. Chinese scholar Li Li holds that China-India security relations have changed markedly since the end of the Cold War due to changes in the two sides' understanding of security and thus their security relationship has evolved away from a security dilemma toward a more positive state of affairs (Li 2009).[5]

There are also scholars who question whether the China-India security dynamics operate as a traditional security dilemma. For instance, Fang Tien-Sze argues that contrary to the assumptions of a traditional security dilemma the two sides have highly asymmetric threat perceptions. As a result, India as the less secure power is more assertive than China, while China as the more secure actor strives to preserve the security status quo (Fang 2014).

While recognizing that such criticism makes important points, this article argues that there is a China-India security dilemma. This conclusion is based on the existence of several areas in which China and India are indeed locked in dynamics in which the security gains for one side automatically result in a security loss for the other. What distinguishes these areas from mere conflicts of interest that breed competition is their relevance for the hard security of either side, its territorial integrity and its military security. There are five such areas which generate a security dilemma between the two sides.

First, the nuclear arms race between Beijing and New Delhi engenders a security dilemma. The two sides both possess substantial nuclear arsenals and the capability to deliver massive nuclear strikes against each other. These capabilities are fast expanding in quantity and improving in accuracy and survivability. Both sides have, explicitly or implicitly, recognized each other as a nuclear threat. In 1998, in a secret letter to US president Bill Clinton India justified the very weaponization of its nuclear program with Beijing (Deepak 2005:371).

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[5] Li Li 's views on China-India relations have somewhat darkened since then but she continues to see them primarily as complex and not locked in a persistent, severe security dilemma (Li 2017; Li 2019).

Ivan Lidarev

Similarly, China has consistently seen India's nuclear weapons program as a threat, as indicated by its support for Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons aimed at offsetting India's, support which went as far as giving Islamabad highly enriched uranium sufficient for two atom bombs in 1982 (Small 2015:34). Crucially, the two sides have directed their nuclear and missile forces against each other. India's Agni-III missiles are stationed in Assam to target China's west coast, including Beijing and Shanghai (O'Donnell & Bollfrass 2020:6), and New Delhi is fast developing the Agni V ICBM which, with its greater range and greater reliability, would enable India to threaten all of China (Financial Express 2018). The ranges and location of both missile types indicate clearly that they are directed against China and not against Pakistan, India's other nuclear adversary. For its part China has long stationed nuclear-capable medium range ballistic missiles and, likely, nuclear weapons in Tibet and Yunnan, locations which leave no doubt that these capabilities are directed against India (Scott 2008:253; Cunningham & Metcalf 2011:7; O'Donnell & Bollfrass 2020:4).

Second, both China and India have developed alliances and partnerships with the other side's principal adversaries in a direct challenge to its military security. China has been allied with Pakistan for decades and has supplied its ally with weapons and nuclear support directly targeted at India. New Delhi has undermined Beijing's security by developing a growing partnership with the US and its allies, embodied in India's increasingly close defense cooperation with the US (Hu 2018) and its participation in the Quad, a naval grouping which also includes the US, Japan and Australia and is obviously directed against Beijing (Madan 2017). Beijing fears that the US-Indian partnership might eventually evolve into anti-China military alliance (Jaipragas & Sukumaran 2020).

Third, the Sino-Indian competition for influence in the two sides' shared strategic periphery, particularly in Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar, has direct military consequences for the security of each country. In case of armed conflict along their disputed border Beijing and New Delhi can turn this influence into military deployments, intelligence, and important tactical advantages. Similarly, each power can use these countries as a base to stir trouble in the other, either in China's Tibet or in India's restive Northeast. There are also prospects that Sri Lanka, the Maldives and even Bangladesh might also become security sensitive for both sides in the future, especially if their naval and security ties with China to expand.

Finally, the highly militarized LAC between the two sides and the closely related "Tibet issue" drive the security dilemma between the two sides. Both sides concentrate large forces around the LAC which would, very likely, play a key role in case of armed conflict. The "Tibet issue" is closely

related in many ways to the border, not least because it is the Chinese possession of Tibet which brings the Chinese and Indian armed forces in contact, generating a security dilemma along their militarized border. Both issues are discussed in greater detail below.

To these five drivers of the China-India security dilemma, it is also crucial to add the deep sense of mistrust between the two sides, a key psychological component of the security dilemma which breeds uncertainty about the other side's intentions, fear and worse-case scenario mentality. On the Indian side, this mistrust is rooted in the traumatic memory of the 1962 war and the fear that Beijing might once again strike India (Garver 2001:225,376). On the Chinese side, mistrust is centered on India's historical support for Tibetan separatism and the Chinese conviction that India has not truly accepted Tibet as part of China and seeks to undermine Beijing's rule there (Qiu 2016; Kang 2013). India's relations with the US and Japan also stir up the traditional Chinese fear of encirclement.

Admittedly, the China-India security dilemma is asymmetric, as New Delhi views Beijing as a greater threat than the other way round, due to the large asymmetry in capabilities in China's favor and the memory of the Chinese victory in 1962. However, it would be misleading to assume that China does not see India as a potential security threat. Rigorous analyses of Chinese publications not only reveal a persistent Chinese preoccupation with India's military development (Saalman 2011), but also an increased security concern caused by India's military modernization and closer defense ties with the US (Pardesi 2010).

IV. The Militarized Border

The territorial dispute plays a major role in the security dilemma between China and India. As most literature on the dispute and on China-India relations points out, the presence of a large unresolved territorial dispute, an undemarcated border and a large concentration of troops inevitably feeds the security dilemma between the two sides (Holslag 2009; Garver 2002; Scott 2008). Very predictably most analyses of the nexus between the dispute and the security dilemma focus on the military aspect of the security dilemma (Holslag 2009; Sui 2014; Joshi & Mukherjee 2019). This section briefly presents the military aspect of the dispute and its impact on the security dilemma between Beijing and New Delhi. Then it argues that the dispute has three other aspects which contribute substantially to the security dilemma between China and India.

Ivan Lidarev

The Sino-India border areas are heavily militarized. Counting the deployments close to the LAC itself and the strength of the military regions responsible for it, there are almost half a million soldiers in case of armed conflict on the border. China can rely on 200,00-230,00 troops under the Western theater command and the Tibet and Xinjiang military district (O'Donnell & Bollfrass 2020:8). In this theater the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) can field about 157 fighters, of which about 101 are 4th generation aircraft, all deployed at four air bases at Hotan, Lhasa/Gonggar, Ngari-Gunsa, and Xigaze, as well as a force of UAVs (O'Donnell & Bollfrass 2020:8-9).

For its part, India has deployed about 225,000 troops in its Northern, Eastern and Central commands facing China and can muster an estimated 270 fighters, including 122 4th generation aircraft and 68 ground attack aircraft in these military commands (O'Donnell & Bollfrass 2020:7, 9). While these figures suggest an Indian advantage, it is important to bear in mind that China's military is much larger and better equipped than India's, particularly with missiles that would prove very important in a conflict, and that Beijing can fast deploy troops to the border on its impressive transportation infrastructure. Naturally, the presence of Pakistan, a Chinese ally and Indian enemy, significantly affects the overall military situation.

To offset these weaknesses India has embarked on a campaign to improve its position on the border by raising a mountain strike corps, improving airfields, making moves to boost aircraft and helicopter capabilities, and increasing firepower, all as part of a new offensive Indian posture toward China (Joshi & Mukherjee 2019:33-34). Beijing has responded with a new emphasis on high-altitude warfare (Gan 2019), the induction of new howitzers (Liu & Ji 2019), massive military exercises in Tibet (Rajagopalan 2020a) and the introduction of a special tank for high-altitude operations (Episkopos 2020).

Beside the purely military competition, the two sides have also been engaged in an infrastructure building competition along the border (Ramachandran 2016). Whereas this infrastructure serves to consolidate each side's hold on the border region and symbolizes its sovereignty, its main task is military; to deploy and supply troops around LAC, particularly in case of conflict. While India has made substantial progress in building roads, bridges, and tunnels in the borderlands in recent years, China still enjoys a substantial infrastructure lead over its rival (Jakhar 2020).

This massive buildup of troops, arms, and defense infrastructure feeds the China-India dilemma in three ways. First, it creates a great military threat for both sides in case of armed conflict. The troop buildup on the border not only enables a surprise attack, but also permits either side to exploit the internal vulnerabilities of the other in case of war by invading such restive border territories as Tibet, Kashmir and Northeast India where it can join forces with local separatists. Inevitably, such military scenarios shape the security perceptions of each country's political and military leadership toward the other, instilling a fear and worst-case scenario thinking.

Second, the concentration of forces on the border regularly produces "border incidents" that create political and military tensions between the two sides. Such incidents, in the majority of cases initiated by China, involve either troops moving into disputed territory to patrol or tensions over military infrastructure such as roads, bunkers or surveillance equipment. Some of these incidents are likely the result of the divergent perceptions of where the LAC lies. Others constitute deliberate acts of pressure, usually Chinese acts, in what an Indian general referred to the author as "pinpricks" aimed at pressuring India (anonymous 2017, personal communication, 15 November). In either case, incidents not only create regular low-level military tensions but also have larger political impact on bilateral relations. This point is well illustrated by the Chinese incursion on Indian territory in September 2014 during President Xi's first visit to India after the inauguration of the Modi government which overshadowed the visit and seriously complicated relations between President Xi and PM Modi (The Times of India 2014).

Third, the militarization of the disputed China-India border affects the China-India-Pakistan military triangle. The presence of massive Chinese forces on the border threatens India with the nightmarish possibility of a two-front war in the case of conflict with Pakistan or China. This Indian vulnerability is particularly palpable in the westernmost section of the border, where Chinese, Indian and Pakistani forces occupy positions close to the de facto trijunction of their borders around the troubled Kashmir region, disputed between Pakistan and India[6] and long destabilized by a Pakistani-backed insurgency.

The military situation along the LAC obviously feeds into the China-India security dilemma. However, its importance as a source of insecurity between the two sides should not be exaggerated. After all, the chance of military conflict between China and India under present circumstances is

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[6] Strictly speaking China is also a participant in the Kashmir dispute, as India claims Aksai Chin as part of Kashmir and lays claims to a tract of territory around the Shaksgam valley which Pakistan transferred to China in 1963 (Smith 2013:24-25).

Ivan Lidarev

not great, even after the 2020 Ladakh crisis between the two sides. Such a conflict would be very costly and very high-risk for both sides. A victory or even a stalemate against the massive military machine of the other side would require enormous efforts, losses, and expenses, while the potential gain in terms of recovered disputed territory would be small, as most of the disputed territory is of limited strategic and economic value. Moreover, a war on the border can easily escalate into a larger conflict on land and sea between the two sides, produce nuclear tensions and involve Pakistan and even the US. Regardless how such a war ends, its long-term effect would be to turn the other side into an enemy, force it in the embrace of hostile powers and likely prompt it to support separatism in restive regions such as Kashmir, Northeast India, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

Does this mean that the dispute has only limited impact on the China-India security dilemma? The answer is a decisive 'no.' The impact of the territorial dispute on the China-India security dilemma is much broader than the military build-up along the LAC on which most experts focus. As the territorial dispute is closely connected with other important security issues, its significance for both sides extends far beyond a militarized dispute over territory. It is these, sometimes underappreciated, aspects of the territorial dispute which drive much of the security dilemma between China and India.

In particular, three aspects of the territorial dispute beyond the military situation feed into the Sino-Indian security dilemma. First, the territorial dispute's close connection with Tibet and the "Tibet issue" affects the security dilemma between the two sides. As Tibet is a vital question of national sovereignty for China and an important strategic issue for India, the two sides' security interests clash over it. Second, the dispute's importance for the security of the Indian Northeast also feeds into the security dilemma between the two Asian giants. For India the restive Northeast concerns India's territorial integrity and internal security, while for China it represents an Indian vulnerability that gives Beijing substantial strategic advantages and a region important to the security of Tibet and Beijing's southern flank in Yunnan and Myanmar. Third, the involvement of the US in the territorial dispute also exacerbates the China-India security dilemma. On the background of growing US-India rapprochement and escalating US-China competition, Washington's involvement not only strengthens India's position politically and militarily but also signals support in case of conflict between the two sides.

To understand how these three aspects of the China-India territorial dispute affect the security dilemma between the two sides, the next three sections examine each of them in detail.

IV. The "Tibet issue"

The close connection between the territorial dispute and the so-called "Tibet issue" is one aspect of the dispute which severely affects the security dilemma between China and India. To examine its impact on the security dilemma this section first clarifies the connection between the dispute and the "Tibet issue," then explains what crucial security interests China and India have at stake in the "Tibet issue," and finally argues how the dispute affects the China-India security dilemma via the "Tibet issue." Before proceeding, it is necessary to point out that the term "Tibet issue" is used here as a broad, umbrella term which encompasses various Tibet-related questions, such as the issue of China's sovereignty over Tibet, the campaign of the Dalai Lama and his government in exile to challenge it and the controversy over Beijing's policies in Tibet.

There is a close connection between the China-India territorial dispute and the "Tibet issue" for five reasons. First, China and India's claims in the territorial dispute are based on Tibetan precedent. The two sides' positions on the dispute are founded either on the historical sovereignty exercised by Tibet, invoked by Beijing, or on border treaties signed by Tibet, such as the 1914 Simla Accords (Noorani 2011:169-209) and the 1840 Dogra-Tibetan agreement (Noorani 2011:Genesis), which New Delhi uses to support its position.

Second, the territorial dispute raises the critical question of the status of Tibet as part of China, as the Simla Accords were signed by a Tibet which functioned as a sovereign state. Thus, India's invocation of this treaty challenges China's present-day and historical sovereignty over Tibet. Third, the "Tibet issue" played a key role in China's decision to launch the 1962 border war, on the suspicion that India tries to undermine Chinese rule in Tibet (Garver 2006), a suspicion that persists to this day.

Fourth, many experts and policymakers on both sides believe that the territorial dispute will not be resolved until the "Tibet issue" is settled to Beijing's advantage, i.e. there is no more challenge to China's sovereignty over Tibet. A very high-ranking former Indian security official told this author that 'the Chinese are not interested in settling the dispute because of Tibet' and want to wait for the "Tibet issue" to be resolved after the passing of the current Dalai Lama (anonymous 2017, personal communication, 28 November). One leading Chinese expert concurred, adding that if India changes its Tibet policy and evicts the Dalai Lama and his government in exile, China would 'make some very important deal' on the territorial dispute (anonymous 2018, personal communication, 13 December).

Ivan Lidarev

Finally, the "Tibet issue" clearly influences the policies of the two sides on the territorial dispute (Lidarev 2019:120-136). The only case in which China and India have made any substantive progress on their territorial dispute came after India made concessions on the "Tibet issue" by recognizing the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) as part of the PRC (Deepak 2005:430-32). Similarly, after the 2008 unrest in Tibet, which Beijing believed the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (TGIE) in India had organised, China seriously hardened its position on the border with increased border incidents and attempted blockage of a development loan for the disputed Arunachal Pradesh (Lidarev 2019:130).

The "Tibet issue" is central to Sino-Indian relations and the security dilemma between the two sides because it affects the security interests of both China and India. For China, Tibet is a huge, restive region with a large ethnic minority population and great natural resources whose stability and security are regularly threatened by the separatist TGIE led by the Dalai Lama. As the Dalai Lama and the TGIE have been based in India for decades and conduct their activities, including their international campaign for Tibetan autonomy or independence with the acquiescence of New Delhi, the "Tibet issue" is a 'great concern of China in its relations with India' (Li 2009).

Against this background, Tibet and the "Tibet issue" affect China's security interests in three ways. First, for Beijing the "Tibet issue" is a question of sovereignty and thus a "core security interest" on which no compromise can be made. Second, for China Tibet is a question of internal security. TAR and the Tibetan inhabited parts of China have for years been rocked by protests, Tibetan self-immolations, and large scale unrest, such as in the 1987-89 period and in 2008. Third, the "Tibet issue" is also a question of external national security for Beijing.

Traditionally seen as a 'backdoor to China' through which invaders can enter China (Norbu 2008:687-688), Tibet constitutes a Chinese vulnerability that adversaries such as the US and India can exploit, as they have done in the past. Against this backdrop, China's basic security interest has been to solidify its rule over Tibet, eliminate any international or domestic challenge to its sovereignty over Tibet, and deny the "Tibet issue" to hostile external forces.

For India, the "Tibet issue" presents a special security challenge. With Tibet's incorporation into the PRC in 1950 India lost the strategic buffer which separated it from China and ensured the security of its northern borders. Hence, the "Tibet issue" affects India's security interests in four ways. First, China's hold on Tibet inherently militarizes India's northern border and poses a military

challenge to India's security. Second, the consolidation of Chinese rule in Tibet allows Beijing to project power in the whole Himalayan belt, by using its financial muscle and Buddhism to spread its influence in Nepal, Bhutan and in some parts of India, such as Sikkim, Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. Third, China's claimed historical sovereignty over Tibet legally challenges most of India's northern border and serves as the basis of Chinese claims to Indian territory, particularly to Arunachal Pradesh. Finally, the "Tibet issue" presents India with a rare Chinese vulnerability it can exploit in spite of the massive imbalance in power between the two sides. On the basis of all this, New Delhi's basic interest is to prevent China from fully consolidating its hold over Tibet in order to prevent Beijing from threatening India and keep the advantage the "Tibet issue" gives it.

Against this background, security dilemma dynamics emerge between China and India on the "Tibet issue" and the related territorial dispute. Put very simply, China strives to gain security by completely settling the "Tibet issue," while India tries to improve its security by keeping it alive. In practice, this has meant that Beijing tries to offset India's advantage and force New Delhi to restrict Tibetan activities, deny any form of recognition to the Dalai Lama and the TGIE and eventually expel them or force them to capitulate to China's demands. India for its part has aimed at exactly the opposite, to allow the "Tibet issue" to remain relevant and maintain China's strategic vulnerability in Tibet to keep Beijing in check and use it if necessary. Each of these two strategies on the "Tibet issue" aims to give one side more security at the expense of the other and thus would translate into a military and political advantage on the territorial dispute.

Each side has adopted policies to advance its goals above, which predictably have undermined the security of the other side. India has hosted the Dalai Lama and the TGIE on its territory and has acquiesced to their massive international activities aimed at advancing the cause of Tibetan autonomy or independence. New Delhi has also kept two paramilitary forces which have enlisted many Tibetans in their ranks, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Special Frontier Force (SFF), which tellingly falls under the command of India's external intelligence service (Garver 2002:3).

These policies have given India the so-called "Tibet card" (*xizang pai* 西藏牌) against China (Hu 2017; Qiu 2016). If seriously provoked by China or seeking leverage on an issue, New Delhi can play this card by increasing its support for the TGIE. Importantly, New Delhi can also use the card to pressure China on the territorial dispute to moderate its policy and territorial claims to India (Lidarev 2019; 131). Hence, the "Tibet card" is both an insurance policy for India against China

Ivan Lidarev

and a lever over China on issues such as the territorial dispute or Pakistan (anonymous 2018, personal communication, 13 December). As Chinese scholar Zhang Guihong notes 'Tibet is virtually the only effective mechanism of leverage India has against Beijing' (Zhang 2005:64).

Predictably, China has felt deeply insecure by India's Tibet policy. It has seen this policy as an attempt to turn Tibet into a 'buffer zone' (*huanchong chu* 缓冲区) (Qiu 2016) and use the "Tibet issue" as a pressure point. As a former Chinese diplomat explained to the author 'when China-India relations become tense they will use this card again' (anonymous 2018, personal communication, December 2). To reduce this vulnerability and increase its security and pressure on India, Beijing has adopted various policies. These include isolating the Dalai Lama internationally, preparing the ground for his reincarnation, continuing some minimal support for Northeast separatists (Routray 2017), and using the territorial dispute to pressure India on the "Tibet issue" through coercive diplomacy (Lidarev 2019:128-131).

Naturally, the opposition between the mutually exclusive security interests of the two sides on the "Tibet issue" and the mistrust it breeds have large implications for the territorial dispute. These implications generate a security dilemma on the dispute. A Tibet which is fully integrated into China would strengthen Beijing's claims to Indian territory and might even expand them, massively improve China's military position along the border and deny India a lever with which it can pressure China on the territorial dispute. Conversely, an unresolved "Tibet issue" would undermine Chinese claims to Indian territory, legitimize the historical agreement on which India has founded its position on the dispute, strengthen India's military position in the border areas and sustain New Delhi's "Tibet card" that might threaten Chinese rule in Tibet in the future. This, in brief, is how the connection between the territorial dispute and the "Tibet issue" generates a security dilemma in Sino-Indian relations.

VI. India's Northeast

The nexus between the dispute and the security of India's troubled Northeast also feeds into the security dilemma between China and India. The following section first examines why India's Northeast is a great vulnerability for New Delhi and then explains how it is connected to the territorial dispute and how it contributes to the security dilemma between the two sides.

The Northeast, a large region comprising eight states, is one of India's great internal security vulnerabilities.[7] Its vulnerability is predetermined by the region's geography, its ethnic composition, its relative economic underdevelopment and its long history of separatism and instability. In terms of geography, the landlocked Northeast is barely connected with the rest of India through the extremely narrow Siliguri corridor which at its thinnest is merely 22km wide and, hence, stands geographically separate from the rest of India (Hu 2017). This makes New Delhi's ability to hold the region or reinforce it in case of war difficult. To make matters worse from Indian perspective, the Northeast is surrounded on three sides by foreign countries, including by China and Chinese dominated north Myanmar. Just as important, the region is very ethnically diverse, with about 220 different ethnic groups which speak a variety of languages (Jain 2016:275). This combination of ethnic diversity, severe economic underdevelopment, and the local populations' many grievances against New Delhi has fostered separatism and insurgency in the Northeast for decades. There have been a number of insurgent groups in the region, as many as 120 at one point (Hussain 2013:175), some of which had been backed by China in the past (Egreteau 2008:46-47) and, allegedly, continue to receive some Chinese support to this day (Routray 2017). While the insurgencies in the Northeast have declined in recent years due to police action, internal splits and agreements with the Indian government, they remain a factor of instability for the region and a threat to India's control over it. For all these reasons the Northeast is poorly integrated into India and hence presents a strategic vulnerability for New Delhi. Inevitably, such an Indian vulnerability offers China an opportunity to weaken and pressure its rival.

There is a close connection between the territorial dispute and the security and stability of India's Northeast, a connection that generates insecurity in New Delhi. There are three ways in which the dispute and the security of the Northeast are connected. First, China claims Arunachal Pradesh, one of the eight states of the Northeast. While it is very unlikely that Beijing will use force to enforce its claims, their very existence challenges India's sovereignty in the unstable Northeast and creates military and political tensions. This effect is further enhanced by the ambiguity of China's claims which breed uncertainty about Beijing's intentions on the Indian side and consequently insecurity. For instance, it is unclear if China claims all of Arunachal Pradesh, as its ambassador in India once stated, or only most of its territory, as its official maps suggest (Smith 2013:28). Equally, it is unclear if China claims more territory than just Arunachal Pradesh in the east, as Beijing claims 90 000 square km in the eastern sector, a territory larger than Arunachal Pradesh's 84 000 square

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[7] The eight states are Arunachal Pradesh (which China claims), Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. Originally, the Northeast included seven states until Sikkim was added in 2003.

km (Smith 2013:28). Inevitably such deliberate Chinese ambiguities raise fears in New Delhi that Beijing's claims might expand in the future.

Second, China's territorial claims to India, particularly in the strategic Chumbi valley, threaten to cut off the Siliguri corridor, often euphemistically referred to as India's vulnerable "chicken neck" (Hu 2017; Scott 2008: 247). As the strategic Chumbi valley is about 50km from the narrow Siliguri corridor which connects the Northeast to the rest of India, China's claims in the area have great strategic consequences and deeply worry New Delhi (Bajpai 2017). As the prominent Chinese scholar Hu Shisheng writes, the Siliguri corridor is a "sword of Damocles" (*Damokelisi zhijian* 达摩克里斯之剑) hanging over Indian strategic thinking (Hu 2017), making China's claims in the Chumbi Valley a great source of insecurity for India. In addition, through military deployments and infrastructure building Beijing has gradually strengthened its tactical position in the valley, greatly improving Beijing's chances of severing the "chicken neck" in case of war. Moreover, a stronger Chinese position in the Chumbi valley allows Beijing to pressure India whenever it chooses by building up its position in the area, as happened in 2007 (Scott 2008:247) and in 2017, the latter sparking the huge Doklam standoff that shook China-India relations (Panda 2017).

Third, China uses its territorial claims to put pressure on Sikkim, one of the eight states of the Northeast. Sikkim is a former Himalayan kingdom in which Beijing and New Delhi vied for influence until Sikkim acceded to India in 1975, an accession that China refused to officially recognize until 2005 (Lidarev 2015). Sikkim has emerged as an Indian vulnerability due to its controversial merger with India, its proximity to the Siliguri corridor and the fact that it borders Nepal and Bhutan in which China and India compete for influence. Whereas China has officially accepted Sikkim as part of India, it has sought to exploit India's Sikkim vulnerability. Beijing has claimed a part of Sikkim, the "Finger area," and has not accepted the 204 km border between China and Sikkim as undisputed, thus blocking the complete resolution of the Sikkim question (Lidarev 2015). Moreover, Beijing has used Sikkim to pressure India through construction activities and military patrols in the disputed "Finger area" in 2007 and 2014 (Garver & Wang 2010:247; Chellaney 2008; Lidarev 2015). Just as important, there has been some ambiguity about China's acceptance of Sikkim as part of India as Beijing has not publicly declared that Sikkim is part of India, implying that at some point China might raise the Sikkim issue again, as *Global Times* suggested at the height of the 2017 Doklam crisis (Zhou et al. 2017).

The dispute's connection with the security of India's troubled Northeast feeds into the security dilemma between China and India. India's security vulnerability offers an advantage to China which Beijing has partially tried to exploit, while for India it challenges New Delhi's sovereignty over the region, particularly in case of military conflict with China. The nexus between the dispute and the Northeast's security enables China to keep India off balance, pressure it whenever it needs, and improve its military position in case of conflict. Beyond taking advantage of New Delhi's vulnerability, China has an important stake in not allowing India to consolidate its position in the Northeast. Such a consolidation would enable India to project influence and "cause trouble" for China in Tibet, the China-dominated north Myanmar and even Yunnan, unstable areas with often restive ethnic groups living across the borders of China, India and Myanmar. A consolidation of Indian rule in the Northeast, and particularly in Arunachal Pradesh, would also have bearing on the "Tibet issue." Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as part of Tibet, hosts a large group of Tibetans and includes the monastery town of Tawang, where one Dalai Lama was born and the current one might be reincarnated outside Chinese control, to Beijing's great concern (Smith 2013:71-79).

For all these reasons China and India's security interests over the Northeast and the dispute with which it is connected, are in opposition to each other. More security for India in its Northeast would reduce China's security by depriving it of an advantage against a powerful rival and allowing India to threaten Chinese vulnerabilities. An improvement in China's position around the Northeast, in Sikkim and the Chumbi valley, would enhance China's security but undermine India's by increasing Beijing's ability to exploit New Delhi's vulnerabilities, especially in case of war. Hence, it is fair to conclude that the nexus between the territorial dispute and India's Northeast indeed generates a security dilemma.

VII. US Involvement

US involvement in the China-India territorial dispute, although relatively small, also reinforces the security dilemma that the territorial dispute generates between India and China. This section first introduces the background to this US involvement, then presents the involvement itself and, lastly, examines how it influences the security dilemma between the two sides.

To understand the role of US involvement in the territorial dispute and how it impacts the China-India security dilemma, it is crucial to examine its background. The US involvement in the dispute has taken place against the backdrop of two developments which have made it very security

Ivan Lidarev

sensitive to China. First, there has been a great acceleration of US-China competition in recent years. While China has consistently seen itself as surrounded and threatened by the US in what one very popular Chinese book described as C-shaped encirclement[8] (*C-xing baowei* C形包围)*,* the last decade has witnessed a massively acceleration of the US-China competition.

From Beijing's perspective, the Obama administration's Pivot to Asia and US President Trump's hawkish trade and security policies have sought to contain China. China has been particularly worried by Washington's consistent involvement in China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. As a result, Beijing has become highly sensitive to US's partnerships with its neighbours and to its involvement in China's territorial disputes with them.

Second, there has been a growing rapprochement between India and the US in the last two decades, a rapprochement aimed at balancing China. This rapprochement made a decisive step forward in 2005 when Washington and New Delhi signed a defense treaty and agreed on a landmark nuclear deal which transformed relations (Ma 2005:14-15). Beijing believed that the point of the agreements had been to turn India into a 'strategic counterweight to China,' according to an editorial in *People's Daily* (quoted in Garver &Wang 2010:245), and as a result 2005 became a "turning point" in the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations according to a leading scholar interviewed by the author (anonymous 2018, personal communication, 13 December). Since then, India has become a Major Defense Partner of the US, has signed various military agreements with Washington and has joined the Quad, a naval grouping led by the US which de facto aims to offset China's maritime rise (CFR 2020). Predictably, with accelerating US-China competition, the burgeoning partnership between the US and India has deeply worried China, that sees it as a first step toward an alliance aimed at encircling and containing China. Combined, these two developments ensure that any US involvement in the China-India territorial dispute would negatively affect Beijing's security and provoke its suspicion.

Against this backdrop, the Unites States has been involved in the China-India territorial dispute in four ways. Diplomatically, the US has supported India's position on the territorial dispute in the eastern sector. Washington not only officially recognized the territory of Arunachal Pradesh as part of India in 1962 (Smith 2012) but has also offered verbal and political support to New Delhi in

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[8] The book in question is C形包围--内忧外患下的中国突围 (C-shaped Encirclement: China's Breakout of Encirclement under Internal and External Threats), written by the retired army colonel and popular commentator Dai Xu, likely with some official support from the PLA (Dai 2010).

times of tensions with Beijing on the border. For instance, in 2012 the US ambassador to India reemphasized American recognition of Arunachal Pradesh as part of India, on the background of a Beijing-initiated breakdown of Indo-Chinese talks on the dispute (Sunil 2012). Similarly, in 2016, amid tensions between China and India, the US publicly lent support to India's sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh by dispatching its ambassador to the border state and to Tawang, provoking a strong Chinese reaction (Mitra 2016).

The same year also saw US diplomats issuing public statements reaffirming Washington's position on the status of the Land of the Dawn-Lit Mountains[9] (The Economic Times 2016) and even arguing that Google should change its online maps of Arunachal Pradesh to reflect Indian sovereignty (Qiu 2016). More recently, during the Doklam crisis, the US made another gesture reinforcing Indian sovereignty over Arunachal by introducing a smart villages project in the state (Singh & Philip 2019). China has resisted the diplomatic involvement of the American superpower in the dispute. Such involvement undermines Chinese claims to the state of Arunachal Pradesh and enables New Delhi 'to seek recognition of its occupation and control of the disputed border areas by the international community' (*qiu guojishehui dui qi zhanling yu guankong zhengyi bianjie diqu de chengren* 求国际社会对其占领与管控争议边界地区的承认) according to Chinese scholar Qiu Meirong (Qiu 2016).

Militarily, the US has quietly helped to strengthen India's position on the disputed border through joint exercises and arms sales. The US has conducted the last three Indian editions of the *Yudh Abhyas* joint exercises with India in Uttarakhand, not far from the disputed China-India border (Press Information Bureau 2014; 2016; 2018). The US has also strengthened India's military position on the border through important arms sales. For instance, in recent years India has acquired from the US and deployed close to the border M777 ultra-light howitzers made for mountain warfare, as well as heavy-lift Chinook helicopters crucial for fast deployment along the Himalayan border in case of crisis (The Economic Times 2019).

India has also acquired from the US C-130J Super Hercules aircraft, perfect for deploying troops and supplies to its distant airstrips along the border, an important capability in view of the relatively poor Indian infrastructure in the border areas (India Today 2013). Whereas these arms sales are part of a larger defense trade relationship between the US and India which is often driven by

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[9] In Sanskrit Arunachal Pradesh means the Land of the Dawn-lit Mountains, a name sometimes used to refer poetically to the state.

economic considerations, there is a clear realization on both the American and the Indian sides that many of these arms have impact on the tactical military balance on the border and serve the larger strategic purpose of balancing China. Arms sales and military exercises also serve to signal US strategic support for India in the dispute, support which puts pressure on Beijing and gives leverage to India in negotiations. In brief, US military involvement in the dispute improves Indian security on the border at China's expense.

Thirdly, potential US involvement in a China-India military conflict on the border constrains Beijing's policy. As US-China relations have massively deteriorated in recent years and the US-Indian partnership has progressed, such US military involvement is likely to be on India's side and to tip the military balance in New Delhi's favor. There are precedents for such American involvement. During the 1962 war Washington delivered massive amounts of arms and ammunition to India and might even have intervened militarily upon New Delhi's request, had not the war ended unexpectedly while Washington moved an aircraft carrier to India (Reidel 2015:120-146). Another, dramatically more limited US involvement in the dispute took place during the 2017 Doklam standoff, when Washington reportedly provided intelligence to India on Chinese troop deployments (Samanta 2018). Inevitably, the possibility of such US involvement, in the form of arms, intelligence or even direct military intervention, constrains China. It limits how Beijing can employ its military during a crisis on the border, practically erecting a ceiling of military escalation above which China cannot go without risking an American involvement. Of course, India's awareness of this "ceiling" emboldens New Delhi to adopt a harder stance on the border. Just as important, the prospect of US involvement also enables New Delhi to pressure China to deescalate under the threat of India inviting Washington in the conflict, as India implicitly did during the 2020 Ladakh crisis through highly publicized phone conversations between Indian and US leaders (Rajagopalan 2020b). Lastly, a US involvement in a military crisis on the border constrains Chinese policy because such involvement might give the final push for the formation of the very US-India alliance that China has so long feared.

Finally, US support for the TGIE and the Dalai Lama puts further pressure on Beijing along the disputed border by exploiting China's Tibet vulnerability. The US, together with India, has been the main backer of the Dalai Lama and the TGIE. Its support is well documented and involves frequent visits by US politicians to the Dalai Lama, political support, and congressionally mandated financial aid to the TGIE. Bearing in mind the connection between the "Tibet issue" and the territorial dispute examined above, greater US involvement in the "Tibet issue" reinforces New

Delhi's "Tibet Card" and its position on the dispute and, hence, weakens China's.[10] These dynamics have been underscored by the first ever visits of a sitting US ambassador to Tawang in 2016 and 2019 (Roche 2019). The visits not only indicated that Tawang belongs to India but also quietly signalled potential American support for the Dalai Lama's reincarnation there, in a blow to Beijing's hopes for legitimizing a reincarnation in Chinese Tibet. Not coincidentally, the 2019 ambassadorial visit took place at about the same time as a high-ranking US diplomat met with the Dalai Lama (Singh & Philip 2019). For China, US involvement also has a harder security aspect. As India and the US had jointly supported armed Tibetan struggle against Beijing in the 1960s, China fears that renewed US-India cooperation aims to destabilize Tibet (Qiu 2016). As a prominent Chinese scholar observed to the author, US-India cooperation on Tibet is a factor that China 'needs to think about' in its relations with India, including on the border (anonymous 2018, personal communication, 13 December).

US involvement in the territorial dispute on New Delhi's side clearly generates a security dilemma between China and India. Washington's involvement not only strengthens India's military position on the border and its legal case for sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh but also suggests that the US might be willing to support India in case of conflict with China. The involvement of the most powerful country in world on India's side in the territorial dispute is clearly a net security gain for India which otherwise has been at a disadvantage in the dispute against the wealthier, politically more powerful and militarily mightier China. Crucially, it also gives India leverage over its northern neighbour that it can exploit in the diplomacy on the territorial dispute by implicitly or explicitly threatening to invite greater US involvement. On the contrary, for China US involvement is clearly a net security loss on the dispute. Apart from strengthening India's military and political position, Washington's involvement also reduces Beijing's power advantage over New Delhi by raising the possibility, however distant, that the US might intervene in an armed conflict on India's side, as it almost did in 1962. Moreover, the spiraling security dilemma between Washington and Beijing also contributes to China's insecurity caused by American involvement in the dispute, as it means that the US might be much more willing to back India in peacetime or even wartime than before. The

specter of US-India cooperation to exploit Beijing's Tibet vulnerability also produces Chinese insecurities about US involvement in the territorial dispute and shapes its policy on the border.

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[10] At least as long as the Dalai Lama and the TGIE remain on Indian soil where New Delhi can be certain to have strong influence on them, regardless of any US involvement.

Ivan Lidarev

This relatively recent spike in US involvement in the dispute would likely prompt China to take counter measures to improve its own security on the border.

In sum, US involvement in the territorial dispute, while relatively small, generates a security dilemma between China and India as it presents a security gain for one side and a security loss for the other.

VIII. Conclusion

This article has sought to answer the question how the China-India territorial dispute affects the security dilemma between Beijing and New Delhi. It has acknowledged that part of the answer lies with the military situation around the disputed border where Chinese and Indian forces face each other amid a competitive buildup of forces, arms, and infrastructure. However, this article has argued that there are also three other underappreciated aspects of the dispute that influence the China-India security dilemma.

First, the close connection between the dispute and the "Tibet issue" guarantees that the conflicting security interests and policies of the two sides on this issue generate a security dilemma. China's push to reduce its vulnerability in Tibet and India's attempt to hold a "Tibet card" against China are fundamentally irreconcilable as each enhances the security of one side at the expense of the other.

Second, the nexus between the dispute and the security of India's restive Northeast also feeds into the Sino-Indian security dilemma. Beijing is trying to exploit India's Northeast vulnerability to improve its security position in the east and pressure India, while New Delhi seeks to reduce this weakness and with it its insecurity. The two security goals are clearly in conflict with one another.

Third, the involvement of the United States in the dispute also exacerbates the China-India security dilemma. The US not only supports India militarily and diplomatically, but also with its tilt toward India on the dispute shapes the two sides' planning in case of a border conflict and their policies on the "Tibet issue." From a security perspective, the involvement of a Chinese adversary such as the US is a net security loss for China that offsets its power advantage over India and a net security gain for India, the weaker side in the territorial dispute.

These three aspects of the China-India territorial dispute give us a broader, more multifaceted perspective on how it affects the China-Indian security dilemma. They also suggest different ways the security dilemma on the border can escalate. For instance, if in the aftermath of the coming reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, the two sides might find themselves with two Dalai Lamas, one in Chinese Tibet and one in India. If in such a scenario New Delhi recognizes the Dalai Lama on its soil in a challenge to the Beijing-backed candidate, who would present an opportunity for China to settle the "Tibet issue," this would significantly escalate the security dilemma between the two sides.

In another scenario Bhutan might decide to establish diplomatic relations with China and resolve its territorial dispute with it along lines proposed by Beijing in exchange for investment and a greater share of the disputed territory. As a result, Beijing would strengthen its position in the Chumbi valley, close to Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. This would ratchet up India's sense of insecurity, exacerbating the security dilemma between the two sides.

Yet another possibility is that the US would involve itself more decisively in the dispute, for instance by supporting India's claims to Chinese territory in the western sector. Such a development would not only undermine Chinese sovereignty and security around the border but would also tie even further the dispute to the increasingly tense relationship between Washington and Beijing, escalating the Sino-Indian security dilemma. While none of these scenarios are inevitable and some are unlikely, they suggest how the complex, multilayered character of the territorial dispute with its non-military aspects can exacerbate the security dilemma between China and India.

In conclusion, the complex, multifaceted China-India territorial dispute with its military and nonmilitary security aspects is a key driver of the security dilemma between Beijing and New Delhi. Inevitably, the dispute's complexity with its various security aspects also affects the security dilemma, making it more severe.

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S O P H I E   C H E U N G

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the Chinese government's new foreign policy slogan A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM) to discern how China presents and constructs the concept as a narrative to foreign audiences. It finds that Chinese authorities put forth three narratives through the CSFM vision: an international system narrative of global interdependence, an issue narrative of global governance failure, and an identity narrative of China as a responsible and capable leader. Together, they formulate the strategic narrative of an interconnected international system facing increasing global threats, demanding for immediate resolution. Through these narratives, Beijing positions itself as a responsible stakeholder within the current world order, working to improve the system and contribute to solving pressing global challenges. To understand and situate Beijing's international strategic priorities, this paper employs discourse analysis to analyse speeches made by leading Chinese authorities from 2014 to 2019. It draws upon strategic narrative as a framework to decipher key themes and storylines within these speeches, all of which together serve as building blocks of the CSFM narrative.

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Sophie Cheung

China's Vision for Global Governance:
A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

By

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1. Introduction

In recent years, Chinese foreign policy under the leadership of Xi Jinping has featured the new diplomatic slogan 'A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)'. First introduced in the 18th Party Congress Work Report of 2012, CSFM presents the Chinese vision of an ideal international order against a current backdrop of increasing global interdependence and challenges. CSFM refers to a group of people or nations bonded together by common interests and fate (Zhang 2018). To achieve such a community, the Chinese Community Party (CCP) states that efforts at the international level must be made in five aspects: political partnership, security, economic development, cultural exchanges and the environment (Xi 2015a).

Since its inception, CSFM has been increasingly promoted in Chinese political dialogue. CSFM's centrality to Chinese policy can be seen in the 2018 Amendment to the PRC Constitution, where it was added as a new foreign policy goal (NPC Observer 2018). It starred in Xi's speeches during prominent international occasions such as the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 and the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2018. The term gained additional international traction when the UN incorporated it into a resolution titled "Social Dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development". Chinese diplomats and media deemed this as a universal recognition of the concept and a huge Chinese contribution to global governance (Xinhua 2017).

Beijing has presented CSFM to audiences abroad as a core concept that guides contemporary Chinese foreign policy. As a foreign policy goal, CSFM encapsulates the overarching interests and perspectives of the leadership within the international system. President Xi presents CSFM as the latest solution to global challenges and as the direction that humanity should follow to ensure peace and development during a time of increasing global interdependence and instability (Xi 2017a). Derived as a conclusion from deep Chinese thinking and analysis, the proposal of CSFM reflects how the leadership conceives of the current state of global affairs, as well as the best solution forward. Such slogans, although easily dismissed as vague or as propaganda, play a role in shaping

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

Beijing's political actions (Callahan 2015). Examining CSFM can enhance understanding of Chinese beliefs regarding the global order and point to their aspired role within it.

The need to decode and understand CSFM is further driven by how existing literature on the concept is limited, with the majority of work deriving from Chinese scholars and few from overseas ones. International literature mentions CSFM briefly in broader discussions of other foreign policy topics, with absent or limited analysis of CSFM's meaning and implications in a global context (e.g Sørensen 2015; Callahan 2017). Observations from abroad also often take CSFM as '...simply an international expansion of domestic propaganda' (Mokry 2018:4).

Although the concept is relatively new, a lack of focused literature from abroad is significant considering how the slogan is international orientated and how comparatively rich Chinese literature is. CSFM is applauded by Chinese scholars as a major contribution of Chinese wisdom to the world (Zhao 2018), a new framework that transcends traditional International Relations (IR) thought (Sun 2016), and as encapsulating the dreams of China and the world (Chen 2016). The absence of English literature on CSFM signifies the broader need for Western scholarship to better engage with Chinese proposals on the world order, to understand Chinese conceptualizations of international affairs (Mokry 2018).

Given the rising prominence of CSFM internationally and within Chinese academia, this paper aims to deconstruct the concept and situate it in terms of Chinese aspirations in the international system. To this end, this paper poses the following question: *how does the Chinese leadership construct and present the beliefs and visions that make up the narrative of CSFM, to audiences abroad?*

With the framework of strategic narrative and the use of discourse analysis, this research examines a selection of translated English speeches by CCP leaders from 2014-2019 to discern how CSFM is constructed and presented as a narrative to foreign audiences. This is achieved by first identifying six prominent storylines and corresponding themes relating to CSFM, in CCP speeches. A narrative approach is then employed to synthesize and situate these storylines according to how it constructs three broader narratives: an international system narrative of global interdependence, an issue narrative of global governance failure, and an identity narrative of China as a responsible and capable leader. Together, they formulate the strategic narrative of CSFM: an interconnected international system that faces increasing global threats (such as the limitation of global governance) demanding for immediate resolution. Through the deployment of this narrative,

Sophie Cheung

Beijing also aims to present itself as a responsible stakeholder that cooperates within the current world order to address global issues. In a similar tone, leaders also aim to dispel fears of China as a revisionist power that seeks to overthrow the existing US-led order.

Whilst the employed narrative approach serves as a valuable framework to understand how Chinese leaders construct and socialize CSFM, the practice of identifying and deconstructing narratives can be problematic. Although identified narratives in this research are guided by a literature review and methodological approach, they are not all encompassing. Thus, findings can only be taken as a general representation of how the CCP attempts to establish meaning to CSFM. As the emphasis of this research is also purely on narrative construction, there is an absence of analysis on how CSFM is received and the extent to which it truly reflects Beijing's aims. Nonetheless, this paper provides a rich and informed analysis of the ideas which underpin CSFM as a strategic narrative. It serves as a valuable starting point to further understand the new slogan, and the extent to which it may allow observers to infer Chinese strategic priorities.

2.   Theoretical Framework

2.1 Discourse Theory

Discourse theory outlines that understandings and accounts of the social world are created, rather than given. This process is achieved through communication, in the form of language. Language is a medium oriented towards action and function, to construct versions of the social world (Elliot 1996). Discourse is thus concerned with how language is used to represent social practices from a specific point of view (Fairclough 2015).

Discourse theory is concerned with questions of power, as discourse can shape beliefs, values and desires (Fairclough 2015). Discourse situates social practices and defines the range of actions that are possible. In IR, discourse can serve as a form of power resource for political actors, allowing them to mould domestic and global perspectives. Certain actors are in stronger positions than others to influence discourse, thereby controlling the perspectives that are widely accepted as valuable and true. Discourse theory outlines that 'the way we act in relation to a subject is not the most important thing but rather it is how we think and talk about it, and who thinks and talks about it' (Zhao 2016:540).

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

2.2 Strategic Narratives

As a form of communication that moulds how social occurrences are discussed, discourse can influence and be shaped by narratives. Narrative is a widespread and powerful form of discourse in human communication (Patterson & Monroe 1998). Discourses rely greatly on narratives, as humans rely on narratives to understand the world. In the past two decades, IR has undergone a 'narrative turn,' with academics and policymakers viewing narrative as a valuable way to understand and explain political phenomena (Roberts 2006).

Narratives facilitate "meaning making," by simplifying complex situations into an understandable chain of events to formulate and maintain worldviews (Shenhav 2006). This worldview is a product of a particular perspective, formed with consideration of specific events, interests and goals over others. Studying narratives can generate insight on an actor's self-understanding, interests, and ideas about how the world is and should function (Antoniades, Miskimmon & O'Louhglin 2010).

Narratives can be employed during times of change, such as the current international context, which is characterized by globalization and the growing importance of the East Asian region.
As a form of persuasive communication, strategic narrative sets off from a starting point of understanding change in the international system by asking: what are the best methods to influence international affairs? (Roselle, Miskimmon & O'Loughlin 2014). Here, communication becomes a key tool. Employing persuasive communication tactics can enhance a nation's international attractiveness by shaping favourable foreign opinions. Narratives achieve this by forging cooperative behaviours and mitigating tensions, such as between the U.S. and China (Rudd 2015). As a persuasive tactic, they also conceptually integrate values to unite diverse political perspectives (Snyder 2015). Narratives and discourse thus have the potential to influence political action.

For the purpose of this paper, strategic narrative is conceptualized as a form of persuasive communication, involving the construction of a worldview by state actors for the achievement of political objectives. This worldview includes a dimension of intention, where events and identities are formed to '...give determined meaning to past, present and future in order to achieve political objectives,' (Antoniades, Miskimmon & O'Loughlin 2010:5). The effects of a successful narrative are power and legitimacy, tied to whichever narrative is successful in giving shared and accepted meaning. Narratives thus involve a political struggle between states over 'whose story wins' (Nye 2004).

Sophie Cheung

3.   Literature Review

3.1 Chinese Strategic Narratives

The interconnectivity between discourse, language and power is a relationship that the CCP has long acknowledged. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, leaders have constantly worked to create a favourable public opinion and positive public image, as a means to guarantee the government's hold on power. Beijing has since incorporated methods of political public relations and communications in its thought work and propaganda efforts (Brady 2008).

One method of communication is strategic narratives. From Mao Zedong's "Five Principles," to Deng Xiaoping's "independent and peaceful foreign policy," to Hu Jintao's "Harmonious World," to Xi's current "Community of Shared Future," China has employed strategic narratives as part of an effort to communicate its values to the world. Policy implementation at all levels in China is shaped with consideration to questions of 'How should this be put? What happens if we put it like that? Will putting it like this put people off?' (Schoenhals 1992:3). Determining the most appropriate formulations of language is crucial to controlling what is being discussed, and by extension what is being done within Chinese politics (Schoenhals 1992). Such attention to the formulation and reception of Chinese ideas can be interpreted as part of CCP's efforts to increase its global influence by guiding discourses.

3.2 China's Discursive Power

The global community's scepticism and fear over China's recent rise has shaped Beijing's sensitivity to its international image and feelings of misjudgement (d'Hooghe 2014). As such, the CCP has devoted attention to its communication initiatives, an effort that can be understood through the concepts of discursive power *(huayu quan* 话语权) and the West's discursive hegemony (*huayu baquan* 话语霸权).

As a popular topic within China, discourse power is broadly interpreted as a "right to speak," a de facto "power discourse," correlated directly with national strength, involving "power of the media" requiring its internationalization; or an aspect of soft power, involving values and culture (Kania 2018). This paper conceives discursive power as a blend of these conceptions, in addition to being reflective of power relations which together, enable an actor the "right to speak," and a "right to be heard."

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

Discursive power should be understood in terms of existing international power relations, which determine which actors are more able to shape global structure, processes and institutions in their favour. Power is concerned with 'the legitimacy of particular governing arrangements, who gets to participate, whose voice matters, and whose vote counts,' (Barnett & Duvall 2004:8). As a form of public opinion capital, discursive power builds upon these existing power relations to allow actors to extensively promulgate its ideas and values over others.

Within Chinese academia, a dominant perspective is that China is suffering from a power deficit due to the limits of its soft power resources (culture and values), in comparison with stronger power sources (economy and military) (Zheng 2013; Meng & Wang 2015). Xi echoed this by emphasizing that Chinese values should be spread by increasing China's international discourse power, '…to make our culture known through international communication…' (Xi 2013:179). China has thus begun to pursue a discursive power strategy that comprises of setting facts straight and innovating rules, through foreign policy slogans such as CSFM (Zhao 2018).

The CCP's focus on discursive power is understood within academia in terms of the nations' economic development. As China participates and invests globally, its interests become intertwined with that of the world. Participation in international affairs serves as an important means to protect global interests (Zhang 2008). Zheng (2013) frames the necessity of this participation according to a lack of discursive power. 'China is now the second largest economy in the world, with an increased economic influence. Yet, the right to speak in international economic affairs has not emerged, let alone the right to speak in world politics' (Zheng 2013).[1]

Meng and Wang (2015) similarly iterate this but offer a more optimistic view of China's prospects. Accompanying China's growing economic resources is also the decline in the West's economic strength, signifying an opportunity for China to participate in global governance and improve international discourse power through the construction of a new IR theory system.

The call to strengthen discursive power is additionally framed according to an issue of inequality between China and the West, compounded by Chinese feelings of misunderstanding by the

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[1]Own translation, original text*: ¨Zhōngguó xiànzài yǐjīng shì shìjiè shàng dì èr dà jīngjì tǐ, wài zài de jīngjì yǐngxiǎng lì zēng dà, dàn jíshǐ shì zài guójì jīngjì shàng de huàyǔ quán yě bìng méiyǒu xiǎnxiàn chūlái, zhìshǎo shì yǔqí jīngjì lìliàng bù xiāngfú de, gèng bùyòng shuō zài shìjiè zhèngzhì shàng de huàyǔ quánle* 中国现在已经是世界上第二大经济体，外在的经济影响力增大，但即使是在国际经济上的话语权也并没有显现出来，至少是与其经济力量不相符的，更不用说在世界政治上的话语权了．¨

international community. For Meng and Wang (2015), the discursive hegemony of the West allows it to maintain a leading position in the international system. China thus needs to enhance their discursive power so they can create their own political models rather than following the established Western order (Zhao 2018). Focus on discursive power is further shaped by Chinese frustration with the lack of desired results in its initiatives to strengthen its international attractiveness (Melissen & d'Hooghe 2014). As Xi emphasizes, China must 'grasp international discourse" to effectively spread a 'good voice and story of China' (Xi 2013).

3.3 Global Governance and Power

Global governance offers a setting for the CCP to increase its discursive power. In the current era of globalization, a need emerges for international governance and rule-making to facilitate global cooperation. Global governance can be conceptualised in terms of power as governance includes rules and institutions, both of which shape social life and are fundamental elements of power. In global governance, discourses can influence an actor's hold or claim to power. Discourses generate different social capacities for actors to define and pursue their interests, influencing their ability to shape their own fate (Barnett & Duvall 2005). Specifically, discourse can create a productive form of power, which '…orients social activity in particular directions, defines what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and shapes whose knowledge matters,' (Barnett & Duvall 2005:4).

3.4 Global Governance Failure

CSFM is referred to by scholars as a global governance concept (e.g., Zhao 2018; Chen 2016), which is a tool to understand changes at the global level (Hewson & Sinclair 1999). Amidst the need for global rule-making and governance, institutions of the international system have failed to meet this need, resulting in disorder (Qin 2015). As a popular view amongst Chinese scholars, global governance failure is evident and an outcome of a long-standing international order characterized by political coercion, U.S-led military alliances, and Cold War mentalities (Sun 2016).

According to Qin (2015), global governance failure is cited to be largely due to ideational limitations, where current ideas underpinning global governance such as monism, rationalism and dualism, lag behind reality. To address this, it is necessary to reconstruct global governance ideas to ones of pluralism, partnership and participation (Qin 2015). CSFM is thus seen by Chinese academics as the ideational solution to global governance failure, which '…has undermined the world's confidence in the Washington Consensus, making more imperative the search for an alternative model that is more just…' (Zhao 2018:27). By noting the failure of the current system,

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

the Chinese perspective emphasizes the need for alternatives. With its focus on equal representation, peaceful development and win-win cooperation, CSFM global governance concept is thereby regarded by Chinese scholars as this viable solution.

Non-Chinese scholars adopt more critical views of China's global governance proposals. Contrary to beliefs which stress the existence of global governance failure and Chinese contributions to address this, Michael Pillsbury (2015) sees the notion of global governance failure as a constructed one, part of China's effort to delegitimize the West's global authority to create a new one. China must create an image of terminal decline in order to offer an appealing blueprint for a new one (Schweller & Pu 2011).

The idea of CSFM as a viable blueprint is further contested by Western scholars who see it as reflective of long-standing Chinese rejections to the Western-led international order, and an attempt to subvert Western influence (Tobin 2018). Xi's proposal of a specifically China-ASEAN CSFM is highlighted as one such example of a vision which excludes the U.S. and positions China at the centre (Sørensen 2015).

Apprehensions about CSFM are further shaped by a perceived lack of credibility. As d'Hooghe (2014:40) notes, '…official messengers are never fully trusted, even less when they come from a country with an authoritarian leadership that is not considered legitimate by the public.' As a top-down initiative from an authoritarian government, CSFM could suffer from a lack of legitimacy. Developments within China such as repressive domestic crackdowns and prevailing gaps between the rich and the poor stand at odds with Beijing's assertions that it holds the answers to global issues of peace. CSFM is thereby interpreted by Tobin (2018:166) as China's '…highly orchestrated, ostentatious campaign to trumpet its vision.'

This section introduced the frameworks and concepts to understand how CSFM is constructed. To decode CSFM, this research employs discourse theory and a framework of strategic narrative. As forms of communication which are interlinked and able to reinforce one another, discourse and narrative as a valuable lens to understand the social aspect of power in IR, Chinese communication initiatives, and conceptions of discursive power. This section also discussed the concept of global governance, situating it in terms of discursive power, and of the Chinese belief in global governance failure, which articulates how the current liberal international system is inadequate in addressing

Sophie Cheung

issues facing the world today. In this context of power, communication and global governance, Beijing's proposal of CSFM represents its effort to harness narrative for strategic purposes.

4. Methodology

4.1 Source Type

As CSFM will be examined as part of the CCP's external (international) communications strategy, English-language translated speeches are utilized for this analysis. These sources are most relevant to address the question of how CSFM is presented to foreign audiences, such as representatives from government, international organisations and multilateral institutions.

Whilst translated documents could reflect the ideas of a translator rather than the CCP, they can be taken as representative of official discourse due to the CCP's exclusive control over publishing. Communicating narratives of China to the world relies on the translation of 'China's voice' (Li & Li 2015:424). Thus, translation follows a set of regulated and secretive procedures. Translators are members of the CCP or hold senior positions in political and professional institutions (Zappone 2018). This obliges them to uphold ideologies and pursue politically correct translations. Political translation is an institutionalized, norm-governed and ideologically-motivated practice, underlining China's preoccupation with how its ideas come across to foreign audiences (Li & Li 2015).

4.2 Source Selections and Coding

Whilst the original Chinese wording of CSFM [*renlei mingyun gongtong ti* 人类命运共同体] has remained the same since its inception, foreign audiences have heard the terms Community of Common Destiny, Community of Common Future, Community of Shared Destiny, Community of Shared Interests, and Community of Shared Responsibilities. These were most prominently featured in 2013-2016, with leaders shifting to almost exclusively using CSFM from mid-2016 onwards[2] (see Appendix 1). According to Foreign Minister Wang Yi (2016), changes in CSFM terminology were also a result of the natural development of the concept. Thus, this research codes CSFM and related terms as variations of the same concept.

CSFM was first introduced in the 18th Party Congress Work Report of November 2012., The encoding process began with locating and reviewing all speeches with occurrences of CSFM from late 2012 onwards. Texts were pulled from the "Speeches" sections of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC (n.d.) and the English version of the State Council of the PRC website (n.d.)

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[2] For the appendix materials, interested readers may contact the author through info@mappingchina.org.

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

due to their exclusive focus on foreign policy, international audiences and the large availability of English speeches in comparison to other outlets or departments.

All speeches were reviewed manually to determine the number of occurrences of CSFM. The results outlined that CSFM occurrences were present in 193 speeches from January 2013-November 2019 (see Appendix 1). For the final text selection, only speeches that included CSFM at least five times were considered to ensure an overarching content focus on the concept, rather than a brief mentioning of it in the context of other events or issues. A total of twenty-three speeches met this criterion, still a large number considering the time and word constraints of this research. As such, one speech each year from 2014-2019 was selected, on the basis of highest frequency of CSFM mentions. Although CSFM was first brought up in speeches in 2013, there were no speeches that year which highlighted CSFM or related concepts five or more times. The decision to select texts based on years was also to account for any developments that could impact how often and in what ways CSFM is presented.

With the goal of analysing a total of twelve texts, six more speeches were chosen according to target audience. To have a range of speeches targeting various audiences is important, as messages could be presented differently depending on the audience. The final selected speeches were delivered at academic, region-specific, human rights, security and development forums. Others were made after Party Congresses, or at the UN Office in Geneva. All speeches were delivered by Xi or high-ranking leaders such as Wang Yi,[3] Yang Jiechi,[4] Zheng Zeguang, Li Baodong or Liu Zhenmin.[5] Further details about the selected speeches can be found in Appendix 2.

4.3 Narrative Approach

Unlike other qualitative frameworks, narrative research does not set definitive starting or finishing points. There is an absence of overall rules about suitable materials, methods of analysis, or the best level at which to study stories (Squire 2008). As such, this research adopts its own approach based on the conception of narrative as a constructed, temporal and politically motivated form of story building.

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[3] Wang Yi is the Foreign Minister and a member of the 13th State Council, the executive organ of the CCP.
[4] Yang Jiechi was a member of the 12th State Council and is currently a member of the Politburo and the Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission.
[5] Zheng Zeguang, Li Baodong and Liu Zhenmin are Vice Foreign Ministers.

Sophie Cheung

For this paper, CSFM is examined through three layers of analysis, each of which employs different tools of content, thematic and narrative analysis. The layers of analysis build upon each other and decode different dimensions of narrative to discern how CSFM is presented. Chronologically, this process begins with identifying the components of a narrative, themes/storylines of narrative, and finally, the types of strategic narratives. Each layer's details, function and tools are outlined below in the process created uniquely for this research and expanded upon in the subsequent sections.

Graph 1: Narrative Analysis Process (own design)

Components of Narrative
Components: Act, scene, agent, agency, purpose
Characteristics: Descriptive, contextual, explicit
Tools: Thematic and content analysis

Themes/Storylines of Narrative
Storylines: Global governance failure, Shared fate, Chinese wisdom/solutions, Chinese victimization, Chinese presence and power, China for multilateralism
Characteristics: Analytical, implicit
Tools: Thematic and content analysis

Types of Strategic Narratives
Types: International system, issue, identity
Characteristics:Interpretative
Tools:Narrative Analysis

4.4 Components of Narrative

This research first sets out to identify and briefly describe CSFM as a narrative. As outlined by Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle (2017:7) there are five components of a narrative: character or actors (agent), setting/environment/space (scene), conflict or action (act), tools/behaviour (agency) and resolution/or suggested resolution/goal (purpose). This criterion qualifies CSFM as a narrative, confirming the suitability of the narrative approach and strategic narrative as an analytical framework. Identifying components of narrative also explicitly sets out the who, when and where, what, how and why elements, which contextualize actions and motives for China's CSFM narrative (Van Noort 2017).

To gather these components, descriptive coding was conducted on the 19th Party Congress Work Report from 2017. Convened every five years, Party Congresses and their work reports set forth guidelines of the highest authority and are the most authoritative public recitation of CCP policy (Miller 2019). Although CSFM was first proposed in the Party Congress of 2012, it was only

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

mentioned briefly and in the early stages of its formulation. The Work Report from 2017 is more indicative of the current Chinese perspective of the geo-political landscape, and its foreign policy aims. In the table below, excerpts about CSFM are referenced in relation to the components of a narrative. The purpose of this descriptive coding is not meant to serve as a complete account of the components of the CSFM narrative, but rather as a summary of the agent, scene, act, agency and purpose.

Table 1: Components of Narrative as Presented in 19th Party Congress Report (Xi 2017a)

Components of Narrative	Community of Shared Future for Mankind
Agent (character or actors)	'The Communist Party of China,' (50)
Scene (setting)	'Changes in the global governance system and the international order...' (50) 'The world… [that faces] growing uncertainties and destabilizing factors,' (50).
Act (conflict or action)	'As human beings we have many common challenges to face,' (50). 'Gap between rich and poor...unconventional security threats...major infectious diseases, and climate change…' (50)
Agency (tools/behaviour)	'The Belt and Road Initiative,' (52).
Purpose (resolution or goal)	'Safeguard world peace, contribute to global development, and uphold international order,' (21). 'Rise in China's international influence, ability to inspire, and power to shape,' (6).

4.5 Narrative Themes and Storylines

To identify how CSFM is constructed, this methodology focuses on narrative themes and corresponding storylines with the tools of thematic and discourse analysis. Thematic analysis identifies, analyses and reports themes, in a minimally organized manner that describes data in rich detail. It is 'not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question,' (Braun & Clarke 2006:82).

As defined earlier, narratives can be understood as a specific worldview or reality. They are constructed and maintained by discourses, which shape how communities choose to engage and understand politics in specific ways over others (Schneider 2013). In light of this objective, the thematic method in this research is defined as one that 'unpicks or unravels the surface of reality,' (Braun & Clarke 2006:81).

As part of an overarching communication strategy of the CCP, CSFM and its themes are likely to appear across speeches in order to construct a consistent narrative. State-level communication efforts are reflective of an effort to stay "on message," and as such, speeches are commonly a re-iteration of a focused and repeated "message," (Skonieczny 2019:9).

Sophie Cheung

This layer of analysis draws inspiration from Skonieczny (2018) by organizing themes according to storylines. Themes signal larger storylines that comprise of an overall narrative strategy. Storylines are often explicitly referenced to by political leaders and invoke specific understandings. They create and maintain discursive order by allowing actors to draw upon categories, such as themes, to give meaning to phenomena. Storylines '[…] play a key role in the positioning of subjects and structures. Political change may therefore well take place through the emergence of new storylines that reorder understandings,' (Hajer 1995:56).

This process followed Neuendorf's (2002) proposal to code categories based on theory and previous studies. Themes and storylines were identified by referencing theories and literature from the first chapter. This step was further guided by Braun and Clarke's definition of what constitutes as a theme, which 'captures something important about the data in relation to the research question,' (Braun & Clarke 2006:82).

Themes and storylines that build the narrative of CSFM were identified with the aid of the computer software Quirkos. Formatted and designed for themes or nodes of analysis, Quirkos sorts and presents qualitative data in an organized manner. Each speech was reviewed and coded on Quirkos five times to identify recurring storylines, and their respective themes. Themes could belong to more than one storyline. Each theme did not have to be described in speeches in exactly the same manner, but the emphasized idea of the sentence/phrase needed to include one or more elements of the corresponding theme. To discern this, the preceding and following sentences were considered for contextual purposes (see Appendix 3). The final results of the analysis outlines how many times each theme is presented throughout speeches, signaling how present certain storylines are in the CSFM narrative. The following table outlines the identified storylines and respective themes of the CSFM narrative.

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

Table 2: Narrative Themes and Storylines (own data)

	Storylines					
Themes	**Global Governance Failure**	**Share Fate of the World**	**Chinese Wisdom & Solutions can Solve Global Governance Issues**	**Chinese Victimization/Anti-West**	**Increasing Chinese Presence and Power in the International System**	**China as a Champion of Multilateralism**
	World faces unprecedented challenges	Benefits and interests of all countries shared and intertwined	China's phenomenal progress and development	Unfounded and unfair critiques of China	China is reshaping global norms and values to its favour	Criticisms of unilateralism/bilateralism
	World must unite to face an uncertain future	Shared dream between China and other countries	China contributes to mankind by preserving peace or development	China is a fair, just and responsible power	Increased Chinese voice in international issues	Multi-polarization is the trend of the times
	Criticisms of Cold War mentalities, zero-sum thinking	Shared struggles and interests between China and developing countries	Chinese perspectives and proposals are needed	The West should not intervene in internal affairs of other countries	Increased Chinese soft power	World must unite to face an uncertain future
	Global governance reform is needed or desired	Shared struggles and interests between China and Asian countries	China wants to improve, not overturn the system	Chinese partnerships rather than U.S. alliances	China's phenomenal progress and development	The UN at the core of the international system
	Reform must be inclusive	Positive China-U.S. relations benefit everyone	Chinese traditions of peace and harmony		Chinese participation in multilateral platforms	Chinese participation in multilateral platforms
	Changes at the international level	Common interests between China and Europe	CSFM is warmly received by the international community			Multilateralism promotes peace and development
			New type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation			China wants to improve, not overturn the international system
			Chinese partnerships rather than U.S. alliances			China as a defender of developing countries

4.6 Types of Strategic Narratives

Once the storylines and related themes were established, a narrative approach was employed discern how these fit into a broader narrative of CSFM. To retell the CSFM narrative, the concept will be examined at three levels: international system, identity, and issue. Narratives at these levels can be interpreted as interconnected layers of meaning (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle 2017). This approach functions as a lens to discern how China understands the international system, its role within the system, and the global issues at hand. It is positioned as the last stage in the research process, as it incorporates and elaborates upon the descriptive layer (components of

Sophie Cheung

narrative), and analytical layer (themes/storylines of narrative), to achieve a final construction of CSFM. The table below outlines the types of strategic narrative.

Table 3: Types of Strategic Narratives (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle 2017:7)

International System	Identity	Issue
How the world is structured, who the players are, and how the system works. E.g. The Cold War	The story of who a political actor is, and what values/goals it has. E.g. The U.S. as a Champion of Democracy	Sets political actions in a context, with an explanation of who the important actors are, what the conflict or issue is, and how a course of action will resolve the issue.

5.   Findings and Analysis

As the analysis was designed and implemented to only count how many times each theme and storyline appeared, the corresponding data is presented in a purely quantitative manner. To account for the significance of these results in terms of CSFM socialization, the forthcoming section qualitatively situates these storylines and themes according to types of strategic narratives. It synthesizes themes and storylines found from the content analysis to account for how the CCP prescribes meaning to CSFM at the international system, identity and issue levels.

5.1 Presence of Storylines and Themes

Results from the content analysis show that all six storylines and their respective themes were present in all speeches about CSFM. Their occurrences are outlined in the table and graphs below.

Table 4: Presence of Storylines in CSFM Narrative (own data)

Storyline	Number of Appearances	% of Total Storylines
Chinese wisdom and solutions can solve global governance issues	193	31%
Liberal global governance is failing	130	21%
China as a champion of multilateralism	98	15.5%
Shared fate of the world	98	15.5%

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

Chinese victimization/anti-West	63	10%
Increasing Chinese presence and power in the international system	46	7%

Graph 2: Presence of Storylines in CFSM Narratives (own data)

Table 5: Chinese Wisdom and Solutions can Solve Global Governance Issues Storyline (own data)

Theme	No. of Appearances
China contributes to mankind by preserving peace or development	73
New type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation	21
Chinese partnerships rather than U.S. alliances	20
Chinese perspectives and proposals are needed	18
Chinese traditions of peace and harmony	17
China wants to improve, not overturn the international system	15
Peaceful Coexistence	13

Sophie Cheung

CSFM is warmly received by the international community	9
China's phenomenal progress and development	7
Total	**193**

Table 6: Liberal Global Governance is Failing Storyline (own data)

Theme	No. of Appearances
World faces unprecedented challenges	35
Changes at the international level	27
Criticisms of Cold War mentalities and zero-sum thinking	26
World must unite to face an uncertain future	15
Global governance reform needs to be inclusive	15
Global governance reform is needed or desired	12
Total	**130**

Table 7: China as a Champion of Multilateralism Storyline (own data)

Theme	No. of Appearances
The UN at the core of the international system	20
China as a defender of developing countries	17
China wants to improve, not overturn the international system	15
The world must unite to face an uncertain future	15
Criticisms of unilateralism/bilateralism	10
Chinese participation in multilateral platforms	9
Multilateralism promotes peace/development	7
Multi-polarization is the trend of the times	5
Total	**98**

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

Table 8: Shared Fate Storyline (own data)

Theme	No. of Appearances
Benefits and interests of all countries are common and intertwined	30
Shared struggles and interests between China and Asian countries	26
Shared struggles and interests between China and developing countries	24
Shared dream between China and other countries	9
Positive China-U.S. relations benefit everyone	6
Common interests between China and Europe	3
Total	**98**

Table 9: China Victimization/Anti-West Storyline (own data)

Theme	No. of Appearances
China is a fair, just and responsible power	21
Chinese partnerships rather than U.S. alliances	20
The West should not intervene in internal affairs of other countries	16
Unfounded and unfair critiques of china	6
Total	**63**

Table 10: China's International Presence and Power Storyline (own data)

Theme	No. of Appearances
Increased Chinese voice in international issues	15
Chinese participation in multilateral platforms	13
China is reshaping global norms and values to its favor	9

China's phenomenal progress/development	7
Increased Chinese soft power	2
Total	**46**

5.2 International System Narrative of Global Interdependence

CSFM is presented as an international system narrative of global interdependence, where the core theme of changes at the international level is linked to the storyline of a shared fate of the world. The CCP identifies changes unseen in a century as the 'shifting balance of power,' (Wang 2017a) and 'multi polarization and economic globalization,' (Xi 2015a). In the face of this, the 'interests of countries have never been so closely interconnected,' (Liu 2014).

Global interdependence is framed as an inescapable outcome of monumental changes at the international level. Here, the trend of globalization (increasing networks and flows) is what interlinks the interests of all, thus creating the condition of global interdependence. This notion is established in the opening paragraphs of almost all speeches by leaders (Wang 2019; Wang 2017b; Yang 2018; Li 2017; Xi 2017b; Xi 2015a). To support this shared fate storyline, officials often refer to the theme of a shared dream. By interlinking the fates and dreams of all, the CCP establishes a sense of interdependence between countries of the world.

As a key feature of the international system, interdependence outlines how relationships are interlinked in a way that the needs and desired outcomes of one party is contingent to some degree on the behaviour of others. Interdependence allows the system as a whole to function because of the interdependence of its parts (Coate, Griffen & Elliott-Gower 2015). In this context of interdependence, Beijing stands for mutual benefit and win-win-cooperation, through the development of economic globalization for common prosperity (Yang 2014). Interdependence is framed by Chinese leaders as a condition which requires reciprocal cooperation and common benefits, to attain desired results. Beijing's emphasis on shared interests and outcomes is largely focused on that of an economic nature, rather than those of an ideological or political basis.

In dialogue with Asian and developing countries, China emphasizes shared historical struggles, which are framed according to developmental and economic interests. China and Africa have 'similar sufferings and struggle in our histories and are faced with the same tasks of development,' (Wang 2019) and 'Asian countries [after the Cold War] were finally able to focus on development

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

and on exploring a path suited to their national conditions,' (Liu 2014). Through the theme of share struggles, China further pursues its effort since the 1970s to institutionalize its relations with developing countries. Cultivation of this relationship is further driven by how China views developing countries as the main force to build a more representative and equitable international order (Yang 2014).

To establish a shared fate with the U.S. and Europe, CCP leaders alter their approach by referencing contemporary economic interests rather than those which derive from developmental shared struggles. The 'economic relationship between China and the United States is, in essence, mutually beneficial, delivering many tangible benefits to people of both countries,' (Zheng 2018). 'China and Europe have continued to make fresh headway in the development of the partnership for peace, growth, reform…' (Wang 2017b). Here, Beijing's rhetoric aligns with its power diplomacy strategy of building strategic partnerships with big countries (Yang 2014). By emphasizing the shared fate of the world with reference to specific bilateral relations, historical contexts and diplomatic strategies, the CCP builds a narrative of global interdependence that is able to speak to all participants in the international system.

In this context of shared interests and fates, the CCP establishes a sense of uncertainty for the future, which equally affects all parties. 'People long for a bright future but are bewildered about what will come. What has happened to the world and how should we respond?' (Xi 2017b). Beijing builds a looming image of an unknown future, creating a sense of urgency to address destabilizing factors in the international system. In the system which 'has become more unstable, uncertain and unpredictable' (Yang 2018), Cold War mentalities and zero-sum thinking must be abandoned. Such attitudes are in conflict with processes of integration that characterize the current order. 'One must not cling to the Cold War mentality or zero-sum thinking since the times have changed' (Wang 2017c).

The call to replace zero-sum thinking is prescribed with a high degree of urgency when officials touch upon conceptualizations of how the international system is vs how it ought to be. These notions draw upon history, juxtaposing the outdated remnants of Cold War thinking with the present system of global interdependence, characterised largely by economic integration. 'Old security concepts based on the Cold War mentality, zero-sum game and worship of force are being overtaken by new trends of regional economic integration' (Liu 2014).

Sophie Cheung

Whilst speeches do not specify which actors are guilty of operating under Cold War mentalities, Beijing alludes to the U.S. as such an actor. The U.S, often regarded as the dominant power and leader of the current liberal international system, has received criticisms of zero-sum thinking by Chinese diplomats (e.g Xinhua 2019; BBC 2017). China's narrative of global interdependence asserts that 'no country has the right to monopolize international and regional security affairs,' and that 'all countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community' (Yang 2018). Within the Chinese proposed system of global interdependence, equality, mutual trust and justice are core values which are described as achievable only through the rejection of zero-sum mindsets.

Characteristics such as U.S.-style alliances are criticized in the international system narrative as they are features of the bipolar Cold War system and remain a 'central pillar of the liberal international system' (CSIS 2019). Beijing opposes such alliances, instead advocating for the alternative of partnerships which:

> 'spring naturally from China's independent foreign policy of peace...transcend the Cold War mentality of either with us or against us that created confrontation between opposing alliances and present the world with a new modality for developing state-to-state relations,' (Wang 2017c).

As a hallmark of contemporary Chinese foreign policy, partnerships are noted to be more conducive to progress and collaboration in a globalized world (Wang 2017a). They are a key feature in the CCP's big power diplomacy strategy, to shift towards non-alignment with big countries in the post-Cold-War era (Yang 2014). In comparison with U.S.-style alliances, partnerships are also more preferable as they are not bounded by treaty obligations and allow for cooperation with partners despite differences in ideology. By contrasting partnerships with the inefficient alliance system, Beijing officials put forth a vision of the global order in which the U.S. system of treaty alliances is absent (Tobin 2018). The international system narrative thus excludes long-standing features associated and put forth by the West, advocating for a system which instead features Chinese proposals.

In the context of global interdependence, the CCP highlights themes of changes, shared fates and dreams, uncertain futures and the need to abandon old Cold-War mentalities. These notions suggest the need for new global governance ideas, as a 'new era calls for a new mentality,' (Wang

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

2016). The international system narrative thus functions to set the context in which new ideas and solutions are required during a time of global interdependence.

5.3 Issue Narrative of Global Governance Failure

Drawing on the narrative of global interdependence in which the world is characterized by change and uncertainties, the CCP establishes an issue narrative of global governance failure. Whilst the international system narrative alludes to problems in the global order, the issue narrative explicitly labels the issue as the failure of liberal global governance to address 'uncertainties in the economic climate…non-traditional security threats and global challenges including terrorism, cyber security, energy security, food security, climate change, and major infectious diseases,' (Xi 2015b). There thus needs to be immediate "solutions," (Wang 2017b) "reforms," (Zheng 2018) and "conclusions and answers," (Wang 2017c). The narrative of global governance failure is constructed through its own storyline, along with the themes of unprecedented challenges, the desire for international system reform and a more inclusive reform. It further employs the storyline of Chinese wisdom and solutions, drawing upon the notion that Chinese ideas such as CSFM are needed to solve global governance failure.

The narrative of global governance failure is constructed through themes of desired reform and inclusive reform. Against the backdrop of global interdependence, 'countries are eagerly looking for solutions to such questions as how to uphold the post-war international order,' Wang 2016). These questions are framed in terms of the unprecedented challenges that have been left unresolved and equally impact members of the international community. Thus, 'the goal to achieve peace and development is far from being met. We need to respond to the people's call.' (Xi 2017b).

The demand for global governance reform is framed in terms of the fundamental inequality which exists in international relations, illustrated by the lack of 'representation and say of developing countries' (Yang 2018). Thus, reforms that 'serve the interest of developing countries' (Yang 2019) are required. Chinese leaders view that its role in this context is to 'play an active part in reforming and developing the global governance system' (Zheng 2018). In recent years, China has taken such action by for example, pushing for the revision of the institutional architecture of the International Monetary Fund, resulting in a greater voice for it and other emerging economies (Kastner, Pearson & Rector 2018).

Sophie Cheung

Beijing imagines a multilateral system featuring Chinese participation as the most appropriate course of action to reform global governance. Multilateralism is conceptualized as the coordination of policies between three or more states for the purpose of certain principles and burden-sharing. It is often characterized as a post-Cold War phenomenon, an embodiment of world multi-polarization, globalization and internationalization of challenges (Niu 2011). Specifically, a multilateral system centred around the United Nations (UN) is identified as one way to address the lack of representation in IR, allowing for an order that is not determined by might but by a set of rules that apply to all (Sidiropoulous 2019).

The CCP iterates that 'we must never allow the law of the jungle to rule the world, nor should we accept the zero-sum game that puts the weak at the mercy of the strong' (Wang 2019). Such statements reflect perceptions that the rules of the current system have been skewed against poorer countries (Sidiropoulous 2019). With reference to the desires for inclusive reform, China explicitly interlinks the 'need to unequivocally uphold the UN Charter,' with the safeguarding of 'the common interests of all developing countries and emerging economies, and, for that matter, international fairness and justice' (Wang 2019).

Positioning itself as a champion for inclusive growth and peace, China asserts that multilateralism is the answer to the 'important question of where human society should go,' (Zheng 2018). Multilateralism is situated as the way to promote peace and development and discussed in terms with another theme of multipolarization. Multipolarity increases voices in IR, checking the unilateral impulses of the U.S. and generating more stability than a current order which is dominated by a single American superpower (Li 2012).

Chinese emphasis on the role of smaller, developing countries is driven by the positive influence that such countries can have on creating a multipolar structure, to counter U.S. attempts to build a unipolar world (Yang 2014). Xi asserts that 'big countries should treat smaller ones as equals instead of acting as a hegemon imposing their will on others,' (Xi 2017b). Multilateralism thus facilitates the necessary cooperation in a system of interdependence that lacks equal representation and faces challenges due to global governance failure.

Beijing presents itself as a champion for multilateralism by drawing attention to its participation in platforms such as 'multilateral human rights committees,' (Li 2017) the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank (Xi 2015b). The AIIB, with China's 30% stake, is regarded as an alternative to Western-led multilateral financial

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

institutions, illustrating Chinese leadership in the reform and development of the multilateral system (Rosellini 2017). Such contributions are underscored as part of Chinese efforts to 'make the global governance system more just and equitable' (Yang 2019). In light of global interdependence and the rise of developing countries, Chinese contributions in this area provide developing countries with increased channels to address themes that they feel existing institutions are not tackling (Sidiropoulous 2019).

China strategically communicates a narrative of global governance failure by highlighting the serious challenges that the international community jointly faces. The themes of desired reform and inclusive reform refer to the failures of the current system to address challenges and changes at the international level. In this system, the ideational foundations of zero-sum thinking and unilateralism stand at discord with the current context of global interdependence. Along with ideational limitations, the CCP references the issue of unequal representation in IR, which reflects the inadequacies of the current system and drives desires for reform. Within this context, China notes the suitability of its ideas such as CSFM to address global governance failure. In a similar vein, China also champions for multilateralism to make IR more equitable and prevent the dominance of the system by one or several countries, such as the U.S.

5.4 Identity Narrative of China as a Responsible and Capable Leader

After strategically communicating a system narrative and issue narrative, Chinese officials put forth a narrative which conveys who China is and what its values are. The identity narrative establishes China as a responsible and capable world leader by highlighting the nation's contributions to peace and development, contextualizing such contributions in terms of China's increasing international power and presence. The CCP further employs themes that emphasize the value of its proposals for the international system by stressing its domestic developmental success and philosophical traditions of peace and harmony. Beijing additionally presents itself as a fair and just actor in IR, countering anti-Chinese narratives which misrepresent the nation as a hegemonic power. The identity narrative thus provides an elaborate account of how the leadership conceptualizes its identity and role in a system of global interdependence and governance failure, communicating their capability to lead at a time of uncertainty and interconnectedness.

The most coded theme in the discourse analysis was that which detailed China's contributions to the peace and development of mankind. On 73 occasions, leaders explicitly referenced China's 'significant contribution to world peace and development' (Zheng 2018). Against the backdrop of

Sophie Cheung

global interdependence and governance failure, Chinese contributions shape an image of China as a capable leader to meet rising challenges. In a similar vein, the CCP references the theme of China's phenomenal progress and development to further highlight its competence on the world stage. 'China has blazed its own path to strength and prosperity,' (Wang 2017c), growing 'from a poor and weak country to the world's second largest economy' (Xi 2017b). Here, success and progress are attributed to the uniqueness of the Chinese developmental path. This addresses critical conceptions that China should not 'follow its own path of socialism with Chinese characteristics...suited to its own conditions' (Wang 2017b).

Chinese progress is presented in terms of how Beijing's ideas 'are inspired by the fine traditions of the 5000-year Chinese culture emphasizing the pursuit of common good' (Wang 2017b). These values are described as something special that China offers to the world. As such, ideas like CSFM 'with distinct Chinese features' (Wang 2016) are received warmly by the international community. As a Chinese proposal for the reform of the international system, CSFM is framed as credible due to its foundation in wise, time-tested tradition.

Chinese propositions are presented as not only valuable for the international community, but also indicative of the nation's increasing power. China has 'a bigger voice and greater influence in the international arena' (Wang 2017c). For the CCP, this is partly due the circulation of Chinese ideas such as CSFM, which contribute to Chinese efforts to improve its soft power. 'These propositions have further enriched the core values of China's foreign policy and received wide recognition from the international community…they have become a hallmark of the soft power of socialist China' (Wang 2017c).

The emphasis on the wisdom of Chinese ideas and their increased global presence can be understood as part of CCP efforts at enhancing discursive power. Discursive power, held in conjunction with a broader ability to influence international structures, processes and institutions, can contribute to the development of soft power, crucial for China's comprehensive national power. Leaders invest in communication initiatives to shape favourable global discussions and improve understandings of China, which are often negative (d'Hooghe 2014).

The Chinese perspective also sees a dichotomy between the image of China presented by the West and the reality of China. To address this, the CSFM narrative communicates the theme of

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

unfounded critiques, situating them as a product of 'anti-China forces' (Li 2017) which are 'totally groundless,' and expose a 'lack of understanding about China' (Wang 2019).

Chinese conceptualizations note that the West possesses discursive hegemony and uses it to negatively describe Chinese behaviour with labels such as neo-colonialism and authoritative capitalism (Zheng 2013). In particular, critics have been wary that China's increasing infrastructure projects in Africa, such as the Belt and Road initiative, reflect its neo-colonialist ambitions rather than development-oriented ones. When referencing Sino-African relations, officials counter such notions by asserting that 'outside forces have attempted to vilify and undermine China-Africa cooperation by fabricating the so-called neo-colonialism and debt trap' (Wang 2019).

Other themes such as the one that emphasizes how China is a fair and just power function similarly to counter negative narratives. In addressing its relationship with Africa, officials emphasize that 'China upholds the principle of sincerity, real results, amity and good faith' (Yang 2019). China emphasizes its opposition to Western intervention, asserting that 'no interference will weaken our resolve to strengthen cooperation with Africa' (Wang 2019). The determination of Beijing leaders to increase their presence in the continent is driven by the belief that '…China's historical experience and development model resonate powerfully with African counterparts, thereby creating a comparative advantage vis-a-vis the West' (Morrison 2007).

The identity narrative also addresses fears about the implications of China's rise on the global order. Chinese interpretations of discursive power highlight that negative concepts like the 'China Threat' reflect the many 'doubts about China,' (Zhao 2016:545). In speeches, leaders explicitly stress that Chinese participation in global governance is 'not meant to overhaul the system or start a new structure, but to improve the current system' (Zheng 2018). Such definite statements reflect Beijing's attention to how it is regarded by the foreign public, who often express fears that China wishes to overturn the current order (Gilpin 1981). According to such conceptualizations, China will seek to alter the literal international system to increase its power and interests.

CCP officials rebuke these claims by asserting that China 'will firmly uphold the existing international system…[with] no intention to change or displace the United States' (Wang 2017b). The theme of China as a fair and just power is employed for this purpose, to assure observers that 'no matter how advanced it may become, China will never seek hegemony' (Yang 2018). Here,

Sophie Cheung

Beijing is a responsible stakeholder, working to sustain its position in the system that maintains its prosperity (Zoellick 2005).

China is searching for ways to expand its influence within the current system rather than directly attacking it (Ikenberry 2018; Zhang 2016). In line with this, the CCP constantly asserts that the 'global governance reform that China takes part in is not about overturning the current system and starting all over again. Instead, it is about improving the system so that it can better reflect the changing realities' (Yang 2018).

China presents itself as a responsible and capable world leader at a time of international uncertainty and change. It highlights the diverse ways in which it is working to sustain and improve the international order. Yet, it also puts forth themes that indicate desires to fundamentally change the current system. For example, speeches include notions of how Beijing 'takes initiatives to shape the new normal in our favour' (Xi 2015b) referencing 'rule-making in new areas' (Liu 2014) as a positive indicator of China's increased international presence and power.

Observers interpret Chinese reshaping of norms as indicative of efforts to overthrow the system rather than improve it. In human rights, China harnesses its influence in the UN to actively influence norms. Leaders work within the institution to establish values such as state sovereignty and the right to economic development rather than political and civil human rights (Okano-Heijmans & van der Putten 2018). CSFM is seen as a tool to achieve this, hiding '…a desire to reinforce orthodox interpretations of principles of national sovereignty and non-intervention… [and] undermine the legitimacy of international mechanisms to monitor human rights…' (Piccone 2018:7). Such accounts stand at odds with the image that China projects of itself 'the most positive factor in the evolution of the international system' (Wang 2017b).

These accounts contextualize Beijing's strong avocation for the UN in global governance Motivations are not purely rooted in the UN's 'universally recognized contribution to maintaining global peace and sustaining development,' (Xi 2017b). Rather, the UN helps China advance its interests and achieve its goal of acting as a responsible power through participation in UN affairs (Niu 2011:5).

By emphasizing China's international contributions and the phenomenal pace of its domestic development, the CCP shapes an image of China as a responsible and capable world leader. This

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

identity qualifies China to reform the international system. By linking the theme of Chinese wisdom and solutions with Chinese traditions of peace and harmony, the CCP projects Chinese proposals such as CSFM as viable solutions to current challenges. CSFM further allows the CCP to inject its values into global discussions, countering the discursive hegemony of the West and taking control of the story of China.

To construct the image of China as a responsible and capable leader, the identity narrative also addresses critiques of China as hegemonic and revisionist with a Chinese victimization/anti-West theme. This, and the consistent framing of Chinese proposals as valuable, underscore the increasing confidence of China on the world stage. However, certain discrepancies exist between China's projected identity vis-a-vi the CSFM narrative and actual practice. Here, CCP efforts to subvert certain global norms within multilateral institutions calls into question the legitimacy and value of CSFM as a solution to global governance failure.

5.5 Narratives in Dialogue

China's international system narrative of global interdependence relies on the shared fate storyline to describe how the world is changing as the futures and interests of all become increasingly intertwined. Changes arising from power shifts and globalization generate uncertainties, thus calling for international cooperation and new ideas for global governance. Whilst the international system narrative emphasizes a context of change, the issue narrative provides more detail by stating that the cause behind an uncertain and unstable future is the failure of the current liberal global governance system. The storyline of global governance failure also draws upon the system narrative of global interdependence to further stress how unprecedented and unresolved challenges affect all participants in the international system. With such high stakes, immediate solutions are required to tackle the inadequacies of liberal global governance. In this instance, the storyline of Chinese wisdoms and solutions is put forth to highlight how China possesses the answers to problems of peace and development which global governance has failed to resolve. The narratives of global interdependence and governance failure thus work together to create a sense of demand for solutions, with the identity narrative functioning to present China as the source for such solutions. Storylines of Chinese victimization/anti-West, increasing Chinese power and presence, and Chinese championing for multilateralism characterize China as the most capable actor to lead in a system which is interdependent and suffering from global governance failure.

Sophie Cheung

6.   Conclusion

This paper provided an in-depth examination of the CSFM vision and contextualized it according to Chinese thinking on the world order and its role within it. A narrative approach decoded CSFM to identify six prominent storylines with corresponding themes, all of which helped build an international system narrative of global interdependence, an issue narrative of global governance failure, and an identity narrative of China as a responsible and capable leader. To communicate such narratives, the CCP incorporated and framed a range of contextual, historical, cultural, political and theoretical concepts. Together, these concepts constitute a narrative that presents China as a leader in an interconnected global order that is failing to address unprecedented challenges.

As the focus of this research was on narrative construction, more diversified research approaches could increase understanding of how CSFM is received and the extent to which it truly reflects Beijing's conceptions of the global order. Since this research also relied exclusively on CCP speeches to decode CSFM and its underpinning ideas, its approach constitutes as a state-centred one. In the current international context characterized by a new media ecology, non-state actors have increasing influence in narrative formulation and reception, shaping a need to trace how narratives are presented across different outlets (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle 2017). Whilst the role of non-state actors may not be large due to the CCPs control over publishing, other studies could investigate into factors such as narrative reception, for example, through the study of Chinese netizen blogs. Future studies are likely to benefit from a perspective that recognizes how narratives can be constructed or received by different actors and channels.

Despite some shortcomings, the narrative approach in this research decoded CSFM to offer a window into the CCP's thinking about the world order and its role within it. Examining how Chinese slogans are built can generate insight into the image that Beijing seeks to project to foreign audiences. Further attention to concepts such as CSFM may also inform international observers about the impacts of China's newfound influence on the global order, better preparing them to engage with Chinese thinking.

China's Vision for Global Governance: A Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM)

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MAX PAUL GREVE-GAO

The Chinese Migrant Workers: Perspectives on Class Formation and Precarisation

ABSTRACT

This article investigates how the compatibility of class and precarisation can be conceptualised in the case of Chinese migrant workers. While the debate often centres around their collective actions, this article will take a broader look by compiling social, political and economic developments that promoted the emergence of the Chinese migrant workers. Taking Thompson's class concept as a theoretical point of departure, class is defined as a sociohistorical process. Katznelson's critical enquiry adds to the theoretical framework, as he offers a comparatively open approach by proposing an analysis on different conceptual layers. It is further argued that precarisation accompanies the class formation process, affecting the layers of structure and ways of life while evoking responses on the layers of dispositions and collective action. Following these theoretical investigations, the class formation process of migrant workers is retraced, examining the layers of structure and ways of life, the role of precarisation, and the dispositions and collective action of migrant workers as well as differences between new and old generations of migrant workers. Finally, a framework combining the concepts of class formation and precarisation provides a new understanding of China's contradictory transformation processes.

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The Chinese Migrant Workers:
Perspectives on Class Formation and Precarisation

By

Max Paul Greve-Gao[1]

1. Introduction: The Spectre of Class

In the more than 40 years since the Reform and Opening (*gaige kaifang* 改革开放), China's far-reaching transformations changed the country's social landscape. While the rhetoric of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) still centres around socialist values and language, there has been a noticeable turn in academia towards explaining the new social landscape from the perspective of social strata (*shehui jieceng* 社会阶层), rather than class (*jieji* 阶级) (Anagnost 2008:501–504). Except for the concept of a new Chinese middle class, often argued of being as much a political project of the CCP as a (for now) elusive reality, the analysis of strata is thus favoured (Guo 2009; 2012; Lin Chun 2015). While such an approach may allow the researcher to catch a glimpse of a highly diversifying Chinese society, the division of strata based on income levels, consumer preferences or occupational statuses cannot illustrate the whole process of capitalist transformation. [2]

A prominent example of China's far-reaching capitalist transformation and an expression of its ensuing contradictory economic and societal logic is the situation of its migrant workers.[3] Numbering 290 million, or one-third of China's labour force (National Bureau of Statistics 2020), they are subject to an ever-increasing amount of scholarship. Besides research into issues of health, living, and education, there is also a strand of labour research dedicated to the work situation of Chinese migrant workers. Often working in the lowest rungs of the urban labour markets, their integration into capitalist modes of production does not happen without a hitch, signified by their day-to-day individual resistance and occasional collective contention.

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[1] The author would like to thank Daniel Fuchs for his encouragement and guidance, as well as his editor and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful critique.

[2] The question of whether or in which degree the PRC is a capitalist nation is certainly a contentious issue. Debates swing between either praising neoliberalism's advance or glorifying China as one of the last hold-outs of socialism. More often than not, China is marked as an exception by unquestionably adopting the CCP's official definition of socialism with Chinese characteristics (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi* 中国特色社会主义). In contrast, this article adopts the viewpoint that 'it may be more appropriate to define Chinese capitalism in terms of long-lasting contradictions' (Peck & Zhang 2013:369) between a socialist legacy and capitalist reforms.

[3] In this article, the word migrant worker pertains to the rural-to-urban migrant workers within China (*nongmingong* 农民工).

Thus, over the years, a debate regarding the question of class emerged around this resistance. Lee's (2007) ground-breaking study looked at two forms of protest, including that of laid-off workers of state-owned enterprises (SOE) and that of migrant workers. Focusing on their articulatory practices during protests, she argues for different identities expressed by these two subjects. While migrant workers only possess the identities of citizens and masses, laid-off state-sector workers also possess class-based identities (Lee 2007:202). Chan (2012) criticises Lee's use of this concept because it reduces class to an identity that manifests itself in linguistic discourses and does not include the processes of capitalist integration. The qualitative and quantitative changes in migrant workers' protest do point to rising class consciousness in his view. In a more recent article, Lee (2016) argues against such an empowerment hypothesis. Rejecting voluntarist and subjective approaches, she rather wants to highlight how Chinese workers, embedded in their specific institutional and politico-economic context, are confronted by global tendencies of precarisation. In a critical response, Smith and Pun (2018) counter that her precarisation hypothesis only points out the fragmentation of the migrant worker class, and by using the notion of China's uniqueness posits it outside global capitalism.

Besides highlighting arguments for and against the definition of migrant workers as a class, these lively discussions introduced the concept of precarisation into the debate, which is itself a contentious issue, not least since Standing's (2011) proclamation of a new dangerous class called the precariat. While many scholars criticise and distance themselves from the much-contested notion of a global precariat (see e.g. Breman, 2013; Munck, 2013), precarisation in itself is nevertheless capable of being integrated into the concept of class.

Accordingly, the utility of the class concept combined with that of precarisation could stem from the possible explanatory power it has in illuminating another facet of China's contradictory and open-ended transformation process. And, as noted by Peck and Zhang (2013:366), the friction of importing an analytical approach or concept to China can very well be productive.[4] Thus, this paper poses the question: *How can the compatibility of class and precarisation be conceptualised?* This framework is then applied to the case of the Chinese migrant workers.

Primarily being a theoretical investigation, the following parts are based on the synthesis of a broad range of secondary sources. In what constitutes the main part of this article, the concepts of class

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[4] While Peck and Zhang (2013) mention this with regard to the varieties of capitalism framework, this reasoning is not bound to only apply to their specific case.

Max Paul Greve-Gao

and precarisation are elaborated. Alongside Katznelson's (1986) multi-layered class concept, which is in part inspired by Thompson's (1963) seminal work that investigated the history of the English working class, the concept of precarisation is discussed. It is shown that fitting precarisation to these authors' class concepts necessarily entails the theoretical broadening of precarisation. Subsequently, this theoretical framework is applied to the case of migrant workers in the PRC. Four layers on which class and precarisation are examined are discussed before reconsidering the analytical utility of class and precarisation in the conclusion which also provides an outlook on future issues.

2.   Theory: Conceptualising Class and Precarisation as a Process

First of all, the question of the applicability of Western concepts to a non-Western case should be discussed. Here, it is best to keep in mind the first two principles Sinha (1997) mentions in discussing the indigenization of social sciences in non-Western contexts. On the one hand, one needs to 'problematize and question the epistemological and methodological status of all social science categories' (Sinha 1997:176). On the other hand, it would be fruitful to 'embed social theorizing in the socio-cultural and political particularities of a region, without necessarily rejecting all Western input and contribution' (Sinha 1997:177).

Additionally, the characteristics of China's transformation process will help delineate further theoretical considerations. First, the contradictions inherent in this process call for a class concept taking into account the antagonisms and struggles generated by this very process. Second, the openness and historical recentness of this process draws attention to approaches which examine the formation rather than the definitiveness of classes. Thus, this article follows Pun and other researchers' (Chan & Pun 2009; Pun & Lu 2010; Smith & Pun 2018) proposition of using Thompson's and Katznelson's class formation framework in the following elaboration.

2.1. Point of Departure: Class as a Structured Process

The influence of E.P. Thompson's seminal work *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) on labour and social history, in general, is profound. While popularising history from the bottom up may be the book's main achievement, Thompson's critique of prevailing structuralisms and subsequent centring of experience in his class concept reworked our understanding of class. Yet his subjective and contingent concept of experience spawned allegations that he obscures objective determinants of class and categorizes every experience and action of subaltern classes as class-based ones. This viewpoint can be traced back to Thompson's belief that class consciousness is a

historical process in which the corresponding class is formed in the process of struggle (Wood 1982:46–47). He wants to highlight the danger of the all too simple equation that modes of production constitute classes, which disregards how first conditions the formation of the latter. Neglected by his critics[5] is the fact that Thompson only postulates that relations of production divide individuals into class situations (i.e. social relations) and, thus, '[c]lass formation and the discovery of class consciousness grow out of the process of struggle, as people 'experience' and 'handle' their class situations. It is in this sense that class struggle precedes class' (Wood 1982:49).

Consequently, conceptualizing class as a social relation and process emphasises the significance of objective relations vis-à-vis means of production as they generate antagonisms. Furthermore, these antagonisms manifest themselves in conflicts and structure social experience in class-like forms, even when they are not articulated in class consciousness and clear class formations. Lastly, the people on which the objective transformations of the productive and working relations are imposed are not blank slates, but historical beings, which are also to be understood across the continuities of the historical process of transformation. Thompson's historical beings are at the same time object and subject, recipient and agent of historical processes (Thompson 1982:58–59). Thus, the concept of class as a structured process can be presented schematically:

Graphic 1: Thompson's class as a structured process (own design)

| Relations of Production | → | Class Situations | → | Objective Antagonisms and Conflicts of Interest | → | Conditions for Class Struggle | → | Class Formation and Consciousness |
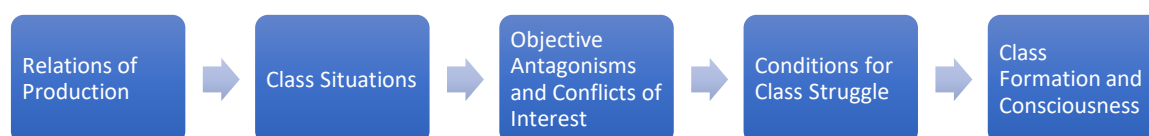
While in some cases introducing some remarkable innovations to a calcified notion of class, Thompson's concept is nevertheless firmly entrenched in his history of the early English working class. A remedy might be found in Katznelson's approach, which deals critically with Thompson's class concept and its influence on new social history. He consequently elaborates a more complex, but also more open framework allowing the analysis of class formations on a wider spectrum.

2.2. Adding Layers: The Variability of Class Formations
Katznelson's critique initially is pointed against (post-)Marxist approaches in general, which all too often use the class-in-itself/class-for-itself distinction without much reflection. There, structure, worldview, and organization of class are conflated, or latter arises determinedly from former

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[5] For an explication, constructive critique and amendment of Thompson's class concept see Sewell, Jr. (1990)

Max Paul Greve-Gao

(Katznelson 1986:7). In his view, Thompson intervenes here with his concept of class-as-junction between exogenous determinateness and endogenous agency and thus creates a new point of departure for social history. However, because of the prominent place of Thompson's work, a plethora of unreflective findings are subsumed under his class concept.

Katznelson (1986: 10-13) spots three deficits in this case: ironically, a weak version of the class-in-itself/for-itself model, the labelling of a lack of class consciousness as a deviation from the norm with the consequent creation of a theoretical alibi, and lastly, the polarisation of history and theory. These criticisms must be kept in mind, as Katznelson tries to differentiate his approach from them in the following explication: 'I suggest that class in capitalist societies be thought of as a concept with four connected layers of history and theory: those of structure, ways of life, dispositions, and collective action' (Katznelson 1986:14). On the first layer, the structure of capitalist development and its consequences, proletarianisation and exploitation, are analysed. As an analytical construct, it is experience-distant. Besides the similarities of capitalism, differences in the national economics and structures, for example demographics, cultural traditions or organisation of the state, are highlighted. Similarly, capitalist developments across different contexts are examined on the layer of ways of life, but here, the realisation of social formations is crucial. This layer is experience-near because class relations are lived and experienced in the spheres of production and reproduction. As this layer also includes economic elements, it appears natural to conflate it with the first, but one must keep in mind that capitalism can for example cultivate different types of workplace relations. The differentiation of these specific expressions is the task of this layer. On the next layer, groups with shared ways of thinking are analysed. Regarding dispositions, Katznelson states that '[s]uch cognitive constructs map the terrain of lived experience and define the boundaries between the probable and improbable' (Katznelson 1986:17). These dispositions are not congruent to class structures and ways of life but are rather an answer to the circumstances of the workers. Furthermore, since dispositions are interactive and transcend individuals, they can be understood as cultural configurations under which people act. Finally, dispositions can act as motivators for the layer of collective action. On this layer, groups attain organisation to, for example, consciously change their position in society.

With achievements on these four layers, does a group then constitute a class? This approach is not intended as an answer to this question. Rather, it can be used to investigate the formation of a class regarding the variability of the interdependent processes. Regarding different use cases, Katznelsons (1986:22) additionally notes that the content of these layers historically and

geographically varies, that the layers do not only have to be examined from a stringent class perspective and that the connections between layers are contingent. It is moreover helpful, as Dangschat (1998:56) notes, to see the layers of structure and ways of life as those on which the class structure is produced, while on the layers of dispositions and collective action the class formation is reproduced. This argument is reproduced in the following graphic:

Graphic 2: Katznelson's multi-layered class formation framework (own design)
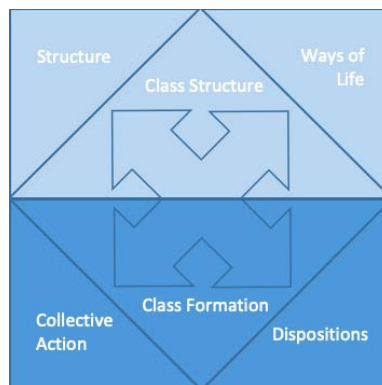
When comparing this graphic to the one associated with Thompson's class concept, the seemingly non-linear nature of Katznelson's approach is revealed. Thompson's work contains the belief that through the process of industrialisation followed by an inevitable proletarianisation of a large group of workers, these workers will politically challenge the status quo. Thus, his work 'bore the mark of the modernization theorists he aimed to critique' (Batzell et al. 2015:756). A similar critique can be levelled against Katznelson's concept, as he is still influenced by the same meta-narrative. Regarding clusters of class theories around the emergence of the English working class, Somers writes that '[e]ach theory takes as given the *same causes* – proletarianization and the impact of capitalist society. This leaves for empirical research only the historical variations of these unquestioned causes' (Somers 1997:79). Katznelson's class concept, too, is guided by this a priori causal argument.

Following this critique, this article wants to introduce the concept of precarisation, not to completely question the causes and effects of capitalist transformation, but to broaden and complicate this point of view. This involves an explanation and integration of precarisation into the concept of class formation.

Max Paul Greve-Gao

2.3. Precarisation: Effects and Responses

Precarious means, for one, to be "vulnerable to the will or decision of others" and, for another, it describes things, both material as well as immaterial, that are unstable, insecure or hazardous (OED Online 2020). The latter meaning was borrowed when, in the sociology of labour, the concept of precarious work gained prominence to highlight the recurrence of low-paying, socially insecure and temporary work in Western society (Dörre 2017:259). A notable elaboration was done by Castel (2000), who observed the erosion of "traditional" employment and divided the society into zones of (in)security. Regarding labour markets and work processes, precarious work was more narrowly defined as a mechanism of control, while Bourdieu (1998) saw precarity in a broader sense as an instrument of power used by the existing political order.

Precarious work is often understood as a deviation from a real or imagined standard of employment, in terms of material, working and legal standards of integration. This orientation towards a supposed standard is shared with the concept of informal work (Mayer-Ahuja 2017), which would explain its often-interchangeable use in literature. For example, Kuruvilla, Lee and Gallagher (2011:4) speak of an 'accelerated transition into precarious informal employment' in the context of China. While informal work should not be subsumed under precarious work, as former could also consist of relatively stable employment which is simply out of the view from government tax authorities, gradual informalisation, for example through a multi-layered subcontracting system, may well be counted as an important factor of precarisation.

Not only the roots but also the consequences of precarisation and how it is defined are different in non-Western countries (Lee 2019). Colonialism, imperialism, authoritarianism, and uneven development in general influence the local occurrences of precarity in specific ways (Lee & Kofman 2012). In addition, conditions of precarity may be institutionalized by state regulations and laws, and lead to a country-specific or even locality-specific development of precarious work (Pang 2019). Thus, even if the global entanglements of capitalism draw attention to precarisation as a global phenomenon (Sproll & Wehr 2014:8), the local outcomes must be analysed in detail.

Lastly, it needs to be considered how precarisation fits into the process of class formation. As staunchly argued by Palmer (2014), the claims of a new precariat class are hardly tenable. Taking a historical perspective, he argues that precarisation always follows the class formation process (Palmer 2014:49). Yet he closely links precarisation to dispossession from which proletarianisation arises. This view may prove to be more restrictive than helpful, especially when one looks at the

diversity of class formation processes. This article proposes that precarisation must be investigated on each of the four layers of class formation. While the layers of structure and ways of life mainly analyse the effects of precarisation, the layers of dispositions and collective action are concerned mostly with responses to it. Thus, precarisation is a constant companion of class formation but is also challenged by its recipients, effectively being changed in the process (Sproll & Wehr 2014:5).

What follows now is an application of this framework to the case of the Chinese migrant worker. In the first block, structure and ways of life are analysed, then the effects of precarisation are discussed. After that, dispositions and collective action are examined with special attention granted to the responses to precarisation.

3. Retracing the Migrant Workers from a Class Formation Perspective

3.1. Structure

On the layer of structure, this article aims to retrace three developments which especially influence the emergence and class formation of migrant workers: (1) the structural release of Chinese farmers, (2) the particularities of the developmental system, and (3) the intensifying of the rural-urban divide and the *hukou* (户口) system. These developments in the objective structures in favour of capitalist developments in today's China are located in the Reform and Opening period which is considered a break with the socialism of the Mao era, and began after the reformers gained power in the face of crisis phenomena, such as the slowing down of industrial growth, political leadership battles after the death of Mao, and the growth of social resistance (ten Brink 2013:103).

(1) The Structural Release of Chinese Farmers

The transformation of rural China was the basic prerequisite to the emergence of the migrant workers. Before the reforms, agricultural work was generally administrated in collectives. The introduction and enforcement of the household responsibility system transferred the land use rights, as well as profits and risks onto the household. Even though rudimentary welfare still existed under this system of "full responsibility" (Zweig 1997:57), the main burden and livelihood security shifted from the collective to the household and its farmland. The rural household effectively became, except for the state grain quota (abolished in 2006), a free-market actor and was able to freely allocate its resources, including its labour-power. This not only led to an enormous growth in production, but also to the release of large swaths of the agricultural labour force. These parts of the labour force were initially absorbed by the then burgeoning township and village enterprises (TVE), but in the late 1990s their expansion stagnated (Chan 2016:129–130).

Max Paul Greve-Gao

This stagnation was met by a policy change of the central state regarding rural-to-urban migration, allowing local states to manage their migration restrictions. Yet, cities in the late 1990s also suffered from high unemployment rates stemming from the restructuring of SOEs. Therefore, restrictions by the local government helped to channel the migrant workers in the low-paying and low-prestige jobs which were shunned by the urban population (Li 2010:6).

(2) Particularities of the Development Model

These developments must be seen in tandem with the particularities of China's reform model. Inspired by the East Asian development model[6], and later alerted by the negative effects of the "Big Bang" economic liberalisation in Russia and some of its former bloc states, a gradual and initially on special economic zones (SEZ) confined process of capitalist development took place, called 'gradualism with growth' (Gallagher 2005:9).

One distinctive feature of this process lies in the centrality and early liberalisation of foreign direct investment (FDI) (Kroeber 2016:14). The high volume of FDI is a special case of the East Asian development model, as it normally took place without great foreign participation in the market. According to Gallagher (2005:6), FDI had three functions in the Chinese restructuring process. First, it exerted competitive pressure vis-à-vis SOEs, which consequently introduced capitalist work practices. Second, FDI and the foreign sector served as laboratories of reform through which the reform process could be gradually pushed forward. Third, an ideological reinterpretation took place. Public ownership was reinterpreted as national ownership so that competitiveness could be made imperative.

In this view, FDI might have exerted two influences in the early reform process. For one, foreign capital inflows helped in building capitalist production sites in China, in which first and foremost migrant workers are exposed to the real subjugation of capital. On a larger scale, FDI played an outstanding role in the tight integration of China with the global market in the form of an 'extrovert economy' (So 2010:100) and thereby facilitated the formal subjugation of China and its workers under global capitalist rationale.

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[6] The East Asian development model describes those East Asian capitalist economies in which a strong central directs the economy and invests in specific sectors to boost their growth. Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan are often mentioned in relation to this model (White & Wade 1988).

(3) Urban-Rural Divide and the Hukou System

The selective investment of FDI in state chosen SEZs and their surrounding provinces heightened China's regional disparities. Coastal provinces such as Jiangsu or Guangdong received respectively 7.6 and 12.7 per cent of their regional GDP in FDI during the high tide of foreign investment (1993-2002), while the capital inflow for inland provinces amounted to only 1.4 per cent (Naughton 2018:426). FDI was mainly invested in the export-oriented light industry, which required vast labour resources, found in the poorer inland provinces.

Here, state regulations come into play by facilitating a migration regime through its *hukou* system, thereby utilising these structures of inequality. The *hukou* system which divided the population into urban and rural people by linking an individual's household registration with social welfare, such as food stamps in the urban areas, and agricultural subsistence in rural ones, has been gradually relaxed. While the decentralization of the *hukou* system shifted the primary distinction to one between local and non-local *hukou*, the system still disfavours the migrant workers. In most cases, they do not attain the strict criteria for a local *hukou* status and the social welfare that accompanies it (Chan & Buckingham 2008:595–596).[7]

Thus, the toleration of migrant workers without their effective integration in the cities' welfare system allows for the separation of production and reproduction spheres, and the passing on of costs to the institutions in their hometowns or the workers themselves. As a result, the state and market are each tightly interwoven in respectively supplying and demanding cheap labour for the urban areas. On the structural layer, the dualisation of the Chinese economy continues. Yet what differs from the Mao era is the emergence of a labour force caught between the rural and the urban spheres based on accumulation without expropriation.

3.2. Ways of Life

The changes and continuities on the layer of structure are reinforced by the actual development of capitalist society at and away from work, namely the production and reproduction spheres in which migrant workers reside. On the layer of ways of life, this article thus wants to highlight (1) the peculiar connections between these spheres in the case of migrant factory workers, and (2) the reliance on kinship and hometown ties.

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[7] This picture might become more complicated when looking at differences between larger cities and small towns. While the larger cities are still major destinations, smaller cities are also host to large swathes of migrant workers. Garcia (2011), for example, argues in her work that small towns may be more effective in their social inclusion of migrants.

Max Paul Greve-Gao

(1) Disconnecting and Reconnecting Migrant Workers' Regimes of (Re)Production

The duality upheld by the *hukou* system is reflected in the peculiar separation and concurrent fusion of production and reproduction, which is exemplified most vividly by the 'dormitory regime' (Pun & Smith 2007:30).

The migrant workers who are producing goods for the international, as well as the domestic market, in China's factories are subjugated to a harsh system of production. The fast-growing demand for flexible production calls for flexible labour-power, which is supplied by the migrant workers. But flexible production is no trend specific to China and migrant workers. What makes the situation of a great margin of migrant workers different from other workers is the connection of flexible production with the accommodation of the workers within the closed factory complex, and the consequent extension of control mechanisms onto the domain of labour-power reproduction. The example of Foxconn[8], the world's largest provider of electronics manufacturing services, illustrates this. First, looking at the domain of production, the long hours and high work intensity must be highlighted. Pay is low, and thus overtime work is required to receive adequate pay – a common theme in Chinese manufacturing. The workers are integrated into production in a standardised manner (Deng, Jin & Pun 2013:58), leading not only to the alienation from their work, but also to fragmentation among themselves, as each of them has only small tasks in the production chain.

The tightly controlled regime of production is complemented by a dormitory system, in which the workers are even denied their respite from work, as they are constantly monitored and disciplined. Thus, the dormitories can be seen as the extension of their workbenches (Liang, Bao & Lu 2013:88). Controls are almost as strict as they are in the production facilities. Workers from the same hometowns or even province are divided into different rooms or dormitories. Their freedom is systematically limited by the ordering of "voluntary" work, and the (moral) supervision of workers is widened by prohibiting drinking, smoking, gambling, and visits from the opposite sex (Liang, Bao & Lu 2013:88–92, 96–99). On the spatial and social dimension, this regime of (re)production thus contributes to a new type of alienated urbanism (Yang 2014) in Chinese cities.

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[8] The Taiwanese electronics giant is part of another facet of China's integration into the global capitalist economy. Especially in the beginning, large parts of foreign investments came from economies operating in close cultural proximity to China. While investments arrived from Taiwan and Hong Kong, the new capitalist class in China funnelled their profits back through them, explaining the considerable weight of these economies for "foreign" investment in China. So, Lin & Poston (2001) provide in their collection more in-depth examinations of further connections.

(2) Hometown Networks

Even outside of the confines of the factory complex, spatial and institutional exclusion highlights migrant workers as an outlying group. They often congregate in the urban periphery or urban villages – rural enclaves surrounded by the sprawling city. There they find grey areas of healthcare and schooling for their children, as high fees often exclude them from both. Besides the formation of a dual labour market, the dualisation of Chinese cities also takes their course. Yet these "modern" ways of exclusion are also crisscrossed by social ties established in migrant workers' hometowns (Pun, Lu & Zhang 2016; Swider 2014).

The continuing dependence on their hometowns is not only stemming from their institutional exclusion at their destinations but is also a product of the enduring reliance on social networks in finding and organising work. Construction workers may be the best-investigated example because it shows how this reliance coincides with an exploitative mode of production (Pun, Lu & Zhang 2016:123).

The construction industry in China is characterised by a multi-layered system of subcontractors, with migrant workers employed as construction workers under the leadership of a petty labour contractor being situated on the lowest tier (Pang 2019:555). The contractors recruit the workers mostly from their hometowns and lead their work on the construction site. At the end of the contract, they pay out the wages, which is usually done just before Chinese New Year, when the workers migrate back to their villages. Besides the subcontractor system, these hometown networks disguise the relationship between capital and labour and divide the construction workers by their hometowns. While the relations of production on the site of work are still discernible, the borders become less clear after returning. In their hometowns, the kinship norms and relations are emphasised more strongly. This often leads the workers to forego open confrontations with their contractors, which are sometimes friends or family, to save the face of both parties (Pun, Lu, & Zhang 2016:118–123). Here, capitalist processes are overlapping with non-capitalist practices and intensify the exploitation of and divisions between the construction workers (Pun, Lu & Zhang 2016, p. 139).

In contrast, Swider (2014:50) compares this type of 'intermediary' employment with 'embedded' employment. Latter is based on the high rate of interaction in urban migrant enclaves, wherein new networks are built. Besides hometown networks, migrant workers may utilise these new networks

to change employment and thereby expand and branch out their networks. This adds to the formation of a more intertwined migrant worker class.

3.3. Endemic Precarisation: The Case of the Labour Law

Capitalism in China, just as in the rest of the world, entails the precarisation of one or more segments of workers. The class-formation process of the migrant workers was and still is accompanied by precarisation by both state and capital. While migrant workers did not experience the departure from the urban standard employment, meaning the transition from the social(ist) contract to the individual labour contract, they are the recipients hit most strongly by precarious employment, which may define a new normal.

This article furthermore argues that the distinctiveness of China's *hukou* system suggests an inherent potential for precarisation, which is brought into action through uneven development and subsequent migration, as social security is mostly *hukou*-based. Besides urban marginalisation and institutional exclusion, the temporary character of their migration is forced by the state and can only be partially covered by non-state mechanisms of integration, such as hometown networks. The *hukou* system separates the productive from the reproductive sphere and thereby instils uncertainty into the working and living conditions of migrant workers at their destinations.

The state is conscious of the immense growth of social inequality and the issues this has for social stability. When looking at reforms and policies enacted by the state, included in them are also measures aiming to socially and legally protect migrant workers in particular. Yet these measures only lead to marginal changes in favour of migrant workers. Simultaneously, new tendencies of precarisation develop in reaction. The deep-seated problems, which prohibit substantial change, can be exemplified with the labour law reforms of 2008-09 (see e.g. Gallagher & Dong 2011).

To remedy the widespread lack of labour contracts and employment rights of migrant workers, the labour law reforms aimed at providing these rights, albeit only in the individual sense. Collective employment relations, which constitute the core issue through which migrant workers could assert their rights, were therefore not addressed (Chang & Brown 2017:39). Now, just as before, collective bargaining only takes place after migrant workers articulated their interests through strikes and protests. Afterwards, the state, in using the only legal union, the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), takes charge of the bargaining without much input from the affected. The more or less organised migrant workers are thus side-lined. 'In a legal sense, the workers are the

responsive aspect of labour, while the union is the authorised aspect' (Chang & Brown 2017:41), with no effective linkage between the two. The migrant workers are thus deliberately alienated from politics of labour.

The legislative process of the Labour Law Reforms in itself also showed to what extent the state acknowledged the interest of capital as hegemonic (Friedman & Lee 2010:528). A novelty was the involvement of public opinion in the legislative process. Besides many suggestions by NGOs, academia, and workers, global as well as national capital formed up to resist the, on paper strict, standards (Gallagher & Dong 2011). While they did not succeed in preventing the law, capital succeeded in considerably limiting its reach, which is also partly owed to the state's concessions in wake of the global economic crisis.

Although the formalisation of employment relations must be seen as a big step forward, it does not hide the growth of new tendencies of precarisation. Immediately following the Labour Law Reforms, an increase in temporary work practices was observed (Kuruvilla, Lee & Gallagher 2011:2–3). According to the state union, the total number of temporary workers grew to 60 million by the end of 2010, which is a 20% increase (Zhang 2014:56). This also highlights the need to distinguish between the concepts of (in)formalisation and precarisation, as formalisation might not lead to a less precarious workforce.

3.4. Dispositions

The experiences of migrant workers are complex and are embedded in productive, cultural-social and spatial-temporal contexts. The interpretation of experiences by migrant workers themselves must also be examined. Experiences are furthermore shaped by discourses[9], which in course of their use are continuously reworked and contested. This part highlights (1) discourses of modernity in relation to self-development narratives, as well as (2) prospects for solidarity among migrant workers in collective dispositions.

(1) Modernity and Self-development

The transition to a more or less developed market economy was accompanied by a departure from Maoism. 'New allegories of modernity' (Rofel 1999:29) promised a departure from the retrospectively viewed economic and cultural backwardness of that era, while the alignment to

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[9] A discourse for the purpose of this article, and in loose reference to Foucault's (1981) concept of discourse, is basically defined as a structure of knowledge which, to a certain degree, dictates ways of experiencing one's individual surroundings, thus influencing one's thought and action.

Max Paul Greve-Gao

global modes of production promised wealth and power. The official discourse distanced itself from the Maoist egalitarianism and collectivism and turned towards the individual as the engine of modernity instead (Rofel 1999:101). Furthermore, a discourse about the quality of the population (*renkou suzhi* 人口素质) allowed to ascribe the growing inequality between urban and rural China to its people, obscuring structures of inequality, as well as creating hierarchies and evaluations leading to the decentring of the worker subject (Florence 2007:124) and degradation of the rural population.

The migrant workers' dispositions are oriented towards these hegemonic discourses, but also challenge them. For example, Jacka (2005) has collected and analysed different narratives from members of the Migrant Women's Club, finding strong narratives of individual self-development. These individual narratives are sometimes interrupted by the articulation of protest in face injustices and indignity experienced by the migrants. One side of the coin is the act of speaking bitterness (*suku* 诉苦), in which they contrast their urban experience of migration and the new social order with their as more favourable perceived rural past.[10] The other side is the utilisation of a burgeoning rights discourse to protest their working and living conditions (Jacka 2005:274–275).

Two conflicting tendencies are combined in their dispositions: the wish for self-fulfilment in the cities, and the resulting disillusion over the impossibility of this task (Florence 2007:131). This process happens under the influence of the state discourses about individual entrepreneurship and modern development. Thus, many migrant workers are describing their experiences as a hardening process, in which only individual will and effort counts (Florence 2007:132). Yet the development discourse is also appropriated and ironically subverted, for example, in poems, and the rights discourse is contrasted with the experienced reality of the Chinese justice system. In both cases, the experiences are situated in the broader reality of migrant workers (Florence 2007:141).

(2) Work and Solidarity

In another way, based on Pun's (2005:132) characterisation of the workplace as microcosm and point of (re)production of the dual society, shared dispositions might indicate collective characteristics discernible within the group of migrant workers. Here, the direct reaction to their

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[10] In contrast, Li claims that migrant workers' way of speaking 'differs from speaking bitterness because these speech patterns appear primarily in informal, private settings, while speaking bitterness rituals were state-sponsored public speech acts' (Li 2016:49). Yet Li (2016) also retorts that these speech practices are incorporated more and more into migrant workers' cultural productions such as poems and music.

positioning in the relations of production and their growing awareness of their position vis-à-vis other social groups are of importance.

The case study Foxconn showed that the fragmentation and isolation at and away from work takes an enormous toll on the migrant worker. Most often, they are additionally pressured by their social responsibility for their families (Chan 2002:176–178). Pun and Lu (2010) also diagnose the migrant workers they researched with a diffuse state of anger, which does not only appear to result from their position in the relations of productions but their social position as a whole. In the same vein, resignation or the belief in the temporary nature of their lot is widespread, too. Often, the wish 'to be their own bosses' (*ziji dang laoban* 自己当老板) is articulated (Ling 2015:130). This appears to be the antithesis of solidarising dispositions.

Yet migrant workers may find a sense of solidarity in their dissociation from other groups. Guang (2005), for instance, highlights that migrant workers' use of the word *dagong* (打工) for work (and also through the imposition of society) dissociate their temporary, unregulated and low-paying work with that of urbanites, who do *gongzuo* (工作), "regular" work (2005:497). Zhang's (2014) research into the automobile industry gives further insights. The segmentation into the regular workforce and temporary workers, of which the latter consist of mostly migrant workers, generates a strong sense of injustice among the latter. They are paid less and often take on dangerous and strenuous work. The reasoning of the management that temporary workers perform similar, but qualitatively different work clashes with experiences on the shop floor and strengthens resentments. The low chance to attain the far more stable regular employment consolidates the perception of this group as a self-contained workforce (Zhang 2014:149–152). Thus, in the narrower setting of the relations of production, the migrant workers may understand themselves as a cohesive "we" through their shared experiencing and handling of injustices.

3.5. Collective Action

The contentious issue of the debate outlined in the introduction centres around a potential qualitative change in the strikes and protest of migrant workers and its relation to the migrant workers as a class.[11] This article (1) retraces these strikes and protests, then (2) discusses the state's

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[11] For an excellent quantitative overview of social unrest in China, which also highlights the dominance of labour-related protests see Goebel (2019). For a broad overview of the characteristics of migrant worker strikes in manufacturing from the 1990s until 2010 see (Ling 2016:5-25).

Max Paul Greve-Gao

reactions and NGO involvement, and lastly (3) highlights the migrant workers' reflection on their own strike actions.

(1) Discussing Migrant Worker Strikes

Strikes can have different reasons. The most prevalent reason has been and still is the non-payment of wages. Especially in the construction industry, wage arrears are rampant (China Labour Bulletin (CLB) 2018:6–7). With the partial relocation of the manufacturing industry from the coastal to the inland provinces, factory closures and lay-offs are becoming more prevalent. Here as well, outstanding compensations play a big part in migrant worker strikes. Besides these defensive strikes, migrant workers gradually articulate more offensive demands, mostly an increase in wages (CLB 2018:15). Political demands, such as calls for democratic union elections, are more often than not side-lined, as 'state and union at all levels maintain a steadfast dedication to the isolation of political from economic struggles' (Friedman 2014:160). All in all, as migrant workers try to assert what is theirs, a transition from rights-based to interests-based protests can be observed (Lin, Kevin 2015:82).

Collective action undertaken by migrant workers is often spontaneous and without leadership. The reluctance to choose worker representatives comes from the fact that enterprises often target these representatives (Ling 2016:13). Hence, collective demands are only ineffectively conveyed. Migrant workers' economic situation and lack of welfare state coverage also do not allow them to prolong the strikes and pressure on enterprises. This has implications for cross-factory strikes. Although strikes can spread like wildfire across factories, as the 2010 Nanhai Honda strike wave displayed (Chan & Hui 2012:662), cross-factory organisation was and is still not given. Yet singular strikes show a higher degree of organisation. For example, before initiating a strike in a Guangzhou shoe factory, 'workers had completed a multi-layered democratic process of organising, electing their representatives, establishing media liaison teams, a solidarity fund administrative team as well as a security team' (CLB 2018:17; for a more detailed account see CLB 2015). Such developments are worth mentioning, but strict regulations on collective organisations beyond the state's purview are constricting any organisations outlasting the immediacy of struggle.

(2) The State's Reaction and NGO Involvement

When looking at the central state's reaction to the migrant workers' collective actions, one can make out a legislative rush, which culminated in the already mentioned labour law reforms. This partly led to the isolation of collective into individual conflicts by legal means but failed at

eliminating conflicts (Friedman & Lee 2010:533). Also, the only legal Chinese union, the ACFTU is seen by migrant workers as just another instrument of state control and without any legitimacy. The often-propagated reforms of this quasi-state authority and the forceful expansion of union bureaus in enterprises did neither change the top-down approach, nor the overall effectiveness of the union, as the Chinese state still operates with socialist methods in a post-socialist world (Friedman 2014:16).

Can NGOs fill these gaps? Unlike the state union, they often take on legal cases involving migrant workers, which appear to be lost causes or are deemed politically sensitive. However, besides attending to their legal needs, their hands are mostly tied when it comes to the organisation of migrant workers. Fu (2018:3) argues here for a 'mobilisation without the masses' under a regime of flexible repression. NGOs only have three options: micro-collective actions of symbolic nature, atomised actions, which articulate complaints and force the state to act, and discursive actions, which try to construct a counter-narrative (Fu 2018:20–21). At all times, NGOs are caught between the dilemma of state incorporation and repression. In the end, migrant workers are largely to rely upon themselves. Then, how are migrant workers experiencing and reflecting upon their collective actions?

(3) Effects of Strikes on Migrant Workers

Through examining worker narratives (Ren 2016), migrant worker's reactions and reflections can be identified, which point to the effects of strikes on the migrant workers' sense of their situation vis-à-vis capital. First, migrant workers become aware that they have potential as a collective and change their minds regarding this (Ren 2016:92–93, 144). Second, the importance of collective discussions and collective pressure during bargaining becomes apparent to them (Ren 2016:74, 195–196). Third, their organisational skills grow throughout the strike, and they realise the importance of networks for their work environment (Ren 2016:92–93, 210). Fourth, their attitude towards labour law stays ambivalent. While some state that they attained a deeper understanding of the laws (Ren 2016:195–196, 210), others believe with a growing disillusion that the law only applies to the rich and powerful (Ren 2016:83, 182). Fifth, migrant workers show a remarkable degree of solidarity. They collectively resign or try to block the arrest of their strike leaders and try to compensate them after they are fired by the management (Ren 2016:123–124, 169–170). And lastly, if individual lines of production organise a strike, this often awakens the interest of other lines and their strike experience is consequently shared (Ren 2016:105).

No clear answer can be given as to how these reflections may have been embedded into a broader notion of class. However, as the migrant workers' reflections about their own strike actions have just shown, in the course of a strike or protest, when capital, often working together with the state's security apparatus, is confronted, a heightened sense of antagonism towards the exploiter and of solidarity among migrant workers is apparent.

3.6. Old Structures and New Perceptions of Precarisation

Living and working in the cities, the migrant workers experience and handle the uncertainties of their temporary migration on a daily basis. They are aware of the deep divisions existing between the rural and urban sphere, and experience antagonisms at work closely mirroring these divisions. Yet the perception of their precarious position is not constant but changes over time. Therefore, this research argues that migrant workers' changing perception of their precarisation leads to a realignment of their dispositions and shifting boundaries of possibilities.

Expectations regarding migration, work, life and their future come into conflict more openly with their uncertain work and life situation, which is best exemplified with regard to the "old" and "new" generation of migrant workers. This distinction is based on differences in education, household structure, farm experience, job preferences and urban integration (Fan & Chen, 2013). Concerning strikes and protest, stronger consciousness about rights and class is sometimes attributed to the new generation, but this is debatable (Franceschini, Siu & Chan 2016; Lee 2016:326). However, with both generations experiencing continuous precarisation in their own ways, the shifts in their normative framework may have implications for the process of class formation.

The old generation of migrant workers has closer ties to their rural hometowns and more agricultural experience. Periodic economic stagnation or harvest push them to return, and thereby contribute to the consolidation of these ties. While some NGO reports (Landesa 2012) highlight illegal land transfers and inadequate compensation, and a trend towards leasing of agricultural land to big agricultural enterprises can be observed, it must also be noted that rural land ownership is quite resilient in the Chinese context (Zhang & Donaldson 2008:44).

Furthermore, a growing portion of old generation migrant workers is nearing retirement age and is now confronted with questions concerning insurance and pension payments. The Yue Yuen strike in Guangdong in 2014 showed the rising relevance of this for older migrant workers. Following the non-payment of social insurance contributions, more than 40.000 workers went on

strike, the core of which consisted of mostly older migrant workers worrying about their future security (Schmalz, Sommer & Xu 2016). While agreeing with Lee's (2016:329) argument that the institutional structures subjugating the migrant workers did not change in broad ways, this article argues that the Yue Yuen strike shows a growing awareness in older migrant workers about their precarisation by capital and state. With more and more migrant workers not willing or not able to move back to their farmland, because they either perceive no opportunities or lost their farmland in course of expropriation or long-term leases, this awareness and possible resistance might grow stronger.

Although the new generation of migrant workers may face similar problems in the future, they differ from the older generation regarding consumption patterns and future planning. Furthermore, as they migrate earlier and have less or no agricultural experience, the problem of integration at their destinations grows even more prominent. Their dispositions are changing in the sense that they adopt an urban way of life and attempt to integrate themselves more strongly (Yue et al. 2010:546). However, this also means that they confront their continuing exclusion and marginalisation in the cities more strongly. Thus, Smith and Pun conclude that the 'new generation of migrant workers realized they will always be considered second class citizens by urban governments' (Smith & Pun 2018:607–608).

He and Wang (2016:76) attenuate this argument in their study – not new, but old generation migrants feel more strongly about the social inequalities in the city. At the same time, new generation migrant workers' attitudes and responses towards their precarisation by capital and state are changing. This is respectively indicated by their higher job expectations and consequently more and quicker changes of employment (jumping feeding troughs [*tiaocao* 跳槽] or voting with one's feet [*yi jiao toupiao* 一脚投票]) (He & Wang 2016:86), and their wish to rather relocate to smaller towns due to more lenient *hukou* regulations (He & Wang 2016:83).

While maybe not as eye-catching as their participation in offensive strikes, such as the 2010 strike wave, these choices emphasises the need to examine new and old migrant workers' handling of their precarisation in broader ways.

4. Conclusion: Future Prospects for Chinese Migrant Workers

This article aimed to show that the concept of class formation can be reconceptualised in relation to global trends and their local manifestations, expressed here by precarisation. By examining the

Max Paul Greve-Gao

case of Chinese migrant workers, the need to focus on a plethora of interrelations becomes apparent.

First of all, this article argued that there exists a reciprocal relationship between structures – the combination of an export-oriented, uneven regional development project, a massive surplus of labour-power, and the state-sanctioned exploitation and segmentation at and away from work – and ways of life.

Additionally, these developments go hand in hand with changes in discourses. Here, a look at the migrant workers' dispositions reflects the contradictory nature of China's capitalist transformation. On the one hand, they incorporate and utilise discourses about individual success and rights. On the other hand, they use the socialist practice of speaking bitterness to voice their indignation. In public, they likewise respond to their positioning by capital and state in the lowest rungs of the urban labour and living spheres through a variety of struggles. This research argues that while these struggles may not arise directly from a collective identity and are often of individual nature, they are, as reactions to their exploitation and precarisation, nonetheless central in their formation as a distinct class.

Moreover, the migrant workers are distinct in the fact that the migration regime, which is upheld by the *hukou* system as well as discriminatory discourses and labour practices, leaves open any conclusion to their proletarianisation. Thus, class concepts taking for granted the established truth of a heroic proletariat enacting socio-political change will be of little use, especially in cases of authoritarian state such as China. Rather than trying to predict the consciousness and capabilities of a group by positioning it in relation to a supposed, in most cases Western, standard, the analyses of classes would gain more by retracing how this group responds to challenges in the spheres of production and reproduction and potentially defies them. It is worthwhile to investigate precarisation, by far not a new but concomitant phenomenon of class formation, as such a challenge. As always precarisation must be scrutinised in the local context.

What are the prospects for migrant workers? Political, social and economic developments, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic being only the most recent example, will continue to influence their class formation process. In the past, one could observe, for example, some limited, but earnest trade union reforms by local leaders (Friedman 2014), thus highlighting the fact that the Chinese state itself must be differentiated.

The Chinese Migrant Workers: Perspectives on Class Formation and Precarisation

Under the rule of Xi Jinping, many of these experiments have been abandoned and new ones restricted. At the same time, labour NGOs are increasingly restricted in their actions or are incorporated by the state (Fu 2018:153–156). Still, strikes and protests by migrant workers do not stop, although shifts of manufacturing either inland or to economies offering cheaper labour, lead to more defensive strikes (Xu & Schmalz 2017). Additionally, as more migrant workers move into a service economy marked by new tendencies of precarisation such as fluid workplaces, organising protests may become harder. In contrast, new overarching identities such as the workmate (*gongyou* 工友) have been observed (Yu 2018).

One also needs to look at developments in the rural spheres. With the state's push for agricultural modernisation, population pressures in the cities could be exacerbated (Zhan 2019). This possibly leads to a deepening of precarisation, as the rural areas cannot cushion migrant workers in times of economic downturn any longer. It may also be beneficial to look beyond proletarianisation as proposed by Jakobsen (2018) in finding new pathways for resistance and solidarity. In the end, the framework of class formation and precarisation conceptualised in this article may assist in integrating these developments in further studies.

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Max Paul Greve-Gao

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TINA SCHÄR

The Political Role of Chinese Consumer Boycotts for Beijing

ABSTRACT

This essay aims to discuss the political role of Chinese consumer boycotts for the government in Beijing. The French retail chain Carrefour witnessed the economic leverage of Chinese consumers in 2008 and will serve as an illustrative example. In the first part, it is shown how Chinese consumer boycotts are supportive for the Chinese government as they can lead to a gain of legitimacy. The part about risks then highlights how boycotts also can turn in a counter-productive threat. The essay concludes that to the extent that they remain under government control, Chinese consumer boycotts can be considered as supportive for the Chinese government, but also that they should not be underestimated - neither by foreign firms conducting business in China nor by Beijing.

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The Political Role of Chinese Consumer Boycotts for Beijing

By

Tina Schär

Introduction

Consumer boycotts are feared by foreign companies in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Chinese consumers have demonstrated their economic leverage several times in the past 20 years: Carrefour (Nyíri 2009:1), Mercedes (Li & Jourdan 2018), Zara (Zhang 2019), Dolce & Gabbana (Williams 2019) and Starbucks (Fish 2018) have all witnessed such an impact since the turn of the millennium. This essay discusses the political role of consumer boycotts in China with the example of the Carrefour boycott. This case will serve as an illustrative example of how the phenomenon offers important political advantages, such as gaining legitimacy, but also what risks it hides for the Chinese government in Beijing.

It is not the first instance of such a consumer boycott (the same strong expression of nationalism was already evident in 2005 against Japan), though it was perhaps the first time that European countries experienced the strength of consumer nationalism. Furthermore, the boycott demonstrated the perils of losing the support of the Chinese population: 'The Carrefour boycott achieved the largest scale, by far the highest visibility, and perhaps the most success of any such initiative in China in recent years, but it was typical of a growing number of boycott appeals' (Nyíri 2009:5).

Context of the Carrefour boycott

The Carrefour boycott occurred in the spring of 2008 during preparations for the Olympic Games in Beijing. When the torch relay arrived in Paris, it was interrupted by Pro-Tibetan activists, which incited the anger of the Chinese population. 'Chinese national pride was injured by these incidents (particularly in Paris), resulting in an upsurge of Internet nationalism and public protests' (Shambaugh 2013:93).

In many cases, the Chinese government has reacted with economic sanctions when other countries have been perceived to have offended China's national interests. Economic sanctions correspond 'to the concept of economic techniques of statecraft' (Baldwin 1985:39) and can be defined as 'the deliberate, government-inspired withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, of customary trade or

The Political Role of Chinese Consumer Boycotts for Beijing

financial relations' (Hufbauer et. al. 2009:3). To the public, sanctions are often associated with trade-disrupting measures (Drezner 1999:3).

Recently, China has used sanctions on several occasions as the country became increasingly aware of the strength of its growing economic power as a tool of foreign policy. 'While China is cautious and defensive in its military and strategic foreign policy, its growing economic power has allowed it to be active in its economic foreign policy' (Harris 2014:120). For many observers, it is clear that China knows how to use this tool well: 'Beijing has been playing the new economic game at a maestro level' (Gelb 2010:38).

Norway was sanctioned in 2010 when the Norwegian committee awarded a Nobel Prize to Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese dissident, while in 2013, China levied economic sanctions against the Philippines in response to disputes regarding the South Chinese Sea. The government again initiated sanctions against South Korea in 2017 after the country installed a terminal high altitude area defence missile system (Harrell, Rosenberg & Saravalle 2018:5).

However, in spring 2008, the boycott against Carrefour was initiated by the people itself, not the government. On April 10, 2008, a post was published on Tianya, an internet forum with around 80 million users, calling for a boycott of French companies, including the chain Carrefour (Nyíri 2009:2). The company was one of the main targets, as a small percentage of it is owned by Blue Capital. Blue Capital is managed by the property group Colony Capital and French billionaire Bernard Arnault, who is the chairperson and chief executive of luxury goods group LVMH (Ransom & Macfie 2008). LVMH had ostensibly supported the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans with donations (Deeny 2009).

On April 15, the Chinese government declared the boycott as reasonable and lawful and many consumers stopped shopping at Carrefour (Nyíri 2009:2). The boycott can be seen as a success. The Chinese population expressed its anger, and the Chinese government, without doing much itself, received a similar result as could be achieved with economic sanctions: on April 21, the French president Sarkozy wrote a 'message of sympathy' to Beijing and apologised for what had happened (Spiegel Online 2008).

Due to efforts by the Chinese and French governments, the situation was calmed down, and relations were restored a few days after the incident involving the torch relay. Relations

Tina Schär

subsequently remained friendly until Sarkozy announced his plan to meet the Dalai Lama in December 2008, which again triggered anger within China. However, on this occasion, it was the Chinese government that threatened France, this time with economic sanctions (Day 2008).

Gaining legitimacy - One of its main advantages

'Like all politicians China's leaders are concerned first and foremost with their own political survival. They don't have to stand for election, but they face other political risks that democratic leaders do not have to worry about' (Shirk 2007:6). The government must gain legitimacy through good policies and can only attract the support of the population when it delivers what is asked of it. 'The government relies on accomplishing concrete goals such as economic growth, social stability, strengthening national power, and 'good governance' (governing competence and accountability) to retain its legitimacy' (Zhu 2011:123).

Citizens of superpowers such as China and the US especially want 'strong leaders who stand tall in the world.' (Shirk, 2007:10) In the case of China, standing tall means showing zero tolerance when it comes to core issues. Subjects like Taiwan, Tibet, the United States, and the South Chinese Sea are some of them. In this sense 'Chinese debates over international relations and China's role in the world are inextricably linked to Chinese domestic politics' (Shambaugh 2013:16).

Consumer boycotts may contribute to legitimacy for the Chinese government. They constitute an information channel, as they are an expression of the interests of the Chinese population. They can be seen as a sign for what the population wants Beijing to stand for when it comes to foreign policy: 'Chinese consumer boycotts usually concerned China's national sovereignty' (Liang 2020). The 2008 Carrefour boycott showed the world that it is not just the Chinese government that does not accept criticism of the One-China policy but the Chinese population too (Liang 2020).

In spring 2008, consumers started boycotting Carrefour, but the government followed after the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Sarkozy later that year. The government needed to react sufficiently harshly and show they had listened to the people's request earlier this year: that no one must be allowed to criticize the Tibet policy. 'Demonstrations of popular anger can be helpful when the leadership seeks to signal resolve and demonstrate its commitment to defending the national interest' (Weiss 2014:4). In this way, demonstrations of anger led to an even harder position of the government (Zhao 2013:551).

Therefore, one of the biggest advantages of consumer boycotts for Beijing is that they offer leaders a legitimate excuse to undertake harsher measures themselves afterwards. In this way, it becomes clear what Hoffbauer meant with the title of its article *China sends the Consumer forward* (Hoffbauer 2008). This willingness to tolerate and then curtail anti-French sentiment in 2008 reflects 'many of the same considerations that motivate China's management of nationalist protest more generally – calibrating the domestic risk while maximizing the diplomatic benefit of grassroots anger.' (Weiss 2014:243).

It is for this reason that Carrefour is often considered a turning point: it was the first boycott that had been actively supported by the Chinese government. 'This was the first time the government explicitly, though indirectly, endorsed a consumer boycott, and it was after this that the boycott became broadly visible to ordinary Chinese citizens' (Nyíri 2009:2).

Risks of Chinese consumer boycotts for the Chinese government

The Chinese government is known for crafting and using nationalist sentiment to its advantage. The government wields influence with 'government propaganda, intellectual debates, populous display of emotion and repulsion, or a mixture of all three' (Yuan 2008:212). With its steady growth in economic power and international political influence, this control over people is important in international relations, as 'how nationalism is handled can have a significant impact on relations with its neighbours and beyond' (Yuan 2008:212).

China typically keeps nationalist sentiment under control and only turns it occasionally to its advantage. 'Although Beijing is hardly above exploiting nationalist sentiment, it has generally used nationalism pragmatically, tempered by diplomatic prudence' (Zhao 2005:132). However, there are exceptions:

> It is also no secret that such sentiments cannot always be controlled to the extent that suits China's leaders. This becomes a problem for the CCP when Chinese nationalists blame the state for perceived inaction, unprincipled compromises, or humiliations, or demand more or tougher action from it than the leadership is prepared to take (Guo 2012).

The Chinese government has witnessed several times how nationalism (which may cause consumer boycotts) can turn into a counter-productive threat, as was the case with the Zara consumer

Tina Schär

boycott. The Spanish company was attacked on Weibo (the Chinese counterpart to Twitter) for featuring a Chinese model with freckles in one of its advertising campaigns for lipsticks. The model did not correspond to the Chinese ideal of beauty, which was widely criticised within China (Nyffenegger 2019).

However, the government did not see any political benefit in boycotting Zara; on the contrary, such a boycott would only result in economic losses and would likely worsen the country's relationship with Spain. Accordingly, it denounced the criticisms as unfounded and wrote via China Daily to the people: 'Zara 'insulting China'? Don't be so sensitive!' (Zhang 2019).

The anti-Japan protests after the dispute over ownership of the Senkaku islets (Taylor 2012) raised critical opinions in the Chinese national newspapers too. Boycotts may backfire: 'Blindly boycotting Japanese goods by giving way to sentiments could harm our own industries and exports and reduce employment' (Xinyu 2012).

As such, if the government does not do enough to reprimand the offending country for 'wrong' behaviour that could subsequently put the government in a sandwich position: on the one hand, they must follow the opinion of the population to prevent losing legitimacy, while on the other, upholding good relations with foreign countries is essential for China's foreign policy principles. Therefore, 'it is not difficult for Chinese leaders to realize that nationalism is a double-edged sword: both a means to legitimise the CCP rule and a means for the Chinese people to judge the performance of the state' (Zhao 2013:541).

Hence, consumer boycotts have political consequences and Beijing has to be careful that they do not become an independent phenomenon. 'Antiforeign nationalism can undermine Beijing's diplomacy with Western countries aimed at securing a stable inflow of foreign investment and technology as well as cultivating China's image as a peaceful and responsible player in the international community' (He 2007:22).

It is therefore understandable why the Chinese government supports some of the boycotts but typically tries to control 'the information available to ordinary Chinese citizens and manipulating their reactions to international events, ensuring that the situation does not backfire on the party-state or get out of hand' (Guo 2012).

In the case of the Carrefour boycott, Beijing was able to maintain control. Doing so was necessary because 'the anti-Carrefour boycotts were becoming a distraction from the Olympics. The international media were following the boycotts. Instead of positive news stories about the Olympics, there were stories about the protests that would mention the problems in Tibet' (Coombs 2013:115).

As a result, Beijing intervened to prevent further actions against Carrefour. For example, state censors made it difficult for organizers to speak online. Further, messages encouraging the boycott were blocked, and 'typing Carrefour into Chinese-language search engines returned blank pages explaining that such results 'do not conform to relevant law and policy' (Jacobs 2008). On May 1, the police began dispersing protestors and arresting people. Eleven protestors were apprehended outside Carrefour stores in Beijing and Shenzhen, and the government managed to calm the uproar (Nyíri 2009:5).

Therefore, the Carrefour boycott is a key example of the benefits of a consumer boycott. It was supported by the government and stopped before it began to cause harm. However, it also showed how politically inspired popular movements could be difficult to control (Van der Putten 2008).

Conclusion

From a political point of view, consumer boycotts against foreign companies are a welcome instrument for the government in Beijing. They tie in with the strategic aim of the Chinese government of using soft economic power rather than military power in its foreign policy, and they support the government in gaining legitimacy on a domestic level. It might further be argued that consumer boycotts become even more powerful in the future as the purchasing power of Chinese consumers has been growing.

Their current economic leverage could be seen for instance in the Dolce & Gabbana case. In 2019, an advert published by the company and racist statements made by its CEO caused outrage on the internet, with considerable repercussions. Consumers shared videos of burning or destroying their D&G products. 'Many consumers, in fact, returned goods and all major e-commerce platforms in China stopped selling their products' (D'Arco, Marino & Resciniti, 2019:186). It was a big issue for the company as a large proportion of Dolce & Gabbana's total sales are made in China (Gänger 2019). And the damage was not limited to China: 'At both the Golden Globes and the Oscars, where in previous years Sarah Jessica Parker, Scarlett Johansson, and other top talent stepped out

Tina Schär

in opulent Dolce & Gabbana gowns, no A-lister dared to risk alienating fans by donning the label' (Williams 2019).

This is why consumer boycotts are still of great importance in 2020. Especially in times of economic slow-down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, global companies do not want to see their bottom line decrease further because of a boycott in the often-strategic Chinese market. This essay therefore concludes, that to the extent that they remain under government control, consumer boycotts can be considered as supportive tool for the government in Beijing.

However, consumer boycotts are associated with more risk if the government loses its ability to control them. For example, China could face problems if the government is unable to start or stop them at the appropriate time. In such scenarios, boycotts could cause damage and endanger foreign relations, as well as the legitimacy of the government. This understanding is important to predict the behaviour of the Chinese government in the future and the potential effects on international relations. Chinese consumer boycotts should not be underestimated - neither by foreign firms conducting business in China nor by the government in Beijing.

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Tina Schär

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J I E   L I

The 1990s Chinese Debates over Islamic Resurgence in Xinjiang by PRC Soviet-watchers

ABSTRACT

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, China panicked and began to analyse the potential root causes. China, like the Soviet Union, is a multinational country with religious diversity. Chinese Soviet-watchers paid particular attention to the impact of the Islamic resurgence in the newly independent Central Asian republics on China's Muslim populations in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Those writings tended to define the Xinjiang minorities fighting for religious freedom as political dissents opposing socialism. They also perceived that after the Soviet collapse, international forces would move against China. Xinjiang was seen as the most vulnerable to foreign conspiracies, owing to this Islamic resurgence and Western influence. These viewpoints justified the agenda of the CCP after the Cold War, when the Party believed that Western countries had a master plan to undermine China.To summarise, the debates of Chinese Soviet-watchers emphasized the importance of the Chinese government to take a firm hand in combating Xinjiang's Islamic resurgence. The strategies that arose from these debates may inform readers of China's present state policies and actions.

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The 1990s Chinese Debates over Islamic Resurgence in Xinjiang by PRC Soviet-watchers

By

Jie Li

Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 had profound repercussions for the People's Republic of China (PRC). In particular, the role played in this by religious factors caused panic throughout the top levels of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). China, like the Soviet Union, is a multinational society with a diversity of religious faiths. Chinese Soviet-watchers (both officials and academics) in the 1990s paid particular attention to the impact of Islamic resurgence in the newly independent Central Asian republics in China's largest province—Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Xinjiang borders three Central Asian states that were members of the former Soviet Union. As a result, Chinese policymakers view these nations through a strongly strategic lens (Mackerras 2003; Zhang 2014). Xinjiang itself is the home of China's largest Muslim populations, including the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and the Uyghurs.

Scholarship on how China learned from the Soviet Union in the management of ethnic and religious affairs falls into two categories. The first category of literature focuses on the pre-1991 period, especially the eras of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping (Schwarz 1971; Dreyer 1976; Heberer 1989; Mackerras 1995; Gladney 2004). The second category of research shifts its attention to the post-collapse decades, but those scholars are generally concerned with how the Chinese debated and analysed the failure of Soviet policies and how China could learn from Moscow's mishandling of those issues (Bernstein & Li 2010; Shambaugh 2008; Liew & Wang 2012; Lambert 2001; Star 2004).

The above-mentioned scholarship mainly discusses how Chinese officials and scholars reflected Moscow's past wrongdoings, tending to overlook how the Chinese debates generated and provided solutions, strategies, and direction for the country to handle its ethnic and religious affairs in the years to come. As this essay will argue, those arguments made in the 1990s may mirror China's present state policies and actions.

To support this argument, this essay examines the thinking of Chinese scholars and officials against the backdrop of political developments in the PRC in the 1990s. It does this primarily

with a literature review of publications in national core journals of the PRC. In addition, to successfully locate this study in the rich fabric of intellectual activities and the changing environment of contemporary China, the author also consulted China's Party newspapers and journals, such as *Renmin Ribao* (人民日报 People's Daily), and the writings and speeches of PRC officials, such as those of contemporary Chinese leaders.

In this essay, the term 'Soviet-watchers' (or 'Sovietologists') refers to those who study and research the state of the USSR. This is based on the definition of Christopher Xenakis, who defines US Sovietologists broadly to include 'political scientists, economists, sociologists, historians, diplomats, and policy makers, working in academia, government, private think tanks, and the media' (Xenakis 2002: 4). He uses the terms 'Sovietologists', 'Soviet experts', 'foreign policy analysts', 'Cold War theorists', and 'political scientists' interchangeably, citing the examples of George Kennan, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Richard Pipes, and Strobe Talbott. These individuals are both Soviet-specialists and policy makers, while Hedrick Smith and Robert Kaiser are also Soviet-watchers and journalists simultaneously (Xenakis 2002: 4). For the sake of conforming to the Chinese context and for convenience of narrative, the author will use the term 'Soviet-watchers' (rather than 'Sovietologists') throughout the essay.

In terms of this elastic definition of the field and the diversity of scholars' backgrounds, the situation in China is generally similar to the situation in the US as described by Xenakis. Although some Chinese scholars specialise in either Soviet or world communism, most of those mentioned and quoted in this essay are generalists rather than specialists in Soviet studies. Their articles often express more political zeal than scholarly expertise or analytical insight. Generally speaking, the descriptions by Xenakis of US Sovietologists could also be applied to the Chinese situation. Chinese Soviet-watchers are a diverse group, rather than representatives of a single school of thought or central theory. Their publications never imply a complete homogeneity of views. However, although their academic training is in different disciplines and by no means confined to Soviet studies, their research and publications are relevant to Soviet research in one way or another.

The essay is divided into six sections. After the introduction, the author will move on to review how the PRC tackled religious issues both historically and in the present-day context. In the subsequent third section, the essay will look at how the Chinese state reacted to Xinjiang's Islamic resurgence in the 1990s. In the fourth section, this paper examines the 1990s Chinese

Jie Li

debates on the resurgence of Islam in Xinjiang and the religious repercussions from Central Asia. In the fifth section, the paper discusses how the PRC regime made use of Xinjiang's Islamic resurgence to facilitate its control over ethnic minorities and legitimise its rule after the end of the Cold War. In the conclusion, the essay sums up how these discussions might reflect China's increasingly repressive religious and ethnic policies in the present-day.

The Issue of Religion in the Chinese Communist Regime

Since the founding of the PRC, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has made it clear that religious bodies are to be stripped of their political and economic power. The CCP intended to control religion as far as it could for its own purposes and to support its own rule (Dreyer 1976). In the 1980s, the Chinese government still believed that strengthening economic development – in combination with respecting the rights of minority and granting them a certain degree of autonomy – would strengthen Party-rule. In doing this, they believed that the results would help them to win the sincere support of national minorities and regain the ruling legitimacy that was damaged by the disastrous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) (Zong 1986).

However, since the collapse of world socialism in the late 1980s, religious revival in China and especially that of Islam in Xinjiang has posed new difficulties for the Chinese government, which discovered that material goods alone could not easily stifle the awakening of national identities separate from the Han-dominated PRC and demands for independence.

In 1992 a state document made the following warning on religious issues:

> All party comrades should be psychologically prepared for the long-term nature of religion existing under socialism. The thought that religion would perish soon under socialism is unrealistic (Cai 1992).

Religious revival and its threat to China's sovereignty were a central topic in the 1990s Chinese Soviet-watchers' writings. First, Marxism-Leninism is avowedly and extremely anti-religious. The religious issue in the Chinese context is often interwoven with problems of ethnic groups and nationalities. Interestingly, the popularity of the topic in China coincided with the faltering of some multinational socialist countries with diverse religious beliefs such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Thus, the CCP regime came to see religion as a major political threat to communism.

Second, the discussions of religious revival in 1990s China focused on Xinjiang's Muslim

populations, suggesting that the issue has less to do with filling the faith vacuum because of the death of Marxism. In this case, religious revival is associated with national consciousness and the awakening of ethnic identities in China's minority regions. In the mind of the Chinese leadership, the religious revival was the reason for the Chinese minority's demands for independence, and it was the direct result of the Soviet and Yugoslavian collapses. It might constitute a major threat, not only state unity and social stability, but also to the fate of socialism. As Ismail Amat (Chairman of the PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission) stated in 1994,

> We can draw a profusion of lessons from the evolution of Eastern Europe and the Soviet collapse, and the present social disturbances in the world owing to ethnic and religious conflicts. China's religious issue has its own characteristics, and correctly handling the religious issue will have great implications for the future of socialism (Amat 1994).

China's official publications have long been aware of the disintegrative impact of religion on socialism. A reporter in the Party-sponsored journal *Liaowang* (瞭望 Outlook) remarked in 1983 that the anti-communist uprising of 'Solidarity in Poland' was inspired by Christianity, which has a long tradition in Polish society (Chu 1983). After the Soviet collapse, both Party Secretary-General Jiang Zemin (江泽民) and Li Ruihuan (李瑞环), member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee, warned that the Party must remain vigilant against collaboration between dissidents and international malevolent forces using religion to incite political disturbance and divide the country (Jiang 1994; Li 1994).

From the 1990s onward, several scholars and officials commented that the West was using religious institutions to destabilise the communist systems for peaceful evolution. They criticised the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church for intervening in the internal affairs of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. They assured readers that the next target of the West in it use of religion for subversion would be China, the last major communist power (An 1991; Luo 1991; Lu 1998).

In the CCP's mindset, religion should not interfere in politics or the state institutions, and above all, it should not be used to split the country (Ulanhu 1981). This proscription applies not only to a religion such as Catholicism, with its tradition of political involvement, but to any faith where the leaders try to split a particular part of China off from the rest of the country. This has

become a serious problem among those nationalities that have made religion a strong component of politics, particularly Islamic minorities (Jiang 1998).

The Chinese government is generally prepared to accept the role of religion, but with one major proviso: it becomes unacceptable when it spills over into a demand for secession or independence from China. As mentioned above, in the 1980s the Chinese government was still willing to adopt a relaxed approach towards religion with regard to its minorities. However, as both the international and the domestic contexts changed, the Chinese authorities moved to restrict religious freedom.

For the Chinese party-state, religious diversity and ethnic harmony are window-dressing, while the survival of the regime is fundamental. As we will see in the subsequent sections, this was the context in which the 1990s debates were set and the narrative that dominated those debates.

Chinese Official Reaction to Xinjiang's Islamic Resurgence in the 1990s

In the 1990s, it was not the religion of Christianity but that of Islam that provoked a heated debate in Chinese Soviet-watchers' writings, and the reasons for this are varied. First, to this day, China has not established diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Relations have been tense since 1989, because the CCP, as mentioned above, is aware of the potential role of religion in overthrowing communist regimes in Europe. On the other hand, China has strengthened its relations with the Third World, including many Islamic states, since the end of the Cold War, as the PRC intended to make allies of developing nations to contain the capitalist West after the fall of world communism (Mackerras 1995). Moreover, very few of the countries bordering China are Christian states, but a number are Muslim nations, especially after the demise of the USSR.

In addition, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the impact of the newly independent Central Asian republics on China's own Islamic populations in Xinjiang has caught the attention of the CCP. Sean Roberts (2004) reveals the influx of ideas of Western liberalism and democracy into Xinjiang since 1991, through the region's increased interaction with Central Asia, which also brought renewed hopes to the Uyghurs that they may realise their long-time ambition of establishing their own sovereign state.

Historically, Xinjiang has been the hotbed of national secessionism in China and this tendency was triggered by Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union (Roberts 2004). In the 1990s, the CCP

leadership perceived the issue a result of the influence of Central Asian states. Jiang Zemin, in his two speeches delivered before and after the Soviet collapse, remarked that the Xinjiang unrests were due to 'the changes of international climate' and 'the influence of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism' (Jiang 1990). He condemned the Uyghur anti-government force for attempting to establish the 'Eastern Turkistan Republic' or the 'Great Kazakhstan Republic' for splitting China (Jiang 1998).

Xinjiang's Islamic Resurgence in the 1990s Chinese Debates

This official guidance inevitably passed into academic research and writings. In 1993, Li Tieying, President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing, hosted a state-wide meeting for the academic staff in international studies. He expressed his great concern about the political, social, and religious repercussions of the newly independent Central Asian states on China's Xinjiang minorities after the collapse of the USSR, owing to the similar historical and cultural backgrounds of the two regions—the so-called 'problems of the cross-border nations' (*kuajing minzu wenti* 跨境民族问题) (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 2010).

According to the analyses of many Chinese Soviet-watchers throughout the 1990s, due to the Islamic revival and the Soviet collapse in the late 20th century, waves of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism spread across Central Asia. The principle of these religious ideologies was to unify the Muslims across the world or establish a grand republic consisting of all the Turkish-speaking peoples, including those in Xinjiang. In their opinion, such a call might trigger Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in Xinjiang, which would threaten China's sovereignty and security (Wu 1993; Pan 1994; Yu 1996; Xu 1999). In addition, several Chinese scholars concluded it was the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) and political pluralism that had encouraged both atheism and the Islamic revival and which finally pulled down the 70-year pillar of Marxist ideology in the Soviet Union (Zhang 1992; Zheng 1994; Deng 1997).

The Chinese State, Xinjiang, and Islamic Revival

Control of religious affairs in China is not a recent innovation by the CCP. As demonstrated by Tony Lambert (2001), in imperial China, different dynasties used a variety of methods to regulate and subjugate the religions and make them serve the interests of the central state. According to Thomas Heberer (1989), the Confucian orthodoxy also criticised other religions as being 'heterodox' and practised by 'barbarians'. He points out that Confucianism, the traditional

ideology of the Chinese state, was especially good at helping the state to assimilate other religions, through the imposition of Han-Chinese values rather than a policy of extermination. The acceptance of other religions signified their subjugation to the Chinese state. The aim was not to conquer them, but rather let them govern themselves (Heberer 1989: 18).

After 1949, when Confucianism had been replaced by communism, any minority figures who wanted to safeguard their traditional way of life and religious faith by opposing the Party's many disastrous political campaigns were dubbed as 'reactionary' and were harshly prosecuted (Heberer 1989:15). As such, there is a strong link between the past and the 1990s Chinese debates on how to overcome Islamic resurgence and maintain national unity. Many Chinese scholars wrote that Xinjiang ethnic minorities might collaborate with foreign or Western hostile forces to use religion to facilitate national separation movements and threaten China's security. This was able to generate support amongst the Han Chinese for the CCP regime in the wake of the collapse of world socialism.

First, the Chinese government has consistently adhered to their long-time tradition of 'grand unification' (*dayitong* 大一统), which is a key concept in China's civilisation and mentality that articulates the unification of the country as the norm and the division of it as an aberration (Fairbank 1968). Under this mindset, the Chinese government takes state sovereignty and unity as its foremost priority. It will tolerate no attempt by foreign forces to divide the country. As Xinjiang ethnic minorities were not considered Han Chinese, they were suspected to be conspiring with foreign forces to secede from the PRC. It was thought that this might stir the Han Chinese to demand the government take tougher measures against Xinjiang ethnic minorities.

Second, the discourse of Islamic revival and its potential threat to split China went hand-in-hand with the prevalent peaceful revolution doctrine in early 1990s China. This theory was created by the CCP regime in the late 1980s to use the imagined fear of foreign subversion to safeguard and justify its rule, after the international collapse of communism (Shambaugh 2008). As a result, the discussions of Islamic religion and its subversive potential in the 1990s Chinese Soviet-watchers' writings also played a role in reinforcing the weakened legitimacy of the CCP (Wu 1993; Pan 1994).

Lastly, the Chinese concern about Islamic religious affairs in Xinjiang could also explain China's

increasingly repressive religious policy from the 1990s onward, owing to the impact of the Soviet collapse (Bachman 2005). While being firmly under the control of the Party, religion in 1980s China was treated by the CCP leadership with appreciation and interest. It was a target of cooperation but not repression, since the Chinese government did not want to repeat the oppressive religious policy seen during the Cultural Revolution (Gladney 2004).

However, since the 1990s, owing to the alleged role of religion in toppling communism in Europe, China's perception of religion has become more hostile. Gleaned from the Chinese writings above, since the 1990s, religious affairs in China have become a highly politicalised issue. The maintenance of stability and national unity always came at the expense of religious freedom (Perdue 2013). Ethnic minorities from Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolian regions who were pleading for religious freedom and national autonomy or independence were defined as political dissents opposing socialism (Zhou 2010). This shows that China has increasingly viewed religious activities through the prism of not only national unity and state sovereignty, but also the survival of the socialist regime, as they may have the ability to threaten the Party dictatorship.

An illuminating example is the *Falungong* (法轮功 Buddhist Law Society) religious movement, whose members once staged a sit-in outside the CCP-leadership compound in Beijing, in protest against China's repressive religious treatment (Tong 2009). Although the CCP leadership is aware of *Falungong*'s organizational power, financial success, and ideological authority that might constitute a challenge to its rule, many of *Falungong*'s demands were for no more than the freedom of religious practice and the right to form associations, guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution (Tong 2009).

The subsequent state-wide crackdown on *Falungong* and the mounting Chinese scholarly denunciation of the movement as '*xiejiao*' (邪教 heathendom), reflected that China has learned from the collapse of European communism that the rampancy of any organised religion might pose a risk to its communist power base. Such understanding is consistent with the above-mentioned Chinese criticism of what they interpreted as Gorbachev's excessive tolerance of religious freedom. The Chinese perceived Gorbachev's liberalisation and hands-off approach to religious policy as having cultivated many anti-government forces and led to the ultimate demise of the USSR.

On the religious issue, the most important aspect of the 1990s Chinese debates was what they

Jie Li

saw as the role of foreign forces in using religious elements to subvert Eastern European regimes and the former Soviet Union. Chinese Soviet-watchers perceived that, after the Soviet collapse, the international forces might gang up against China, and the Xinjiang Uyghur region was the most vulnerable to such contagion, due to Islamic resurgence in Central Asia across the border (Guo 1996; Yu 1996; Xu 1999).

Their opinions highlighted or exaggerated the role of the foreign forces in bringing down the Soviet Union and their potential to overthrow the Chinese communist regime through what they saw as religious subversive activities. Such arguments appear to serve and legitimise the CCP agenda after the Cold War, when the regime thought that the country might become the next target of the West for 'peaceful evolution' (Shambaugh 2008).

Since the 1990s, China has launched many projects to impose assimilation and Sinicisation of minority populations and to suppress the formation of an ethnic identity among minorities, such as official-sanctioning of a large influx of Han populations, compulsory Mandarin-language education in schools in minority areas, and the recent establishment of re-education camps located in Xinjiang (Cappelletti 2019).

All of these efforts aim to integrate Xinjiang and other minority regions with the rest of China and leave them dependent on the central government. Their ethnic and cultural identities, as well as their national existence, have been under direct threat, and those ethnic groups may functionally disappear as a distinct ethnic group within a few generations. No one can deny that China has never been as dominant in its minority regions as it is presently. Such a situation will not see a fundamental change until the political conditions in China themselves undergo massive changes.

Conclusion

As this essay indicates, the fundamental shift in central attitudes towards religion originated in the early 1990s, immediately after the Tiananmen Incident and the demise of the USSR, when the CCP realised the threat that religion posed to its survival and decided to discard its liberal religious policies implemented in the 1980s.

Since then, the Chinese state have determined that respect for minorities and their religions should not go against the fundamental interests of the Party. It believes that any demands for

ethnic autonomy, a revival of national identities, or religious resurgence could threaten the unity of the country and undermine the rule of the CCP.

Any foreign influences on those matters are deemed a conspiracy aimed at China's disintegration, inspired by the Soviet breakup. In the eyes of the CCP, to avoid the fate of the Soviet Union, harsh measures such as 'cultural genocide' (Peerenboom 2008) and 'ethnic drowning' (Cheek 2006) are necessary and unavoidable when dealing with what they see as 'reactionary' elements. Since then, the overall practices of the Chinese state have become more repressive, not only in religious policy but in other aspects as well.

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Jie Li

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H I D D E   W A M S

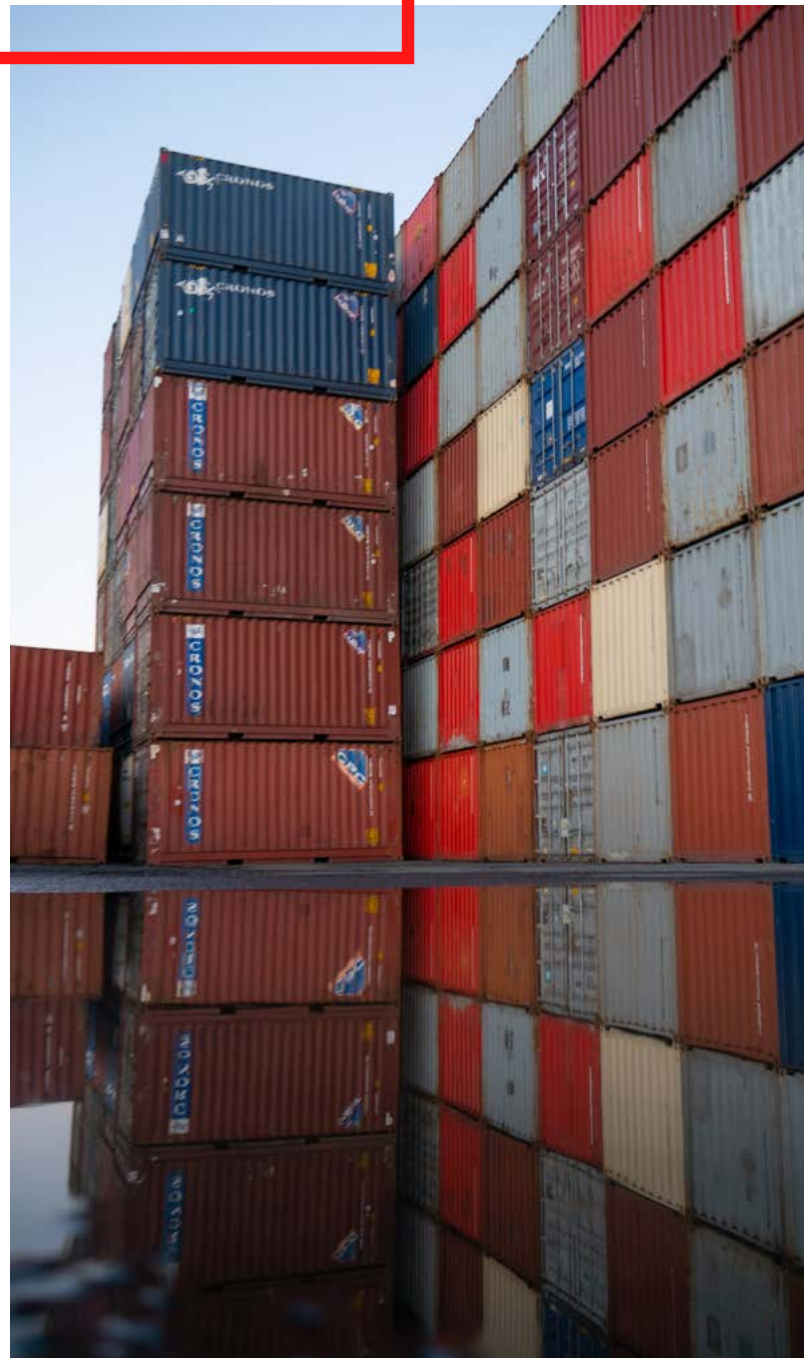## Chinese FDI in EU Seaports and the Challenge to European Strategic Autonomy

ABSTRACT

This essay examines Chinese investments into major container ports in the European Union (EU). These ports matter: the advent of containerisation has rapidly impacted the face of the modern world economy and has irreversibly globalised supply chain economics. In times of war, seaports play an essential strategic role as well. Therefore, seaports are understood as part of a state's (or the EU's) strategic or critical infrastructure, the disruption of which would have sizable implications. Currently, we see a development of Chinese companies, both private and state-owned, increasingly investing in the EU's major seaports. This cannot be seen as an innocent type of investment. By gaining a stake in the EU's critical infrastructure, China can bolster its political influence throughout the EU. These dynamics were described by an EU port lobbyist as 'he who pays the piper calls the tune.' This has to be understood within a context of changing EU-China relations, demonstrated by the European Commission naming China a 'systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance' in 2019. This essay argues that to protect European strategic autonomy, the EU needs to adopt robust policy measures to counter the increasing Chinese influence on the EU's critical infrastructure.

AUTHOR

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Chinese FDI in EU Seaports and the Challenge to European Strategic Autonomy

By

Hidde Wams

Introduction

About ten kilometres from the centre of Athens lies Piraeus. A municipality of under 200 thousand residents, Piraeus is home to the largest seaport of Greece, which in August 2016 was largely conceded to a Chinese shipping giant by the name of China Ocean Shipping Company (*zhongyuan haiyun* 中远海运 COSCO Shipping) (Neilson 2019:563; Yang, Pan & Wang 2016:83). This concession sparked a heated discussion in Greece and beyond, both in the realms of academia and politics (Geeraerts 2019:3; Ma & Peverelli 2019:50). How should Greek and European Union (EU) policymakers view this concession? Is it simply a story of successful foreign direct investment (FDI), or are we witnessing Chinese power geopolitics at play?

This essay will attempt to answer these questions, drawing on fieldwork at the port of Piraeus, interviews with EU officials and a literature review focusing on concepts such as the EU ambition of 'strategic autonomy' (Franke & Varma 2019). The essay is structured as follows. First, the relevance of ownership structures of container ports will be explained by introducing the concepts of containerisation and critical infrastructure. Next, the essay will relate these topics to the case of Chinese influence at the port of Piraeus. By involving the concepts of economic statecraft and strategic autonomy, the essay will argue that the increasing Chinese influence on European ports potentially affects the EU's external 'capacity to act' (Leonard & Shapiro 2019) and why this may be understood as a challenge to the EU. The conclusion will assess the main policy measure adopted in response to these dynamics and provide some contextualisation.

Containerisation and critical infrastructure

Container ports matter. One of the major *space-shrinking technologies* largely responsible for the rapid globalisation of trade since the second half of the twentieth century has been the advent of containerisation (Coe, Kelly & Yeung 2013:268). Containerisation refers to 'the adoption of standardized 20- and 40-foot-long metal containers for land and sea freight, thereby vastly simplifying the transport and transhipment (i.e., transfer from ship to ship, or ship to train) of a huge range of commodities' (Coe, Kelly & Yeung 2013:268).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) asserts that 'world trade is fundamentally dependent on a system of maritime transport that has been made as frictionless as possible' (Cowen 2014:56). Container ports constitute key nodes in this system of maritime transport. For this reason, seaports are often referred to as (part of) a nation state's *critical infrastructure* or *strategic infrastructure*, since 'both national security and economic prosperity depend upon that system of roads, railways, seaports, and airports' (Dodd 2012:1).

In this sense, seaports not only have important economic value; in times of war, seaports play an essential strategic role as well. For that and other reasons, ports 'can be seen as security bubbles, especially in regard of the amount of money that goes into port security' (Eski 2011:423). As an official of the European External Action Service (EEAS) affirmed: 'large-scale Chinese investments in major seaports might pose security issues in maritime areas since we are talking about critical infrastructure. Investing in this kind of infrastructure cannot be seen as simply innocent investment' (Anonymous 1, 2020).

Another outcome of global containerisation has been the changing ownership structure of seaports. These spaces have seen a change from being nationally owned public infrastructural sites to their incorporation as companies, often privatised (Castelein, Geerlings & Van Duin 2019:6; Psaraftis & Pallis 2012:27). It is with this shift that ports have become ideal opportunities for large FDI. This has notably been the case in Piraeus.

China's influence through its 'national champions'

The company conceding the port of Piraeus was not just any Chinese company. COSCO Shipping has been described by scholars as 'an organ of the Chinese party-state' (Neilson 2019:565). It is owned and supervised by a special body that falls under the State Council of the People's Republic of China (PRC), 'China's highest organ of state power' (Neilson 2019:565). Furthermore, the chief executives of COSCO Shipping are appointed by a specific department of the Communist Party of China's Central Committee, the top leadership of the PRC's long-time ruling party (Neilson 2019:565). COSCO Shipping is one of the so-called 'national champions' of China's state-capitalist system (Lin & Milhaupt 2013:725). China's national champions are state-owned companies supervised by the State-owned Asset Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council (*guowuyuan guoyou zichan jiandu guanli weiyuanhui* 国务院国有资产监督管理委员会 SASAC) (Naughton 2015:46). These national champions profit from national policies and aim to

serve Chinese national interests abroad (Hemphill & White 2013:207; Lin & Milhaupt 2013:702; Melnik 2019:28; Van Dijk 2020:87).

Since COSCO Shipping established its presence, the port of Piraeus has featured prominently as an important infrastructural node in many Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (*yidai yilu* 一带一路 BRI) communications (Van der Putten 2016:2). The BRI is the Chinese foreign policy endeavour of increasing Chinese-led connectivity throughout Eurasia and Africa (Van Dijk 2020:124; Chen et al. 2018:1; Huang 2016:314; Van der Putten 2016:2; Zhao 2016:109; Neilson & Rossiter 2014:5). The BRI, sometimes referred to as 'One Belt, One Road' or as the 'New Silk Road,' has been conceptualised as a 'grand strategy' of Chinese foreign policy (Leverett & Wu 2017; Zhang 2017:311; Fallon 2015) or an evolving 'geopolitical culture' (Lin, Sidaway & Woon 2019).

Although China's Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi 王毅 has repeatedly stated that the BRI should not be viewed with an 'outdated Cold War mentality' (Demiryol 2019:169) and that it is not a 'tool of geopolitics' (*diyuan zhengzhi de gongju* 地缘政治的工具) (Sidaway & Woon 2017:593), the BRI is largely perceived abroad as a 'tool for China to exert global ascendancy' (Lin, Sidaway & Woon 2019:514) and to 'establish its great power status in the world' (Liu 2018:7).

The power dynamics at play in Piraeus were made visible to me when walking past one of the Port Authority buildings in Piraeus. The name of the port authority was depicted on the façade of the building in three languages: Greek, English, and in Chinese simplified characters. The English name was a literal translation of the Greek words for 'Piraeus Port Authority'. The Chinese translation, however, added the name of the Chinese concessionaire COSCO Shipping to the name: *zhongyuan haiyun bi lei ai fu si gangkou youxian gongsi* 中远海运比雷埃夫斯港口有限公司 [COSCO Shipping Piraeus Port Limited Company]. The addition of the name of this Chinese national champion marks how this Greek port is understood, especially for readers of Mandarin Chinese. Much like planting a Chinese flag (which is also increasingly done in and around Piraeus) (Grappi 2015), the naming also constitutes a practice of place-claiming, as geographers have long argued (Dodds 2013:5).

Many European seaports are becoming more dependent on Chinese state-owned companies, with the port of Piraeus as a notable case in point. As the dependence on Chinese state-owned companies grows, port authorities increasingly need the cooperation of the Chinese Communist Party to make strategic decisions (Garschagen 2019:115).

For European authorities, this might prove undesirable, since China and the EU member states have diverging views on a number of topics, including market access, political freedoms, and geopolitical issues such as Taiwan and the South China Sea (Leonard & Shapiro 2020:2; Garschagen 2019:115; Smith 2014; Crookes 2013; Mattlin 2012). In the words of Cowen (2014:68): 'China's influence over Greek politics grows alongside Chinese investment, a direct result of Greek leaders' hope that China could save Greece from total financial collapse.' This poses a distinct challenge for the EU, given the fact that China was proclaimed a 'systemic rival' by the European Commission as recently as 2019 in the *EU-China Strategic Outlook* (European Commission & the HR/VP 2019). This statement was issued in cooperation with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP), the highest foreign affairs official of the EU. This 'change of mind' *vis-à-vis* China (Wright 2020) was also summarised by an EEAS official: 'it is increasingly being understood that China will not help us. A new realism with reference to China is emerging' (Anonymous 1, 2020).

Economic statecraft and 'conceptual gaps' in EU-China relations

By gaining a stake in a state's critical infrastructure, another state (such as China) can bolster its political influence. This kind of international behaviour is sometimes referred to as *economic statecraft*, 'understood as the systematic use of trade, investment and other economic instruments for strategic purposes' (Demiryol 2019:168). When applied to investments in logistical techniques and technologies, what we see is 'logistics as a political force' (Grappi & Neilson 2019). In other words, 'logistical power is political power' (Neilson 2012:328).

Or, as an EU seaport lobbyist summarised these dynamics: 'he who pays the piper calls the tune' (Anonymous 2, 2020). This has already become clear in the recent unwillingness by Greece to condemn Chinese behaviour in the European Council: in 2017, when the EU was planning to make a statement criticising China's human rights record at the United Nations human rights council, Greece blocked the action, calling the statement 'unconstructive criticism of China' (Emmott & Koutantou 2017).

Such instances exemplify how the growing exercise of Chinese economic statecraft may pose a serious challenge for the EU. Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) states that the EU 'is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.' Article 3 TEU states that in its relations with the wider world, 'the Union shall uphold and promote

its values'. As a 'systemic rival', however, China is understood to promote an 'alternative model of governance' (European Commission & the HR/VP 2019:1).

Although the *EU-China Strategic Outlook* does not specify what is meant by an 'alternative model of governance', one way to understand the difference in models of governance between China and the EU relates to their different attitudes in foreign policy. The EU has often been conceptualised as a 'normative power', meaning that the EU as a polity is fundamentally based on a set of norms and values and that the EU aims to export these norms and values beyond its own territory (Manners 2002; Sjursen 2006; Forsberg 2011). Important examples of values the EU has long attempted to export include human rights and liberal democracy (Reiterer 2014:135; Manners 2002:241). The PRC leadership, on the other hand, is broadly understood as valuing state sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference (An, Sharp & Shaw 2020:10; Van Dijk 2020:150; Maher 2016:971; Zhang 2012:89-90; Men 2011:541; Holslag 2011:309).

This Chinese attitude has been called 'sovereignism' (Pan 2012:8; Holslag 2011:309). The Chinese 'sovereignist' emphasis on the importance of state sovereignty *vis-à-vis* the EU is interesting, given the fact that the concept of sovereignty has originated in Europe and was exported to China from Western states in the 1800s during the Qing dynasty (*da qing* 大清) (Tok 2013:40). Scott (2013:40) quotes an unnamed Chinese scholar as stating that 'historically, sovereignty is what Europeans invented and what the Chinese were forced to accept, today it is what Europeans try to bury and what the Chinese hold dear.'

The process of translating the European concept of sovereignty during the Qing dynasty to create the new Chinese concept of *zhuquan* 主权 [sovereignty] was shaped by certain Chinese cultural concepts including *tianxia* 天下 [all under heaven] (Tok 2013:46). This has created a fundamentally Chinese conception of sovereignty, which adds to the current differences between China and the EU in the way sovereignty is understood.

Many Western states have moved to a 'post-sovereign' order that 'entails a stronger emphasis on human rights' (Zheng 2016:352). The existence of the EU, as a 'post-sovereign union' (Chen 2016:782), serves as an important case in point. This strongly differs from China's sovereignist worldview, where absolute state sovereignty and the related notion of non-interference still reign (Tok 2013:85). An example of this can be seen in the fierce way China has responded to Western states' criticism of the way local authorities have dealt with the recent protests in Hong Kong, with

Chinese authorities calling these criticisms 'serious interfering in China's internal affairs' (Hua 2020).

These 'conceptual gaps' (Pan 2012) in the different worldviews portrayed by China and the EU have led to a crisis in EU-China relations (Zhang 2016:463; Crookes 2013:639; Mattlin 2012:182), which is embodied in the EU calling China a 'systemic rival' in 2019 – an 'unprecedented' step in the development of the bilateral relationship between the EU and the PRC (Brattberg & Le Corre 2020).

European strategic autonomy

In the EU, policy discussions of sovereignty are currently strongly focused on the issue of 'strategic sovereignty' (Leonard & Shapiro 2019). According to some, 'European countries are increasingly vulnerable to external pressure that prevents them from exercising their sovereignty' (Leonard & Shapiro 2019:1). Therefore, strategic sovereignty has also been described as 'the capacity to act' (Leonard & Shapiro 2019). Others prefer the term 'strategic autonomy' (Franke and Varma 2019). This concept, originating from the defence sector, has gained traction among EU policy circles (Anghel et al. 2020:1). After being appointed as the new president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen called for a 'stronger Europe in the world (…) that would have strategic autonomy' (Bassot 2020:8). President of the European Council Charles Michel has called strategic autonomy 'goal No. 1 for our generation' (Tamma 2020).

Although the term 'European strategic autonomy' has subsequently been used in communications by the European Council, European Parliament, and EEAS, this term is in practice characterised by 'uncertainty and confusion' (Franke & Varma 2019). Franke and Varma (2019) have explained how among different EU member states the concept of strategic autonomy is interpreted very differently. For example, in some member states, strategic autonomy is mostly understood as autonomy from other powers, whereas in other member states it is mostly understood as the autonomy to conduct operations (Franke & Varma 2019).

A helpful definition of strategic autonomy has been suggested by Lippert, Von Ondarza and Perthes (2019:5), who define 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.' In other words, strategic autonomy is not just about being able to take foreign policy decisions

autonomously, but also about being materially able to carry out these decisions, unilaterally if necessary.

Especially because China does not share the same values and norms on which the EU according to Article 2 TEU is fundamentally based, the negative impact on the EU's strategic autonomy created by Chinese economic statecraft is problematic for the EU. The example of Greece has suggested how EU member states, increasingly influenced by China through investments in their critical infrastructures, may become less autonomous in taking foreign policy decisions – thus potentially surrendering part of their 'capacity to act' (Leonard & Shapiro 2019). This is underscored by the fact that the Greeks' unwillingness to criticise China was centred around the topic of human rights, which is one of the main values the EU is built upon.

Seen in this optic, Chinese investments in EU critical infrastructures can be seen as challenging European strategic autonomy, with the concession of the Piraeus port as an important case in point. By gaining a stake in Greece's critical infrastructure, China has increased its influence on Greece's willingness to take a foreign policy decision that would offend China and, as an EU member state, Greece has a say in the EU's common foreign policy. Since consolidating the EU's strategic autonomy is an important ambition for the EU, emphasised by both the presidents of the Commission and the Council, one would assume that the EU institutions would try to actively push back against this kind of Chinese influence on EU member states such as Greece.

Nevertheless, the story does not end at Piraeus. Other European seaports also face increasing Chinese influence. The EU's largest seaport and 'the most important port for the continent of Europe' (Shi & Xing 2015:116), the port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, is no exception. Currently, three major Chinese shipping companies have a presence at the port of Rotterdam: COSCO Shipping, China Merchants Port (*zhaoshang ju konggu gangkou* 招商局控股港口), and Hutchison Ports (*heji gangkou* 和记港口), two of them Chinese state-owned companies belonging to the 'national champions', while the third is a Hong Kong-based enterprise.

Being Hong Kong-based, some would argue that Hutchison Ports should not be understood as a Chinese company and therefore does not fit into this geopolitical analysis. Although Hong Kong remains a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the PRC and as such holds certain semi-autonomous liberties, recent events in the SAR have shown that Hong Kong is not as independent from China as some in the West had previously thought (Au 2020:vii; Van Dijk 2020:117; Bush

2016:1). Furthermore, the new Chinese economic model under president Xi Jinping 习近平, dubbed 'Xinomics' by *The Economist*, entails that the difference between private companies and the Chinese state is increasingly blurring (Economist 2020). In short, it would be naïve to omit Hutchison Ports in the analysis of growing Chinese influence on core EU infrastructural sites.

Hutchison Ports, operating the ECT Delta and ECT Euromax terminals, operates roughly half of all the container transhipment at the port of Rotterdam (Van der Putten 2019:20). This percentage is set to increase, as Hutchison Ports is currently in the process of taking over the APMT Rotterdam terminal from Danish shipping giant Maersk (Mackor 2020). With three major Chinese terminal operating companies having a significant presence at the port of Rotterdam that is increasing, and roughly one in four containers arriving in Rotterdam originating in China (Economist 2016), it is hard to overlook the growing Chinese influence on the largest seaport of the EU.

Conclusion

Will a concession like Piraeus happen again? Probably not, interviewed EU officials have asserted. However, if southern or eastern EU member states suffer a new sovereign debt crisis – for example following the current global Covid-19 pandemic – how will the EU behave? Will austerity measures again be put in place, allowing third states such as China to step in and concede or otherwise take over EU critical infrastructure? What can the EU do to counter such developments?

One measure put in place to counter the growing Chinese influence over the EU's critical infrastructure is a new screening mechanism, proposed by the European Commission. This Investment Screening Regulation, fully applying from mid-October 2020, provides a way to critically scrutinise FDI before allowing it to take place (European Commission 2019). However, the screening of investments is a member state responsibility, and it is questionable whether this will form a strong enough measure to successfully counter Chinese FDI in the EU's critical infrastructure. As an official at the European Commission told me, 'the screening mechanism is a good stepping-stone. But which specific measures have we taken in response to these large-scale Chinese investments in major EU seaports? None, really' (Anonymous 3, 2020).

We should see these developments in context. The concession of the port of Piraeus might indeed remain a unique case, and Chinese state-owned 'national champion' companies such as COSCO Shipping still play a subordinate role in the EU's top three container ports of Rotterdam, Hamburg,

and Antwerp. Nonetheless, their role is growing, and the difference between Chinese private and state companies is increasingly fading. What if Chinese enterprises concede a whole network of major seaports in the EU? Scholars like Russel and Berger (2020:8) have, indeed, pointed to the strategic importance of ports in 'weaponising' the BRI.

What has become clear is that through COSCO Shipping, China has established a degree of authority within a key EU infrastructural site, which has important implications for European strategic autonomy. At the same time, Chinese presence at the EU's largest seaport is also growing. If the EU is serious about viewing China as a systemic rival and about its own ambitions of strategic autonomy, it would be wise to counter these developments at all scales of governance, to prevent concessions like the one in Piraeus from happening again and to retain strategic autonomy in the EU's foreign policy.

This calls for increased integration of EU policymaking (Leonard & Shapiro 2020:3). As an EEAS official told me in a private interview: 'many answers to the Chinese question are not in EU-China relations, but in the internal relations of the EU' (Anonymous 1, 2020). Chinese shipping companies are increasing their presence in major EU seaports including Rotterdam, but also Antwerp, Duisburg, and Zeebrugge. If the EU wants to continue to 'call the tune', it would be wise for European policymakers to take a close look at the recent history of Piraeus and the question of who they allow to 'pay the piper'.

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- Essays are arguments-based, meaning that they do not require a section on theory. Nonetheless, they should be based on current academic discourse. Essays are discussing opinions on a contemporary topic.
- The language of an essay is allowed to be more non-scientific.
- While essays are not subjected to the same level of academic requirements as research papers, authors should make sure to include a wide variety of research sources, including academic texts.

For further information on Mapping China e.V. visit our website: www.mappingchina.org or for inquiries contact us via info@mappingchina.org

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