

**CHINA AND THE GLOBAL  
SYSTEM | AN ALTERNATIVE  
TO WESTERN MODELS?**

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**Abstract** | The upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting this month could be more significant than usual. China might use it as an opportunity to discreetly lobby members such as Australia, Indonesia and South Korea into joining its brand-new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The bank's rules – or lack thereof – oppose Washington's liberal ideas. China's efforts could be a sign that Beijing is playing less and less under the existing rules, and that it manages to impose its own. Yet studies still tend to focus on how to 'manage' China's rise, implicitly positing a sense of mastery over the state's destiny. Much less attention has been paid to how Chinese leaders and thinkers see China's ascent: their thought form a Chinese alternative to Western models, but it has largely eluded academic scrutiny. Yet this Chinese alternative raises a critically important question: whether China intends to play by the rules of international governance – or to reshape the world order.

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**Résumé** | Cette année, le forum de la Coopération économique pour l'Asie-Pacifique (APEC) pourrait être plus important que prévu. La Chine pourrait profiter de la rencontre pour discrètement faire pression sur certains membres pour qu'ils intègrent sa toute nouvelle Banque Asiatique d'Investissement pour les Infrastructures. On pense notamment à l'Australie, l'Indonésie et la Corée du Sud. La Banque s'oppose aux idées libérales de Washington. Elle pourrait être le signe que Pékin joue de moins en moins selon les règles actuelles du jeu international, et parvient à imposer les siennes. Bien des études académiques se focalisent sur la manière de « gérer » la montée en puissance de la Chine, impliquant implicitement un sentiment de maîtrise sur le destin de l'État chinois. On se penche moins sur la façon dont les dirigeants et les penseurs chinois voient eux-mêmes l'ascension de la Chine. Si leur pensée forme une véritable alternative chinoise aux modèles occidentaux, elle est relativement peu étudiée. Pourtant, ce modèle alternatif, s'il peut être défini, soulève une question d'une importance capitale : la Chine a-t-elle l'intention de jouer selon les règles de la gouvernance internationale ? Ou veut-elle, et peut-elle, véritablement remodeler l'ordre mondial ?

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# | INTRODUCTION

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*“There has been much discussion recently about how to ‘manage the rise of China’.. It gives us a sense of control and mastery, and of paternalistic superiority. With proper piloting and steady nerves on our part, the massive Chinese ship can be brought safely into harbor and put at anchor... But isn’t it possible that China does not want to be integrated into a political and security system that it had no part in shaping?... Might not China, like all rising powers of the past, including the United States, want to reshape the international system to suit its own purposes, commensurate with its own power?”*

Robert Kagan<sup>1</sup>

China is changing at such a pace that in Shanghai, two-week old maps are out of date. The nature and future of the Chinese juggernaut is under increasingly intense scrutiny. No one knows where China is headed, except that it might become the world's largest economy in a decade's time. China's ascent is changing the world, and analysts wonder whether China will play by the rules of international governance or if it will reshape the global order. This is not necessarily an either/or choice. Both strategies coexist. But which one dominates the other?

We might have a hint of answer very soon. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting begins on November 7th. Though fairly powerless, the APEC is significant because its creation was an American initiative. Its unacknowledged goal, among others, was to prevent powerful Asian countries from deviating too much from Washington's free trade rules. In other words, its unavowed aim was to make Asian countries integrate into the global system; to prevent these states from trying to change the global order. This is where China's young Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank comes into play. The Bank is a rival to similar Western institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. It challenges Washington. Will China use the APEC summit as an opportunity to convince Asian states to join its bank, despite American opposition? It would be quite ironic to see this happening within the APEC's liberal framework, which was precisely crafted by Washington to promote a globalization “made in the USA”.

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1. *Washington Post*, May 15, 2005.

China's decision-making process has attracted much attention from researchers, even though it is largely undecipherable. More oft than not, China's political system is presented as the country's Achilles' heel.<sup>2</sup> Yet, predictions that the accelerating pace of change in China would undermine the state's control, or even end in Soviet-style implosion, proved to be wrong. Unlike its Soviet counterpart, the Chinese Communist Party is actually the source of most of the change in the state. It constantly adapts itself to new challenges, thanks to a myriad of minor, crucial, usually efficient reforms. Innovation is a necessity. Professor Zhang Weiwei describes present-day China as "the world's largest laboratory for economic, social and political experimentation." Joshua Cooper Ramo pointed out that "China's problems are simply too big for old solutions, too tremendous for anything but an army of great ideas and successful implementation".<sup>3</sup> These ideas might ripple around the world; this army of great ideas is marching. Will it conquer or falter?

Beijing faces daunting challenges, from environmental deterioration to inequality and corruption. Yet all nations examine China's rise. "China's robust economic performance should be a source of inspiration for other developing countries", declared Supachai Panitchpakdi when he was at the head of the WTO.<sup>4</sup> Deng Xiaoping's approach inspired Vietnam's development mantra: "Stability, development, reform". Beijing's model is spreading by the sheer force of China's example. But does China actively project its model abroad? China's integration into the international system is not a trick, a shadow on the wall. It is a fact. So is its initiative to develop cooperation with Western countries. But there is a flip side to the coin. As Chinese planners have written in *People's Daily*, "this is a course of mutual recognition. The process of our contact with the West is a process of trying to let them understand China, as well as a process of influencing them to some extent."<sup>5</sup> To what extent precisely is the crux of the problem.

This paper explores the strategic implications of China's rise. It first presents the process of China's integration into the international system. It then explores a fundamental shift in Chinese foreign policy thought: the acknowledgment of China's Great-power status. This causes a major change in Chinese rhetoric and behavior. This paper further argues the inevitability of international resistance to China's rise, especially in East Asia. It shows that, to varying extents, China is arousing the world's enmity. It explores the duality of the Chinese reaction to this phenomenon. It argues that Chinese leaders should consider pursuing military and diplomatic restraint. It explores why Chinese policies – from economic development to territorial integrity and national identity – persist, and at times succeed, in spite of mounting resistance. It finally presents the Chinese alternative to Western models, the ideas of the persuasive thinkers who are forging China's indeterminate future – and could ultimately change the world.

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2. For instance, see <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/0bb66080-59fa-11e4-8771-00144feab7de.html#axzz3I2jf7ZE9>.

3. Joshua Cooper Ramo, "The Beijing Consensus: Notes on the New Physics of Chinese Power", The Foreign Policy Centre, 2004.

4. Supachai Panitchpakdi, "Putting the Doha Development Agenda Back on Track: Why it Matters to China", WTO and China: 2003 Beijing International Forum, Beijing, 10 November 2003, [http://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/spsp\\_e/spsp19\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/spsp_e/spsp19_e.htm).

5. See "The Choice of China's Diplomatic Strategy", *People's Daily*, Mar 19, 2003.



# | CHINA'S DUAL FOREIGN POLICY: INTEGRATION VS. ASSERTIVENESS

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During the decade spanning from Deng Xiaoping's death in 1997 to the Olympic Games of 2008, China seemed to be integrating into the global order. Beijing appeared to comply to the numerous norms and rules of international governance that were progressively strengthened since the end of the Cold War. In the United States, thinkers such as Gill Bates advocated a more nuanced policy toward Beijing than in the past. Robert Zoellick famously declared in 2005 that China ought to be a "responsible stakeholder"<sup>6</sup>. Washington's doctrine was then quite explicit: "Relationships based on shared interests and shared values are deep and lasting". American and European analysts expressed hope that China's adherence to a Western set of values would follow its adherence to international organisations such as the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank, and, globally, from China's integration into the "world community".<sup>7</sup>

## A | Integrating into the global order?

### 1 | China intends to gain weight in existing international organisations

The United Nations, World Trade Organisation and World Bank epitomize international governance. China has come to play a major role in all three.

**Increased influence at the UN** | China's role in international governance is obvious within the framework of the United Nations. China is increasingly influential at the United Nations, where it has consistently stuck

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6. Robert B. Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?", National Committee on US-China relations, New York, 2005.

7. Michel Oksenberg and Elizabeth Economy, "China Joins the World: Progress and Prospects", New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1999.



to a line of 'influence, not intervention'. The European Council on Foreign Relations points out that support for Chinese positions on human rights has rocketed from under 50% at the beginning of this decade to 74%, while the USA's has tumbled from 57% to 22%. Beijing's is increasingly capable of influencing the UN, reflecting China's diplomatic skill in playing the UN system.<sup>8</sup>

**Getting used to the WTO** | China's role within the WTO is a sign that China intends to play by the current rules of international governance. China joining – or rather re-entering – the World Trade Organization in 2001 was a powerful signal that it was integrating into the global order. The price was heavy: Beijing had to relax over 7,000 trade barriers, tariffs and quotas. But since that date, its GDP quadrupled and its economy matured. Interestingly, although China used to shy away from confrontation, it progressively got used to the WTO machinery. From 2001 to 2014, Beijing has been involved in 155 WTO cases, including 12 as complainant, 31 as respondent and 112 as third party. "Now they defend themselves," says Nicholas Lardy of the Peterson Institute, a Washington think-tank. "They initiate cases. And when they lose, they comply." China's attitude within the WTO is increasingly proactive.

**Working with the World Bank** | China's role within the World Bank is another sign that China takes an active part in international governance. The fact that China's influence grows within the World Bank is epitomized by the appointment in April 2008 of Justin Lin Yiju as chief economist of the Bank. Since China joined the World Bank in April 1980, Beijing has received more than \$53 billion from it, making Beijing one of the institution's prime recipients. It forged strong ties with the International Finance Corporation, the Bank's private sector arm. China also was the beneficiary of much policy advice from the World Bank. Now the Bank's research projects on China are increasingly collaborative. Notably, recent collaborative research between the Chinese State Council and the World Bank led to the *China 2030: Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative Society* report. It lays six strategic directions for China: completing the transition to a market economy; accelerating the pace of open innovation; going "green" to transform environmental stresses into green growth as a driver for development; expanding opportunities and services such as health, education and access to jobs for all people; modernizing and strengthening its domestic fiscal system; and seeking mutually beneficial relations with the world by connecting China's structural reforms to the changing international economy.<sup>9</sup> Such collaborative research can be used by Beijing to present a positive image of itself as a country peacefully integrating into the global order. This World Bank report has been used in setting up China's XIIth quinquennial plan, yet another sign of China's integration in the global economic system.

Moreover, China is since 2008 a donor to the World Bank's International Development Association. So not only does China play an active part in institutions of global governance. Beijing also seeks to forge the image of a benevolent, cooperative power.

## 2 | China presents itself as a "responsible" power (Shi Yinhong<sup>10</sup>)

**China's aid to Africa** | Assistance to developing countries is an excellent way for a state to promote the image of a selfless, benevolent power – while gaining influence and soft power and serving your own interests. France does it with the Agence Française de Développement. China does it too, in its own way. Yet China's growing economic clout in Africa and the nature of Beijing's involvement on the African continent causes interest and sometimes unease. Chinese investment in Africa grew from USD 210 million in 2000 to 3.17 billion in 2011.<sup>11</sup> Is the Chinese model substituting the traditional Western aid strategies? China's approach might become the frame of reference for foreign aid:

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8. Richard Gowan and Franziska Brantner, "An audit of [E]uropean power at the UN", European Council on Foreign Relations, 2008.

9. See the World Bank website, "China: Overview", <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview#2>.

10. State Council, *White paper on China's peaceful development*.

11. See "Report on Development of China's Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation, 2011-2012," [中国对外投资合作发展报告], Ministry of Commerce, December 2012.

*Providing aid on terms of its own choosing, China challenges the current foreign aid paradigm... The modes of provision are challenged by China's focus on aid that is mutually beneficial; The use of conditionalities is challenged by China's insistence on sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs; Multilateralism is challenged by China's preference of going the major foreign aid projects alone.<sup>12</sup>*

Presented by Beijing as completely selfless ("China strives to share anti-poverty experiences with African and other developing countries", says Member of the Standing Committee Fu Ying<sup>13</sup>), the bulk of Chinese financing on the African continent actually comes in the form of repayable, long-term loans. By this aid coupled to deft diplomacy, China is also securing the continent's natural resources. Moreover, China's "tied aid" tends to favour Chinese companies and creates massive business opportunities. According to one Chinese analyst, "when we provide Africa assistance of RMB 1 billion, we will get service contracts worth USD 1 billion (RMB 6 billion) from Africa."<sup>14</sup> Finally, issues of governance, equity and fairness are regularly overlooked, if not completely ignored. Chinese funding and revenue creation contributes to prop up corrupt governments.

Yet although China's aid serves as a useful policy instrument and political tool to strengthen bilateral ties, it does contribute to long-term economic development, especially regarding Chinese investment in infrastructure. So although Chinese aid is self-interested, it fills a void left by the West – whose aid, according to Chinese thinkers, can be equally self-interested. China's approach has been proactive, practical, and constructive. Incumbents of Chinese aid are incentivized to support China's claim that it acts as a "responsible stakeholder."

**Humanitarian Aid** | Like assistance to developing countries, participation in international disaster relief and humanitarian aid is an excellent way for a state to promote the image of a benevolent power. And China's approach to humanitarian aid is evolving. Beijing committed more than \$150 million in assistance after the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake. What is more, it channeled part of it via multilateral mechanisms. Within the framework of the 2008 United Nations General Assembly's humanitarian resolution, China voted in favour of the Oslo Guidelines concerning the use of military and civil defence assets in disaster relief. President Hu Jintao declared: "China's government and people are willing to walk the same road with the international community, increase interaction, strengthen cooperation, and jointly deal with all types of global challenges."<sup>15</sup> And, shortly thereafter: "In the face of great natural disasters, the people of all nations should support each other, should share the same vessel when crossing a river." The same year, China's swift and efficient reaction to the devastating Wenchuan earthquake garnered international praise. Nowadays, China contributes to the fight against the Ebola pandemic. It sent US\$5 million worth of medical supplies and dispatched three teams of highly trained medical personnel to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, the three most affected states. "Even by dispatching just a few teams, it was a signal of recognition from the Chinese of the gravity of the situation as an international emergency," said Dr J. Stephen Morrison, director of Global Health Policy Centre at Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies. "They are not running away from it, they're running towards it."<sup>16</sup> Additionally, China has built twenty anti-malarial centres in Africa.<sup>17</sup>

**Fighting piracy** | Another way to cast the image of a benevolent, cooperative power is to fight piracy. China contributes to international efforts to quell piracy, albeit on a small scale compared to its Navy's capacities. The People's Liberation Army Navy deploys to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean, carrying out accompanying escorts and deterring attacks. The Chinese Navy has sent 45 ships to the Gulf of Aden on

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12. Kristian Kjøllestad & Anne Welle-Strand, "Foreign Aid Strategies: China Taking Over?", *Asian Social Science* Vol. 6, No. 10; October 2010.

13. Fu Ying, « Answering Four Key Questions About China's Rise », *China/US Focus*, Oct 20, 2014.

14. Yang Fei, "People Should Rationally Understand the USD 20 Billion Assistance Loans to Africa," [对"200亿美元援非贷款"应理性看待], *China Radio International*, March 29, 2013, <http://qb.cri.cn/27824/2013/03/29/2165s4069180.htm>.

15. Xinhua News Agency, "Hu Jintao meets with foreign diplomats to commemorate first anniversary of earthquake", May 12, 2009.

16. As quoted in Rachel Chang's article for *The Straits Times*, « China beats bad image with big aid to Africa », August 21, 2014.

17. *Ibid.*



escort missions.<sup>18</sup> Granted, China's contribution is limited in scope. But its coordination with Western anti-piracy forces shows that Beijing makes positive parallel contributions, especially through the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction mechanism, a facilitating venue chaired by the multilateral Combined Maritime Forces and the EU Naval Force.

**Assistance in destroying Syrian chemical weapons** | In a similar vein of displaying cooperation, China provided assistance in destroying Syrian chemical weapons. The Yancheng, a missile frigate, helped escort Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons in early 2014. This event was a good opportunity for China to portray itself as a responsible power, although China's contribution was limited and mostly symbolic. This operation means little to international observers who are well aware that China was opposed to an intervention in Syria. But it does mean something to Chinese citizens, especially if China's contribution is amplified by propaganda. It conveys at home the image of China as a major world actor and as a "responsible stakeholder". "Dozens of Chinese nationals in Cyprus converged on the quay of Limassol port, about 160 miles west of the Syrian port city of Latakia from where the chemicals were shipped. Loudspeakers blared Chinese music as Chinese flags were waved by women in traditional yellow and red costumes," Reuters reports<sup>19</sup>. Thus this operation caused pride and prompted nationalistic support from Chinese citizens.

**Arms treaties** | Another sign that China is integrating into the global order is its change in attitude regarding arms limitations. The 1998-2008 decade saw an unprecedented increase in Beijing's participation in arms control regimes. China signed or ratified several important treaties: the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Chemical and the Biological Weapons conventions, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the UN Register on Conventional Arms and the Convention on Conventional Weapons. Beijing also founded the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association in 2005 as a sign of goodwill. It was granted a Special Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in 2005. And when critics argue that China's cooperation remains limited, China can point to the US's sometimes uncooperative attitude regarding arms limitations to defuse critics.

### 3 | China claims to be fully integrated in the international system

What stands out is that China plays an active part in institutions of global governance like the UN, WTO and World Bank. And it seeks to forge the image of a benevolent, cooperative power by "helping" developing countries, by complying to various extents to arms limitations and by its (relative) participation in fighting piracy, disaster relief and other international operations. Now China claims to be fully integrated in the international system. This claim is strengthened by three evolutions in its foreign policy. First, China has integrated into existing Asian institutions like the ASEAN. Second, its tensions with Taiwan have eased. And finally, China has an important role to play in international negotiations like the "Six-party talks".

**It has integrated into the ASEAN** | Maritime disputes notwithstanding, China claims that its relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has steadily improved over the course of the last 15 years, pointing to growing economic ties and a shared will to build regional security through multilateral processes. China intended to convey an image of itself as a stabilizing force and "growth driver". China's drive for improved relations with ASEAN member states was especially clear in the 1998-2008 decade. Hu Jintao's 2002 visits to member states emphasized interdependence and cooperation: "China's development would be impossible without Asia, and Asia's prosperity without China."<sup>20</sup>

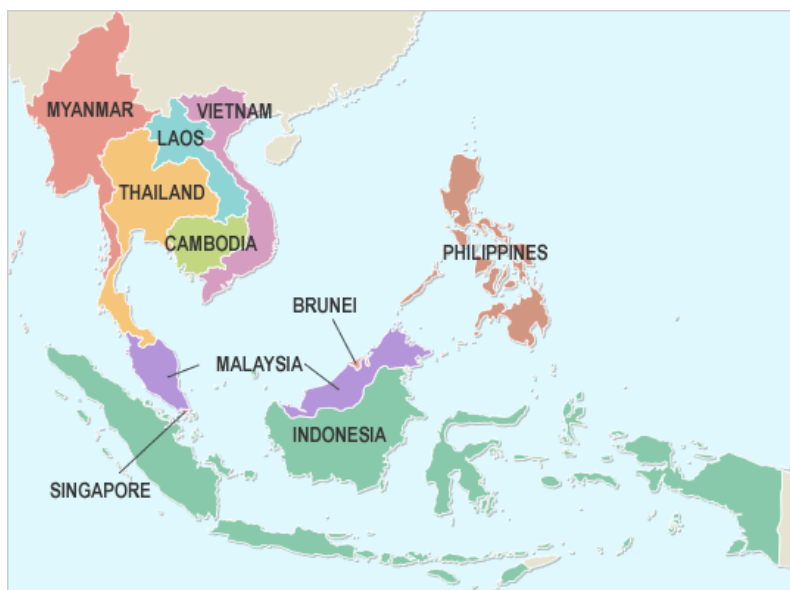
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18. See more at <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/answering-four-key-questions-about-chinas-rise/#sthash.H3IzcDjt.dpuf/>

19. Reuters, *Chinese warship in Cyprus to aid Syrian chemical weapons removal*, January 4, 2014.

20. Quoted in *Asia Times*, 25 April 2002.

Map 1 | ASEAN members



Source | <http://www.snappcambodia.com>

**Its tensions with Taiwan have eased** | Tensions between China and Taiwan have eased. This became obvious since 2008 and the accession to power in Taipei of Ma Ying-jeou. Seeking reassurance and cooperation with Beijing, the new leader was warmly welcomed by mainland Chinese leaders. His election was deemed a “major and positive change”. Taiwan’s democratization in 1986 meant that voices in favor of a *de jure* independence of the island could be heard, and Ma’s predecessors Chen Shui-bian and Lee Teng-hui took steps in that direction. But since Ma Ying-jeou took office, cross-Strait relations improved markedly, with numerous visits from delegations of PRC officials, agreements on transport, financial cooperation, food safety and industrial standards, culminating in the signature in June 2010 of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement.<sup>21</sup> For Taiwan, access to Chinese markets and the mainland’s low real estate and labor costs is vital. For Beijing, economic interdependence and integration can be used as a bargaining chip towards reunification.

**China has an important role to play in international negotiations like the “Six-party talks”** | More oft than not, China’s participation in multilateral talks about its problematic North Korean neighbor is presented in Beijing as a sign that China is integrated into the global order. Dealing with such thorny issues bolstered China’s international influence as Washington’s efforts sometimes seem to be of little or no avail. In sum, China gained weight in existing international organisations: the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, and the World Bank. It presents itself as a “responsible” power: it provides aid to developing states; participates in international disaster relief; fights Ebola; quells piracy; and has changed its attitude regarding arms limitations. It has integrated into the ASEAN, its tensions with Taiwan have eased, and it plays an important role in international negotiations. In short, China did not overthrow the existing order. It became part of it.

One can infer that first, the Chinese have the feeling of having made a genuine effort to comply with the rules; and second, that China should reap the benefits of that effort in terms of international reputation. However, China remains unloved. For instance, China’s aid efforts is sometimes portrayed as merely a foul neo-colonialist attempt to access markets and natural resources.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, some Chinese may feel like China’s efforts have been completely overlooked.

21. Richard Bush, *Uncharted Strait: The Future of China-Taiwan Relations*, Brookings Institution, 2013.

22. See for example <http://www.topix.com/forum/afam/T306JR5LVG8O7U0UV>.

In addition, the 2008 financial crisis has significantly weakened the West and gave confidence to a less-affected China. As Edward Luttwak points out,

*In a process disregarded at the time but quite evident in retrospect, the 2008 financial crisis, the seeming downfall of the 'Washington Consensus' and the seeming vindication of the 'Beijing Consensus' greatly emboldened the Chinese ruling elite, inducing a veritable behavioral shift that became manifest in 2009-2010. There was a sudden change in the tone and content of Chinese declarations, which became sharply assertive on many different issues, from monetary policy to the relevance of Western democracy. More strikingly, mostly dormant territorial disputes were loudly revived with India, Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam – and all more or less at the same time, amplifying the effect. Actual incidents duly followed with the vessels or islands outposts of Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam, with successive episodes that have continued till the present writing.<sup>23</sup>*

It is this double phenomenon – the lack of recognition of Chinese efforts and China's empowerment – that resulted in the sudden change of 2009-2010 and the questioning of Deng Xiaoping's low-posture doctrine.

## **B | China's not-so-low posture**

### **1 | Deng Xiaoping's policy**

A great power's rise is an unavoidably rocky road. Chinese policy makers have long been cautious about mentioning China's rise. The Chinese term for "rise", 'jueqi', was extremely seldomly used. It was preferred by the euphemism "development". This "development" was guided by a slogan attributed to Deng Xiaoping: *tao gang yang hui*, which literally means "hide brightness and nourish obscurity". It was officially translated, however, as "bide our time and hide our capabilities". Deng Xiaoping abandoned revolutionary China's policy of supporting Communist columns throughout the world and its defiance regarding international institutions. Instead, he forged a foreign policy of "not sticking your head out" and focusing on economic development, "yielding on small issues with the long term in mind." However, when China's economy took off, Chinese thinkers found it increasingly hard to nourish obscurity. With the largest population on Earth, Chinese companies and citizens all over the world and defence budgets growing in double-digits, Deng Xiaoping's approach came under increasingly vocal criticism.

### **2 | Short-lived "Peaceful Rise"**

Then the taboo was broken. Not mentioning China's rise became impossible. The "Peaceful Rise" concept (renamed "Peaceful Development") was launched by Zheng Bijian's 2004 research project. An official and a scholar who rose to the distinguished position of Vice-President of the Central Party school, Zheng Bijian was seen as a close adviser of President Hu Jintao. Zheng Bijian directed a large-scale comparative research project on rising powers throughout history. Its conclusion: the quasi-systematic failure of powers "which chose the road of aggression and expansion". He thereafter sought to defuse fears over China's rise: "China will not take the road of Germany of World War I, or Germany and Japan of World War II – using violence to pillage resources and seek hegemony". Instead, he claimed, China's rise would create a "win-win" situation for other states, contributing to global stability and prosperity. Zheng Bijian's thought garnered support from China's then-growing cluster of 'liberal internationalists'. "Peaceful rise" caught on and was used in a number of public speeches in 2003 and 2004. However, it faced a counterattack by assertive nationalists. Those were

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23. Edward Luttwak, *The Rise of China and the Logic of Strategy*, Harvard University Press, London, 2012.

supported by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, vexed that it couldn't take part in the development of the "Peaceful Rise" concept. This caused fierce bureaucratic in-fighting, and the phrase was quietly dropped by senior Chinese officials.

### 3 | A great power's diplomacy

The heated debate within China about the country's foreign policy is not new. But the shift in China's actual policy happened recently, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Today many argue that Chinese diplomacy should match its position as a great power. For example, Wang Yizhou, associate dean in the School of International Studies at Peking University, writes in *Creative Involvement: a New Direction for China's Diplomacy*:

*In the changing world order, the international community badly needs China to play a more active role in all fields of global governance, and to make a contribution commensurate with its current strength and influence. Over the medium and long term, in the absence of full-scale confrontation between major powers, no external force or emergency can derail China's greater international involvement... By leading change and increasing its role in world politics and economy, society and culture, and environmental protection and military security, China will become one of the driving forces of major international organisations.*

Another interesting aspect of this assertiveness, defended by scholars such as Yang Yi, is to openly promote Chinese soft power. Over a hundred 'Confucius Centres' are to be built for the promotion of the Chinese language and culture. Xinhua, the party-controlled newswire, has been considerably expanded. But we should not conclude that Zheng Bijian's ideas have completely lost their appeal, even if the Chinese political landscape has changed. Prominent scholar Wang Jisi, for instance, still advocates "modesty and prudence". "Grabbing capital, resources and markets by military force as the world witnessed in the past is unnecessary in today's world, and it is unacceptable as a policy option for China... Wars and military expansion are no longer the workable and necessary way to attain economic expansion" says Fu Ying, Member of the Standing Committee and Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the 12th National People's Congress of China. On China's relationship with the US, she demonstrated a willingness to cooperate: "Both countries need a prosperous and stable Asia. We should identify areas where we agree and work on them. In areas where we can't agree, let's put aside differences for further discussion."<sup>24</sup>

Mark Leonard elegantly sums it up: "Although the [Peaceful Rise] term has lost its official endorsement, the remarkable debate which the phrase provoked is continuing to rage. The liberal internationalists, who want China to join the Western world and fight for its rights within the system, are continuing to struggle with the neo-comms whose long-term goal is to build an alternative system with China in its centre." As it happens, both sides of the debate share a crucial common point: "Chinese liberal internationalists and neo-comms alike are pushing against the barriers of Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy orthodoxy."<sup>25</sup>

### 4 | The impact of Nationalism

In this debate, the neo-comms' assertive arguments are strengthened by strong popular nationalism. Nationalism is a deep seam in which the arguments of Chinese neo-comms tap. Their thoughts are propagated in influent nationalist magazines like the *Global Times*. Take professor Yan Xuetong. A media-savvy admirer of Churchill, he sees China's all-round military aggrandizement as key for world stability and the protection of Chinese interests. The popular, populist Professor further argues that 'Peaceful Rise' fails to reassure the world, and emphasizes containment over appeasement. Concessions, according to him, only leads to greater demands. Ultimately, even more concessions will be demanded. In the same vein,

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24. Fu Ying, « Answering Four Key Questions About China's Rise », China. US Focus, October 20, 2014.

25. Mark Leonard, *What does China think?*, Harper Collins, London, 2008.

declarations from Chinese officials that foreign demands hurt “the feelings of more than a billion Chinese people” are strengthened by recent outbursts of popular nationalism. The increased frequency of patriotic protests is a product of education. According to Andrew J. Nathan, professor of Chinese politics at Columbia University, Chinese nationalism “generates debates about why China is weak and how it can be strong; about lost territory; and about reclaiming a leading position in the world. With the fading of the Communist Party’s utopian ideals, nationalism remains its most reliable claim to the people’s loyalty.”<sup>26</sup> The Chinese public is reared on nationalist education. The nationalist sentiment was seeded by Chinese authorities, especially through the national education’s emphasis on historical Japanese atrocities.

Yet it should be noted that Chinese leaders only selectively allow explosions of popular nationalist anger to take place. The nationalist sentiment is instrumentalized by Chinese leaders that conveniently point to them to justify their tough stance on certain issues. For example, anti-US demonstrations after the 1999 accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during NATO strikes helped strengthen China’s determination to stand up to America. It is a way to gain bargaining leverage. Chinese leaders can also publicly repress nationalist protests to signal their will to avoid conflict – although at high cost for the regime’s legitimacy. At any rate, the determination at the grassroots level and at the top of the Party to restore China’s standing in the world has revolutionary implications for geopolitics. As Francois Godement points out, “On foreign policy, the nationalists and hardliners seem to be rallying behind Xi, who fulfils their wish for a strongman. For example, in March 2013, leading nationalist general Luo Yan, who has ranted against “traitors”, subscribed loudly to “the leadership of Xi”.”<sup>27</sup> In the battle between Chinese liberal internationalists and neo-comms, the seeming downfall of the ‘Washington Consensus’ seems to have given decisive weight to the neo-comms.

## 5 | The ‘ever-developing’ posture

Ironically, China still often refers to itself as still “developing”. According to Susan Shirk, “The phrase helps manage expectations of what China “should do” to contribute to international problems. And it functions as a convenient justification for Chinese behavior.” Foreign Policy calls it China’s favourite foreign policy trick:

*Think of Beijing’s phraseology as a humblebrag: We’re kicking butt... and we’re still only “developing.” In some ways, it’s the opposite of the famous quip about Brazil (said by non-Brazilians): It’s “the country of the future – and always will be.” Rather, the idea of China as a developing country facing both great obstacles and a bright future is a calculated rhetorical attempt to act like a superpower without bearing the responsibilities of one.*<sup>28</sup>

More oft than not, when China is accused of shirking responsibilities, Chinese leaders dodge the attack by saying something like “as a country accounting for one fifth of the world population, growing prosperous and staying stable in itself is a very important contribution of China to the world.”<sup>29</sup> However, China’s tendency to refer to itself as “developing” is not systematic anymore. Foreign policy thought has greatly evolved in China since Deng Xiaoping’s low posture. Indeed, as Francois Godement points out,

*The 30-year period beginning with Deng Xiaoping has come to an end. Xi [Jinping] has dispensed with statements about “low profile” inherited from Deng and is clearly claiming a global reach that is no longer based on the idea of the “democratisation of international relations” of which Hu spoke. Xi has immediately established a claim that China is a global power.*<sup>30</sup>

This shift in foreign policy thought has a crucial impact on China’s rhetoric and behavior on the world stage.

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26. Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, “The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China’s Search for Security”, New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.

27. Francois Godement, “Xi Jinping’s China”, European Council on Foreign Relations, July 2013.

28. Fu Ying, “Answering Four Key Questions About China’s Rise”, China. US Focus, Oct 20, 2014.

29. See more at: <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/answering-four-key-questions-about-chinas-rise/#sthash.H3IzcDjt.dpuf>.

30. Francois Godement, *op. cit.*



# | CHINA'S INCREASINGLY MUSCULAR RHETORIC AND BEHAVIOR: AN ENLARGED MILITARY DOCTRINE?

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## A | China now defends a strong interpretation of its « core interests »

China's all-out military aggrandizement is motivated by its need to defend far-reaching interests. But the strategic concepts that its military developed are problematic to China's neighbours. And although China avoids escalation, it does assert its presence on disputed territories. In this uneasy context, the strengthening of China's armed force is mirrored by other Asian states.

### 1 | All over the world

China's all-out military aggrandizement is motivated by its need to defend far-reaching interests. Nowhere is that more visible than for its Navy. China needs to defend its Sea Lanes Of Communications (SLOC). Those key maritime passageways hold tremendous strategic importance. China imports roughly 60% of its energy. Its energy acquisition efforts are expanding globally. So China is extremely dependant on seaborne crude oil transportation. And obviously, the Chinese export-oriented economy relies on shipping traffic. Chokepoints such as the Straits of Malacca, Strait of Hormuz and the South China Sea thus hold enormous geopolitical value. The expression "maritime Silk Road of the 21st century" has been used.<sup>31</sup> The South China Sea in

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31. See <http://www.bangkokpost.com/business/news/436137/china-vision-of-a-21st-century-maritime-silk-road-is-vital-to-asean>.

particular is China's main artery of transportation for vital energy imports and commodity exports.<sup>32</sup>

In defending Sea Lanes of Communication, China faces asymmetrical threats such as smuggling, unregulated fishing, pirates and terrorists that are best dealt with multilaterally.<sup>33</sup> But the Chinese navy also has to be able to act unilaterally. Member of the Standing Committee Fu Ying insisted once again in late October 2014 that "Free and unimpeded passage in the South China Sea is crucial for China as a major trading country. Maintaining such freedom remains one of our priorities."<sup>34</sup> The closure of such key sea lanes could well trigger naval conflicts. Increasingly assertive posturing by naval powers in the South China Sea compromises regional stability. Given the multiple claims and counterclaims in the South China Sea and the high number of worrying incidents, it could be a potential flashpoint between naval powers.

Thus in the South China Sea, the Chinese navy must be powerful enough to create a balance of power with other navies and, if needs be, to use naval force to safeguard its interests. Yet China's interest is not in war but in maintaining peace, security and open passage in SLOCs. "Should naval conflicts occur in the sea, the freedom of voyage of shipping traffic would be curtailed and the economic and strategic interests of the coastal states and international community would come under grave threat."<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, China has citizens all over the world. According to recent estimates, over 50 million Chinese live overseas, including 30 million in South East Asia.<sup>36</sup> In 2010, they sent home over 50 billion dollars, according to the World Bank. As recently as August 2014, China has evacuated almost 900 of its workers in Libya. It wasn't the first time. The BBC reports that during the Libyan civil war in 2011, China evacuated 35,860 nationals.<sup>37</sup>

## 2 | Problematic concepts

Therefore, China's all-out military aggrandizement is understandable. It is motivated by its need to defend far-reaching interests. However, China's military doctrine is problematic to its neighbours.

China's "String of Pearls" strategy stirs controversy. This concept describes China's efforts to increase access to ports from the South China Sea through the Strait of Malacca, and across the Indian Ocean. As Christopher I. Pehrson from the US Army War College points out,

*Each "pearl" in the "String of Pearls" is a nexus of Chinese geopolitical influence or military presence. Hainan Island, with recently upgraded military facilities, is a "pearl." An upgraded airstrip on Woody Island, located in the Paracel archipelago 300 nautical miles east of Vietnam, is a "pearl." A container shipping facility in Chittagong, Bangladesh, is a "pearl." Construction of a deep water port in Sittwe, Myanmar, is a "pearl," as is the construction of a navy base in Gwadar, Pakistan. Port and airfield construction projects, diplomatic ties, and force modernization form the essence of China's "String of Pearls."<sup>38</sup>*

This strategy seem primarily driven by the need to secure Sea Lanes of Communication and energy resources. China is not pursuing an openly aggressive course. It does not seek hegemony along the "String of Pearls." In setting up the ports and facilities, Chinese leaders have refraining from pressuring neighboring governments. Beijing is focused on achieving practical strategic objectives. Its approach is generally benign and coupled with development packages and diplomatic gestures.

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32. David Rosenberg, "Governing the South China Sea", Harvard Asia Quarterly Vol. XII, No. 3 & 4 (Winter 2010).

33. The Cooperative Mechanism in the Straits of Malacca, for example.

34. Fu Ying, « Answering Four Key Questions About China's Rise », China. US Focus, October 20, 2014.

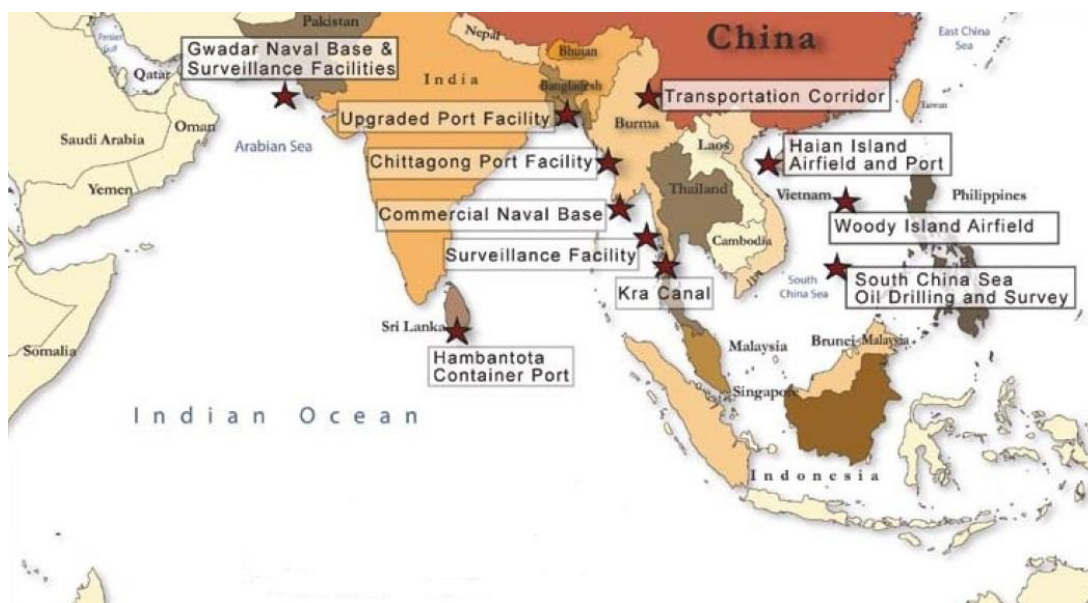
35. Nazery Khalid, "Sea Lines Under Strain", available at [www.mima.gov.my/mima/wp-content/uploads/sealinesunderstrain.pdf](http://www.mima.gov.my/mima/wp-content/uploads/sealinesunderstrain.pdf).

36. P. Guerassimoff, *La Chine et sa nouvelle diaspora*, Paris, Ellipse 2012.

37. BBC News Africa, "Hundreds of Chinese workers are evacuated from Libya", August 7, 2014, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28684555>.

38. Christopher I. Pehrson, *String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenge of China's Rising Power across the Asian Littoral*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006.

Map 2 | “String of pearls”: Chinese political influence or military presence astride oil routes



Source | <http://abhijit-suryawanshi.blogspot.fr>

Nonetheless, the Chinese strategy causes unease. In India, amid talk of ‘encirclement’, New Delhi has responded to Beijing’s presence by developing its own military, especially around the choke points of the Malacca Strait. Analysts in Washington present the “String of Pearls” as a tangible manifestation of China’s growing national power. A US Army War College paper on the “String of Pearls” warned, as early as 2006, that “The expanding capability of China’s military power threatens not only Taiwan – and therefore the United States – but also challenges U.S. friends and allies throughout the Western Pacific, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. Unchecked or disproportionate, China’s military modernization could lead to a major reordering of the balance of power throughout the Pacific.”<sup>39</sup> How China uses its “String of Pearls” can serve as a litmus test for the future course of Sino-American relations.

China is not the only state with far-reaching territorial claims in the South China Sea. The Spratly Islands are claimed in their entirety by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, while portions are claimed by Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines. In total, these states occupy 45 islands, albeit by relatively small numbers of military forces. But it is China’s 9-Dash line that stirs the most controversy – along China’s resistance to handling disputes in an international arena. The 9-Dash line is a controversial demarcation line encompassing almost the whole South China Sea. China says the line’s historical legitimacy is based on expeditions and fishing activities “dating as far back as the fifteenth century, putting it at odds with the boundaries UNCLOS has enforced for the region since 1994”, as Beina Xu remarks<sup>40</sup>. The 9-Dash line is present on a new passport China issued in 2012, as well as on a map China presented to the UN in 2009. Both moves drew international backlash.

### 3 | The *fait accompli* strategy

Aware of this “grim international environment” (Wang Jisi), China avoids escalation. But it does assert its presence on disputed territories. It is a delicate balance, sometimes dubbed “*fait accompli*” approach. What stands out is that China’s “String of Pearls” and *fait accompli* strategy stem from China’s interpretation of its “core interests”. The heart of the problem is that China’s extensive definition of its “core interests” demands an all-out military aggrandizement.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Beina Xu, “*South China Sea Tensions*”, Council on Foreign Relations, May 14, 2014.



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## B | China's military expansion and security dilemma

In recent years, China's military expenditures have increased at a rate of approximately 9 percent per annum in real terms. Its 2014 defense budget reaches \$132 billion, the second largest in the world. The People's Liberation Army also increased its training tempo. There is much talk about China's efforts in developing military technologies.

### 1 | Modern Military

In the People's Liberation Army, past neglect has long been remedied. China now turns to futuristic technologies. In 2011 alone, China spent \$25.8 billion on new weapons and related research and development.<sup>41</sup> China's J-20 prototype stealth fighter is as advanced as one of the most modern American fighters – the F-22 Raptor. China also plans to purchase as a fleet of Russian Su-35 heavy fighters, capable of carrying the K100 air-to-air missile able to shoot down a target up to 300 kilometers away.<sup>42</sup>

### 2 | A New Navy

The People's Liberation Army Ground Force is the largest standing army in the world, and is modernizing. Yet the development of the Chinese Navy is even more significant. Beijing is getting aircraft carriers for force projection and great power status. The blue water aspirations of the People's Republic can be traced back to the 1970s. The ex-Ukrainian *Liaoning* carrier is not sufficient to meet China's needs. The production of an anticipated four domestically produced aircraft carriers has begun. China is also acquiring brand new submarines, ideal for area denial. Its new class of 9000-tonne submarines can carry twelve ballistic missiles. Only the United States, Russia, France, Britain and India have such vessels.

### 3 | An arms race?

PLA Navy officers expressed hope that China's aircraft carriers will allow the nation to project its power to the "Second island chain" – from Japan to the Marshall islands – within seven years.<sup>43</sup> It might be wishful thinking, since the strengthening of China's armed force is mirrored by other Asian states. In Japan, new funding was sought for 42 F-35 fighter jets. Indonesia is building eight new diesel-electric submarines. South Korea's defence spending jumped from \$17.1 billion in 2000 to \$28.6 billion in 2011. India acquired a top-notch aircraft carrier, the INS Vikramaditya. In sum, although Beijing is unwilling to trigger an arms competition, its military aggrandizement jeopardizes the security of its neighbors. It creates a 'security dilemma'. Asia risks a dangerous arms escalation. Yet the Chinese public remains unsatisfied. "Eighty percent of the population wants us to use the military," says Yang Yi, former director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University in Beijing. Although the accuracy of this number can be discussed, he raises a point: "They're asking, 'Why are we so weak? Why are we wasting money on our Navy if we are not going to use it?'"<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Beijing's diplomatic boldness coupled to its rise in military strength causes mounting resistances to China.

Adversarial reactions are bound to appear as China's growth goes beyond the level that can be accepted by other states.

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41. "S. Korea spurs regional arms race headed by China", Yonhap News Agency, October 2014.

42. See <http://www.news.com.au/technology/a-new-arms-race-is-exploding-into-asia-with-an-expensive-and-extensive-shopping-list-of-new-weapons-whos-buying-what-and-where-does-australia-stand/story-e6frnr-1226825644654>.

43. Qianjiang Evening News, "China to Take Second Island Chain by 2020", June 2013.

44. As quoted by "China's 'Security Dilemma' Risks Arms Race in Asia", *Time magazine*, May 16, 2012.



# | MOUNTING RESISTANCE: HOW CHINA'S RISE IS INCITING OPPOSITION BY A COALITION OF STATES

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China's behavior is driving its neighbors into a camp of strategic containment, in spite of economic ties. China seems to have acquired a knack for antagonising almost all of its neighbors simultaneously. Yet current Chinese policies seem to persist in spite of mounting resistance.

## **A | China's behavior is driving its neighbors into a camp of strategic containment, in spite of economic ties**

In different ways and to varying extents, Australia, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines take steps to resist China's military aggrandizement.

### **1 | Australia's discreet coalition-building**

China's inclination for bilateralism conflicts with Australia's preference for a collective security mechanism, especially in dealing with maritime claims. Reacting to Beijing's military modernization and assertiveness, the Australian government hinted in 2009 at what it considered acceptable military strength for China. "(China's military) modernization appears potentially to be beyond the scope of what would be required for a conflict over Taiwan," its *Defence White Paper 2009* notes. Australia checks the rise of China's military power by the only way it can: coalition-building. In *The Rise of China vs the Logic of Strategy*, Edward Luttwak shows that Australian initiatives abound. First, the *Australia-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership* issued on September 7,

2009 is explicit: "Australia and Vietnam will foster greater openness and cooperation in the defence relationship by continued personnel exchanges and human resources training (and) ships visits". Second, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd signed in August 2008 a *Memorandum of Understanding On Defence Cooperation*. Now the armed forces of Singapore train in Queensland, Australia. Third, the *Five Power Defence Arrangement* still commits Australia, the UK and New Zealand "to consult on a response to any armed attack or threat against Malaysia and Singapore". Finally, Australia has most of all strong ties with Japan. Both are close US allies. Notably, Prime Minister Julia Gillard visited Japan in April 2001. "Japan is Australia's closest partner in Asia", she declared, before emphasizing the steps made towards collective security:

*We face a number of shared security challenges... Australia's relationship with Japan on security and defence issues has grown to become one of the closest and most important that either of us has... our Foreign Affairs and Defence ministers meet regularly for "2+2" meetings. This is the only "2+2" meeting that Japan has with any country other than the United States, and one of only two "2+2" meetings Australia has in Asia... We have stepped up our participation in joint military exercises with one another... Australia is keen to see new opportunities for cooperation.*<sup>45</sup>

"The threat is not mentioned because there is only one candidate for that role,"<sup>46</sup> Luttwak notes. In sum, Australian initiatives have come as an alternative model to Chinese bilateralism. Canberra progressively builds a structure of collective security in Asia. In other words, Australia is weaving a coalition to check China's military modernization and assertiveness.

## 2 | Japan's pivot from pacifism

Japan is happy to join this nascent camp of Chinese containment. Sino-Japanese relations have become extremely tense. According to a recent poll by Tokyo research group *Genron NPO*, a staggering 93% of Japanese respondents have a negative impression of China. Worse, more than half Chinese respondents envisage a future conflict with Japan.<sup>47</sup> This enmity is not new. Nonetheless, inter-state relations were not always freezing cold between Tokyo and Beijing. Before Shinzo Abe took power, Yasuhiro Nakasone was in favour of friendly relations with Beijing. Minister Ozawa Ichiro's 2009 visit to Beijing was intended to strengthen relations with China. Yet, concern was expressed even during a friendly visit designed to strengthen relations between China and Japan. When Ozawa Ichiro met with General and Defence Minister Liang Guanglie, he had to "express his concern about China's continuing military buildup." Ozawa is said to have declared: "There is sentiment in Japan that sees China's modernization as a threat. If Japan were to strengthen armaments, it would not bring good results for the future of Japan and China."<sup>48</sup>

From there on, China's image in Japan deteriorated, while – crucially – Japanese perceptions of US and Japanese troops got way better. First, tensions have risen over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. A single incident in particular dramatically escalated tensions on September 7, 2010. A Chinese trawler collided with Japanese coast guards. China's reaction was reckless. It included for instance the interruption of rare-earth shipments to Japan. Japanese shops were ransacked in China. It radically changed public perceptions of China in Japan. The same year, China failed to firmly condemn North Korean torpedoing of a South Korean ship (46 deaths) and artillery bombing of a South Korean islet. Beijing seemed to show support to Pyongyang. China's lenient, limited reaction did nothing to reassure Tokyo.

Sino-Japanese tensions have been building steadily since then. In late 2012, Japanese Prime minister Yoshihiko Noda announced that his government was considering purchasing the islands (which belong to a Japanese individual according to Japanese law). It caused fierce anti-Japanese demonstrations in China. In

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45. Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Julia Gillard, MP, "Keynote Address to the Japan National Press Club", Friday, April 22, 2011.

46. Edward Luttwak, *op. cit.*

47. See [http://www.genron-npo.net/pdf/2014forum\\_d.pdf](http://www.genron-npo.net/pdf/2014forum_d.pdf).

48. See "Ozawa expresses concern over China's military buildup", Japan Today, December 16, 2009.

their wake, both China's Marine Surveillance agency and the Japan Coast Guard intensified their patrols in disputed waters. The latter half of 2012 saw a serious setback to Japanese investment in China. On December of that year, a Chinese reconnaissance plane penetrated uninvited into Japanese airspace above the islands. In response, Japan scrambled its fighter jets. On January 30, 2013, a Chinese frigate locked its firing radar on the Japanese destroyer *Yudachi*. In November of that year, China set up an Air Defense Identification Zone in the East China Sea. It covers the contested Senkaku Islands. It also raises the number of fighter planes involved in patrol or intercept missions over the disputed waters. It was seen as a threatening move and escalated an already tense situation. In sum, "against the backdrop of China's growing military power, the island dispute has increased concerns in Tokyo about Beijing's regional intentions and the adequacy of Japan's security, while stoking nationalistic politics in both capitals", as Sheila Smith of the Council on Foreign Relations notes.<sup>49</sup> What also stands out is that such incidents could precipitate an armed response by either side.

Second, Japanese and American armed forces improved their image after the 2011 tsunami. The swift and efficient assistance in disaster relief they provided, as well as their extreme interoperability, radically changed public perceptions in Japan: "Now", the expansion and diversification of Japanese military capabilities is impeded only by extreme fiscal stringency – instead of by the very stiff domestic political opposition that had always been the insurmountable barrier."<sup>50</sup> Symbolically, Japan and the United States abandoned the idea of relocating the Okinawa base and removing US troops.

### 3 | Vietnam's unnatural rapprochement with the US

Like Japan, Vietnam is determined to resist Chinese power. The national identity of the Vietnamese was forged by resisting its giant neighbor. The current generation remembers the February 1979 war. China was allied to the Khmer Rouge. It sought to force Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia, which the latter had just invaded. An estimated 200,000 Chinese soldiers were sent. But they were contained by a much smaller number of Vietnamese border troops who mounted a harassing, elastic defense. China withdrew its soldiers barely a month after its attack. It had failed to humble its defiant neighbor. Confident in its military, but aware of the overwhelming imbalance in power, Vietnam sought to forge an alliance with a Great Power. It signed in 1978 a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR. This did not improve relations between Vietnam and China. There is also palpable anti-Chinese sentiment in Vietnam. For instance, in 1975, numerous ethnic Han Vietnamese were expelled from Vietnam by bus or boat.

Sino-Vietnamese relations are not only endangered by historic resentment. Vietnam increasingly sees Beijing's military growth as disrupting regional balances of power. The two countries repeatedly clash over incompatible territorial claims. In May, a Chinese oil rig was dispatched in waters claimed by both countries. The move led to a series of ramming incidents between Chinese and Vietnamese vessels. Vietnam sees such Chinese behavior as obstreperous, unruly and arrogant. It was a defiant Vietnam that hosted the 2010 ASEAN meeting, intended as a multinational negotiation forum to internationalize maritime disputes and avoid the trap of Chinese bilateralism. Vietnam was pleased to see the US adopt a new posture undermining China's claims: "legitimate claims to maritime space in the South China Sea should be derived solely from legitimate claims to land features". This new posture angered China. It reflects a notable Vietnam-US rapprochement (in spite of the chronic denial of political rights in Vietnam). This politically unnatural, tacit alliance was anticipated by the Lower Mekong Initiative. It implies diplomatic port visits by American warships and unprecedented joint sea exercises. According to Rear Admiral Ron Horton, "Exchanges like this are vital for our navies to gain a greater understanding of one another, and build important relationships for the future". Analyst Kao Weimin reacted to this rapprochement by an article unambiguously titled "The US and Vietnam Must Not Behave Unscrupulously in the South China Sea"<sup>51</sup>:

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49. Sheila Smith, "A Sino-Japanese Clash in the East China Sea", Council on Foreign Relations, April 2013.

50. Edward Luttwak, *op. cit.*

51. Kao Wei-Min: "The US and Vietnam Must Not Behave Unscrupulously in the South China Sea", Ta Kung Pao, August 10, 2010.

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*Should China and Vietnam truly come into confrontation, no aircraft carrier of any country can make Vietnam secure... Vietnam must not play a dangerous game between China and the United States; that it playing with fire.*

Such veiled threats will not deter Vietnam from resisting Chinese power. The US-Vietnam rapprochement is definitely a reaction to China's military growth and obstreperous behaviour, even though other factors played a role – such as the partial lift of the American arms embargo on Vietnam. In short, it came as a result of Palmerstonian Vietnamese diplomacy.

#### **4 | How China lost Indonesia**

Indonesia also joined this camp of strategic containment. First, Jakarta sees China as threatening Indonesia's claim to regional primacy – an ambition based on Indonesia's heavyweight demography and its geographic extent. Second, Indonesian leaders did not forget Communist China's support for the Partai Komunis Indonesia, the world's third largest Communist Party. Beijing was viewed as complicit with this dangerous Communist Party who planned attempted a coup d'état in 1965. From there on, China was long viewed as one of Indonesia's "main threats". Third, Sino-Indonesian state relations were further strained by periodic outbursts of violence against the Chinese in Indonesia. This violence was sometimes institutionalized, for example when Chinese-language schools were shut down. As Luttwak points out,

*In theory all this is either in the past or unrelated to Sino-Indonesian state relations. In practice it is the subtext that colors reciprocal perceptions – Chinese officials despise Indonesians as self-indulgent, yet periodically violent with their Chinese compatriots... As for Indonesian officials, they are congenitally suspicious of Chinese intentions.<sup>52</sup>*

Add to this historical resentment the ongoing dispute over the Natuna Islands – islets ten times closer to Indonesia than to the closest Chinese coast. In 2009, eight Chinese fishing boats were detained by Indonesian forces off the Natuna Islands. China expressed grave concern about this incident that occurred "in the waters around China's Nansha islands". Furthermore, strained Sino-Indonesian relations came along a remarkable evolution in US-Indonesian relations. Indonesia's leaders seemed to drop their nonalignment stance, while the US eased its sanctions over human rights. The US navy improved its image by its efficient disaster relief efforts in the wake of the 2005 tsunami. The United States is not a formal ally of Indonesia. But Washington's close ally, Australia, offered in 2006 an "Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and Australia on the Framework for Security Cooperation", including:

*The closest professional cooperation between their Defence Forces; [...] Regular consultation on defence and security issues of common concern; and on their respective defense policies; [...] Cooperation in the field of mutually beneficial defence technologies and capabilities, including joint design, production marketing and transfer of technology.<sup>53</sup>*

Joint naval exercises soon followed, including American ships. In May 2010, the USSs *Tortuga*, *Salvor*, *Vandegrift* and *Mellon* were ceremoniously welcomed in Surabaya. In sum, as Luttwak further states,

*There is no audible "who lost Indonesia" debate in Beijing, but there should be. Indonesia is not another Vietnam, whose national myth cannot be in good working order without an ongoing confrontation with China... As late as 1993 and indeed later, it was still set to consolidate relations with China while remaining distant from the United States and its ally Australia. Now, by contrast, it has emerged as an important member of the anti-China coalition.*

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52. Edward Luttwak, *op. cit.*

53. Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and Australia on the Framework for Security Cooperation".



## 5 | The Philippines: a lost opportunity

Today, the Philippines are as determined as Indonesia to resist Chinese power. However, a Sino-Philippine rapprochement seemed possible, even probable, not so long ago. The last American soldier left the Philippines on November 24, 1992 when the American base of Subic Bay was closed. Meanwhile, Beijing and Manila signed a series of bilateral agreements on economic matters. Trade relations steadily grew between the two countries. China and the Philippines had no reason not to be partners. Yet, once again, China's overbearing conduct drove the Philippines back towards the United States. And once again, the clash came over an overlapping claim over part of the South China Sea: a dispute over the Spratly islands. These islets are claimed by both states and partly occupied by the Philippines, who refers to them as the Kalayaan Island Group. China considers them part of the Nansha islands. Moreover, as Francois Godement reports,

*China has maintained its hold over the area surrounding Scarborough Shoal, which has long been held by the Philippines but is now claimed by China. After a tense stand-off in June 2012, the US encouraged a pullback on both sides – but layers of Chinese patrol units and fishing boats now maintain a grip around the islet.*<sup>54</sup>

Interestingly, amid maritime harassment and classic "who has the biggest boat" contest, Manila took the matter to the United Nations. The Philippine mission to the UN Secretary General declared as early as April 5, 2001: "The [Chinese] claim reflected in the so-called 9-dash line map... would have no basis under international law... Sovereignty [belongs] to the Philippines."<sup>55</sup> The Chinese, angered by this "provocation", replied through the same channel – in very strong terms :

*The so-called Kamayaan Island Group claimed by the Republic of Philippines is in fact part of China's Nansha islands... Since 1970s, the Republic of Philippines started to invade and occupy some islands and reefs of China's Nansha islands... [These] acts constitute infringement upon China's territorial sovereignty.*<sup>56</sup>

On May 10, 2011, Philippino President Benigno Aquino III called on its neighbors "to take a united stance against the recent aggressive actions of China".<sup>57</sup> He deployed Coast Gard vessels, paid a much-noticed visit to an American aircraft carrier and praised "the strong defense relations of the two countries". Three days later, the US Navy provided a Hamilton-class 3,250 tons warship to its Philippino counterpart – "an expression of America's commitment to help the Philippines protect its maritime domain", as it was described. Within barely a week came an incident. Two Chinese MiG-29 Fulcrums (top speed 2,400 km/h) "buzzed" – intimidated by flying nearby – a couple of Philippino reconnaissance planes (top speed 480 km/h) over the Spratly Islands. A month later, the Philippine's foreign secretary demanded surplus US warships to "defend maritime borders". Secretary Clinton reassured him on that point.<sup>58</sup> China's conduct had worried the Philippines, a possible partner, into seeking a rapprochement with the United States.

From Tokyo to Jakarta and Manila to Canberra, what stands out is the creation of a tacit camp of strategic containment directed at Beijing. Was this coalition-building process unavoidable for China?

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54. Francois Godement, *op. cit.*

55. Phillippine Mission to the United Nations, Letter, April 5, 2011.

56. See UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf: Submissions to the Commission: China: April 14, 2011.

57. Joyce Pangko Panares, "Aquino Pushes for United Stance on South China Sea", Manila Standard Today, May 10, 2011.

58. U.S Department of State, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, *Remarks with Philippines Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario after Their Meeting*, June 23, 2011.

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## B | Persistence of policies despite mounting resistance

Those resistances are inevitable according to Edward Luttwak's logic of strategy:

*No matter at what level, from a knife fight in an alley to the multidimensional and multilateral engagements of grand strategy in peacetime, the logic is always the same : action – in this case the growth of power – evokes reaction, which need not stop the action but which does prohibit its simple, linear progress. In this case, because of the mounting opposition it is evoking, China's continued and rapid growth in economic capacity and military strength and regional and global influence cannot simply persist. If Chinese leaders ignore the warning signs and forge ahead, the paradoxical logic will ensure that instead of accumulating more power, they will remain with less as resistance mounts.<sup>59</sup>*

### 1 | How to make enemies

Those resistances to Beijing's ascent might be inevitable. But China's aggressive behavior and at times arrogant rhetoric sometimes certainly hastened the process. There also seems to be a fair amount of clumsiness. For example, Xi Jinping complained on February 16, 2009: "There are a few foreigners, with full bellies, who have nothing better to do than try to point fingers at our country."<sup>60</sup> This declaration was not meant to be made public, but leaked. During Xi's weekend meeting with Barack Obama at Sunnylands in California in June 2013, Xi famously declared that "the vast Pacific Ocean has enough space for the two large countries of China and the United States". As François Godement remarks, "The phrase, which implies strategic parity, must leave the other Pacific powers wondering about where they fit into this picture".<sup>61</sup> China's far-reaching territorial claims are perceived in Asia as dangerous pride. Sometimes arrogance is followed by soothing declarations and charm offensives, such as Wen Jiabao's visit to India in the company of hundreds of businessmen in December 2010. But the general impression is that China's traditionally prudent conduct tends to be replaced by assertiveness and hubris.

### 2 | Bureaucratic fragmentation?

This attitude contradicts China's official, conciliatory doctrine of Peaceful Development. Realist thinker Wang Jisi acknowledges that although the global leadership of the West is increasingly challenged,

*In discussing these trends in the global distribution of power, some talk about "the rise of the East" and "the decline of the West." One would therefore expect China... to find itself in a greatly improved international strategic environment. In fact, however, there is a widespread feeling among Chinese people that China faces a grim international environment.*

*... The US and neighboring countries that doubt China's intention of peaceful development are also taking preventive measures directed against China and even co-ordinating a common strategy toward China. As a result, part of the Chinese public now feels more insecure and has more worries and misgivings and a deeper "victim complex" than in the past when China was weaker.<sup>62</sup>*

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59. Edward Luttwak, *op. cit.*

60. Malcolm Moore, "China's Next Leader in Hardline Rant", *The Telegraph*, March 31, 2012.

61. François Godement, *op. cit.*

62. Wang Jisi, "China's Grim International Environment", *China International Strategy Review*, World Affairs Press.

So why does China's behavior persist in spite of mounting resistance? One explanation might be that China's numerous state agencies and institutional protagonists pursue their own objectives, for a final result that is sometimes contradictory and counter-productive for China's interests at large:

*For example, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi gave arrogance a bad name at the July 2010 17th Regional Forum of the ASEAN in Hanoi by declaring that maritime disputes between China and member states (including Vietnam, the host) could not be negotiated multilaterally – and this at a multinational forum !... The predictable result was to drive Vietnam as well as the Philippines into the arms of the United States, but it did gain nationalistic praise for the Foreign Ministry, and no doubt for Yang Jiechi personally.<sup>63</sup>*

In this episode, Yang Jiechi evidently had a degree of freedom of action to pursue its own aims. Civil-military command structures in China are unclear. The maiden flight of a stealth fighter during a Hu Jintao – Robert Gates meeting in 2011 is also cited as evidence of his loss of control over foreign policy.<sup>64</sup> But the hypothesis of bureaucratic fragmentation should not be overstated. First, it is less probable since Xi Jinping took office, by the authority he is displaying and his "rectification campaign" of cadres. Second, the roots of the problem go much further back.

### 3 | Cumbersome history

At a deeper level, China's idiosyncratic history influences its behavior. First, the Tianxia system influences the Chinese vision of international relations. Tianxia means "All Under Heaven": the Chinese Emperor was at the head of Civilisation. Only barbarians living in savagery existed outside of China's immense political sphere. China had no Great Power or even remotely comparable states with which it could habitually interact. Instead, the Imperial court established a tributary system. Tributary states did not challenge Chinese supremacy. The system ruled out the presumption of inter-state formal equality. It was also characterized by the Emperor's actively virtuous benevolence (*rén*) and generosity. This pattern could re-emerge, according to Martin Jacques.<sup>65</sup> These practices echo in contemporary China's penetration in Africa. Flocks of African leaders have been grandly welcomed in Beijing. They benefited from China's welcoming generosity, including fine dining, luxury products, and even gifts of hard cash.

Second, Chinese leaders tend to refer to ancient sages such as Confucius, Sun Tzu and Han Fei. Xi Jinping in particular often portrays his authoritarian decisions as rooted in millennia-old, homegrown core values. According to *The New York Times*, he is riding China's nostalgic zeitgeist:

*Its people have increasingly turned to pre-Communist values while they navigate giddy, contentious changes driven by expanding commerce and inequality.*

*More children undergo Confucian-inspired coming-of-age rites, wearing re-creations of ancient scholars' gowns. Some universities have turned graduation ceremonies into rituals inspired by tradition. Devotees join in elaborate ceremonies to honor Confucius.<sup>66</sup>*

Ancient tradition provides the regime with a traditionalist basis of legitimacy. Its reverence, such as for the Confucian ideal of paternalistic hierarchy, serves a double purpose: maintaining party power and, crucially, advocating independence from Western models. As Yan Xuetong, director of the Institute of International Studies at Tsinghua University, points out: "Where can China's leaders find their ideas? They can't possibly find them nowadays from Western liberal thought. The only source they can look to is ancient Chinese political thinking."<sup>67</sup>

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63. Edward Luttwak, *op. cit.*

64. Francois Godement, *op. cit.*

65. Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World, the end of the western world and the birth of a new global order*, Penguin Books, 2012.

66. Chris Buckley, "Leader Taps Into Chinese Classics in Seeking to Cement Power", *The New York Times*, October 11, 2014.

67. *Ibid.*

Yet strategic texts such as Sun Tzu's *Art of War* cannot always apply to present geopolitics: "While these guides might have helped in diplomatic and military conflicts within China itself, their tactics – such as deliberately provoking crises to force negotiations—turned China's neighbors into foes"<sup>68</sup>. Classical Chinese texts might be excellent, but they can be misleading. Most were written during the Warring States period which ended in 221 BCE and in which all the protagonists were Han. This forged the presumption of universal Han-styled pragmatism in foreign affairs: "The [Warring] states could be allies one day, enemies the next, and then perhaps allies again, simply because at each remove it was the most profitable thing to do. Chinese foreign policy evidently presumes that foreign states can be just as practical and opportunistic in their dealings with China."<sup>69</sup> An obvious example would be the September 7, 2010 incident with Japan about the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands that we mentioned. A Chinese fishing trawler collided with Japanese Coast Guard patrol boats in disputed waters:

*This incident was followed by inflammatory Chinese Foreign Ministry declarations that duly produced anti-Japanese agitations, the arrest of some visiting Japanese executives, a de facto embargo on rare-earth exports to Japan – and very soon thereafter, by Chinese Foreign Ministry statements that recalled the importance of Chinese-Japanese economic relations, called on the public to stop anti-Japanese demonstrations, and called on the Japanese to continue investing in China. It was different from the Japanese, of course: the incident resulted in a long-term reappraisal of Japanese relations with China across the board, and a drastic reversal in a recent trend to be realigning Tokyo towards Beijing and away from Washington.*<sup>70</sup>

Chinese leaders can underestimate the importance of contrasting national sensitivities. Add to these historical residues, and this faith in the superior strategic wisdom of the ancients, the memory of the "century of humiliation", plus the fear of an American-like globalisation, and one gets a sense of why Chinese thinkers seek to shape an "alternative modernity".

#### 4 | You Can Go Your Own Way

The memory of the "century of humiliation" (百年国耻) is still vivid. It lasted from China's crushing defeat in the 1840 Opium Wars to the 1949 Communist revolution. In this infamous time, the glorious Imperial army was crushed. Taiwan was lost. Japan colonized part of China – "raped" it, as the Chinese often say. The grandiose old Summer palace in Beijing – "a dream built in marble", in Victor Hugo's words – was ransacked and destroyed by invading French and British troops in 1860. Its remains have been preserved as a reminder of what China risks when it gets overpowered by foreign forces. It "acts like an open wound that can be salted whenever citizens need to be mobilized, or reminded of how the Communist Party saved China from foreign defeat"<sup>71</sup>, as Mark Leonard puts it.

Moreover, a growing number of Chinese thinkers fear the consequences of an american-like globalisation. For post-Cultural Revolution China, modernization was akin to Americanization. Beijing was forced to accommodate itself to the rules and philosophy of the world's superpower. To a certain extent, the country embraced the United States' market philosophy and mass consumerism. Starbucks penetrated the walls of the Forbidden City.<sup>72</sup> But as globalization accelerated and crises multiplied, Chinese thinkers came to be increasingly worried of this 'flat world' (Thomas Friedman) in which states seemed to lose control of their fates: "pushed out of the economic sphere by privatization, out of the political sphere by democratization, and out of the foreign policy realm by the stateless forces of capital, terrorism and trade."<sup>73</sup>

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68. Edward Luttwak, *op. cit.*

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

71. Mark Leonard, *op. cit.*

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*



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Somewhat paradoxically, China's economic miracle created a strong self-confidence which in turn causes the Chinese to reject the cause of this success. In the context of a "liberation of thought", China now refuses to integrate into a Western political and security international system that it took no part in shaping. Thinkers such as Pan Wei and Wang Xiaodong, from a new breed of nationalists, argue China shouldn't be importing theories and models wholesale from abroad. China seek its own way to the future, to define an "alternative modernity" (Cui Zhiyuan).



## | CHINA'S WORLD

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*"The Rise of China is granted by nature. In the last 2,000 years China has enjoyed superpower status several times.... Even as recently as 1820, just 20 years before the Opium War, China accounted for 30% of world GDP. This history of superpower status makes the Chinese people very proud of their country on the one hand, and on the other hand very sad about China's current international status. They believe China's decline to be a historical mistake which they should correct."*

Yan Xuetong, *The Rise of China in Chinese Eyes*

Beijing's ascent is not ours to shape. Does it mean that world policies – from global poverty to climate change – will increasingly be set in Beijing?

*The first thirty years of the People's Republic reform programme have been mainly about about China joining the world; absorbing and assimilating know-how from the West on economics, politics and foreign policy. The story of the next thirty years will be about how are more self-confident China reaches out and shapes the world. For governments in Africa, Central Asia, Latin America, and even the Middle East, China's rise means that there is no longer a binary choice between assimilation to the West and isolation. Of course, China will not define a new world order on its own, but it will provide an alternative pole and a philosophy that will find their place alongside US attempts to create a balance of power that favours democracy, the European penchant for multilateralism and Islamists' hopes of theocratic rule.<sup>74</sup>*

China thinkers do not want to absorb Western values. They seek, in Deng Xiaoping's words, to combine Chinese ideas with Western learning. They want to free China from the interference of Western financial institutions. Their Chinese alternative world order is about *control*. Control of the economy, control of politics, control of foreign policy. A decade ago, Joshua Cooper Ramo had foreshadowed this trend in *The Beijing Consensus*:

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74. *Ibid.*

*What is happening in China at the moment...has begun to remake the whole landscape of international development, economics, society and, by extension, politics... China's new ideas are having a gigantic effect outside of China. China is marking a path for other nations around the world who are trying to figure out not simply how to develop their countries, but also how to fit into the international order in a way that allows them to be truly independent, to protect their way of life and political choices.<sup>75</sup>*

Ramo further insists that China wants find its own route: "the Chinese want to control, localize and administer their own global future". The Beijing Consensus is about innovation and experimentation as much as it is about control. To shock-therapy leaps, it prefers Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic approach of "groping for stones to cross the river." "It does not believe in uniform solutions for every situation", says Ramo, but it always include a lively defense of national borders. It is gaining ground – in developing states mostly, but not only.

## A | Controlling the Economy

China's rise changes the world ideas about the economy. "China's path to development and power is, of course, unrepeatable by any other nation. It also remains fraught with contradictions, tensions and pitfalls. Yet many elements of the country's rise have engaged the developing world"<sup>76</sup>, Ramo remarks. China clearly opposes Western liberal economic theory – and succeeds. China's new development approach "turns traditional ideas like privatisation and free trade on their heads", Ramo further states. Innovative as it may be, the Chinese approach stresses chaos management. It insists on implementing economic reform before political reform. According to Mark Leonard, it is no wonder that China's state control and gradualist economic reforms appeal to the developing world:

*Just as attractive as Chinese growth is the way that Beijing has been able to maintain control over its own economic policies. For developing countries that exchanged colonial rule for the diktats of the IMF and World Bank, the promise of setting their own agenda is the stuff that dreams are made of.<sup>77</sup>*

On a similar note, Ramo takes it further<sup>78</sup>:

*The Beijing Consensus... replaces the widely-discredited Washington Consensus, an economic theory made famous in the 1990s for its prescriptive, Washington-knows-best approach to telling other nations how to run themselves. The Washington Consensus was a hallmark of end-of-history arrogance; it left a trail of destroyed economies and bad feelings around the globe...*

*Part of the appeal of the Beijing Consensus is that it fits into the prevailing worries about globalisation by offering another path, one where integration of global ideas is first rigorously gut-checked against the demands of local suitability. When this works, it has the effect of making local culture support development.*

In the wake of the 2008 crisis, the Washington Consensus' influence is waning. Privatization programmes are being slowed down or reversed. Meanwhile, Beijing's activist industrial policy, State Owned Enterprises and Special Economic Zones – a combination of tax-breaks, export subsidies and massive transport infrastructure in a zone (经济特区) – are mimicked by an increasing number of states, including Russia and Brazil. The

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75. Joshua Cooper Ramo, *op. cit.*

76. *Ibid.*

77. Mark Leonard, *op. cit.*

78. Joshua Cooper Ramo, *op. cit.*





World Bank acknowledged as early as 2007 the existence of more than 3,000 Special Economic Zones – outposts of Chinese capitalism – in 120 countries around the world. China transplants its growth model.

According to Martin Jacques, an attractive feature of China's control of its economy is that it facilitates the wielding of economic power to lever change. Jacques notes the intense pressure put on French companies PSA and Carrefour in China after President Sarkozy's declarations that he might boycott the Beijing Olympics because of human rights abuse in Tibet. Sarkozy soon backtracked. Professor Zhang Weiwei, director of the Centre for China Development Model Research at Fudan University in Shanghai, similarly claims:

*The Chinese state, under the "socialist market economy," commands not only such Keynesian instruments as fiscal and monetary policies, but also other "tools," which may not be available in other countries, such as public ownership of land and of strategic resources as well as a largely performing state sector. These "tools" give the Chinese state greater leveraging power.<sup>79</sup>*

## B | Challenging Democracy

Beijing's ascent also changes the world ideas about politics. On a global scale, the backlash of free-market ideas comes with a pushback against liberal democracy. China is part of the explanation:

*Even if the People's Republic had done nothing in the world, the power of the Chinese example would have presented a major challenge to promoters of democracy. The contrast between its performance and that of the Soviet Union has given rise to a widespread belief that economic reform must precede political reform. This 'sequencing myth' has become a major barrier for promoters of democracy, taking the pressure off many countries to liberalize their political systems.<sup>80</sup>*

The power of the Chinese example is one thing. China's support for autocratic states is another. Of course, Beijing is careful not to appear as the symbolic head of a coalition of despots. Its calculations are pragmatic. China plainly sees the risks of investing in failing economies. It has for instance changed its stance on Burma. The flip side of the coin is that seemingly benevolent programs such as China's growing aid reform program, as Human Rights Watch puts it, "creates new options for dictators who were previously dependant on those who insisted on human rights progress." More strikingly, Beijing offers actual counter-insurgency advice and surveillance equipment to some autocratic states. In Zimbabwe, not only did Senior Chinese leaders give prominent support government crackdowns. China also pumped around \$100 million in the Robert Mugabe School of Intelligence, a military intelligence base. Construction started in 2007. There, Mugabe's regime benefits from Chinese experience in dispersing demonstrations and controlling the Internet. China also offered police training for crowd dispersal to Uzbekistan's president Islam Karimov after the 2005 massacres in Andijan.

## C | Sovereignty Above All?

China's clear and vocal opposition to the 'Responsibility to Protect' thought is sometimes used as an example of China's support for autocratic states. The 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine means that "The international

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79. Zhang Weiwei, "The Five Reasons Why China Works", *The Huffington Post*, February 26, 2014.

80. *Ibid.*

community has a responsibility to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility [of protecting populations from crimes against humanity].<sup>81</sup> Beijing firmly opposes this concept, not to show support for autocratic states but to defend an older idea of sovereignty. China's traditional view of sovereignty is based on not interfering in internal affairs and not overthrowing 'problematic' regimes. Beijing usually bristles at international intervention in global hotspots. The Chinese stance also includes opposition to Western-inspired sanctions. Beijing has opposed American sanctions against Russia, Syria, Sudan and Iran. Ironically, Beijing promotes this agenda partly through Chinese-inspired multinational organisations: the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the East Asian Community.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (上海合作组织) was created in 2001. Its members are China, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Iran, In addition, India, Pakistan and Mongolia have the status of observer states, and may attain full membership. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation tackles non-state menaces such as terrorism, separatism and extremism. Respect for state sovereignty is of course one of its core values. Its members and observers collectively possess almost half of the world's population and natural gas reserves.

The East Asian Community is a proposed trade bloc for East Asian countries. The idea of a pan-Asian trading bloc appeals to China for its economic benefits. Competition for the leadership in the regional process is tense. While states such as Japan advocate an 'open and inclusive' concept, China favors a Community with exclusively East Asian members. If implemented, the Chinese version would let out the United States. China also insists on keeping control of its economy and states' sovereign rights during this process of institutionalizing existing trends toward regional integration. The East Asian Community's shape has yet to be defined. Yet by its economic clout, China leverages massive influence in the negotiations.

Both the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the East Asian Community are opportunities for Beijing to promote a Chinese vision of international organisations. China assembles non-Western communities of interests. And as we have mentioned, China is at the same time increasingly influential within Western-crafted international organisations such as the World Bank and the UN. To various extents, China uses all of these organisations as amplifiers of its world-view – the desire for what Mark Leonard calls a "Walled World".

## D | Walled World

The Chinese approach is based somewhat reminiscent of nineteenth-century geopolitics. This mindset has a history, Leonard explains:

*Even as they were flaunting their universalist ambitions... the Ming emperors were building... the Great Wall of China. The very act of opening up and looking at the world, seemed to carry with it a need to establish boundaries which could shield China from the influence of barbarians and foreigners. The Ming dynasty, like every regime in Chinese history, was obsessed with the need to hold China together and shield it from its neighbours. The Chinese have labelled this obsession with boundaries the 'Great Wall mentality'. It is a concern that runs so deep that it has infiltrated the country's identity, its lifestyle and even its alphabet: all Chinese cities are surrounded by walls, the traditional Chinese courtyard house literally takes the form of a wall surrounding an atrium, while the pictograph for 'country' is made up of a four-walled pattern.<sup>82</sup>*

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81. As stipulated in the Outcome Document of the 2005 United Nations World Summit and formulated in the Secretary-General's 2009 Report on Implementing the Responsibility to Protect.

82. Mark Leonard, *op. cit.*

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As much as Western thinkers tend to argue that the rising giant should be built in our own image, their Chinese counterparts see China as a shaper of world order:

*The ideal of a 'Walled World' where nation-states can trade with each other on global markets but maintain their control over their economic future, their political system and their foreign policy is emerging as an ideological challenge both to the US philosophy of a 'flat world' and the European preference for liberal multilateralism.<sup>83</sup>*

Finally, minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi recently declared that China will “build a *new* model of major-country relationship” and “take a more active part in the handling of international and regional hotspot issues”.<sup>84</sup>

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83. *Ibid.*

84. Wang Yi, *Remarks at the World Peace Forum*, Tsinghua University, 27 June 2013, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t1054783.shtml>.



## | CONCLUSION

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Like all rising powers in history, China seeks to reshape the international system. It is increasingly evident that Europe and America will have to face the alternative of a Chinese model. As Ramo had foreshadowed, "China's rise is already drawing a wake of new ideas that are very different from those coming from Washington" – or Europe, for that matter: "China is writing its own book now. The book represents a fusion of Chinese thinking with lessons learned from the failure of globalisation culture in other places. The rest of the world has begun to study this book".<sup>85</sup>

Yet this vision of a triumphant China is offset by simple constataions. Many deep-seated issues can only be adressed by systematic reforms. For one, China's widely entrenched corruption comes with deleterious consequences. If it can't be mustered, it may be China's house of cards. But there is more. Of course, Chinese leaders defend the Chinese model in the public sphere. Yet, in their private life, some seem paradoxically fascinated by America and doubt the Chinese model: « on a personal level, the Chinese admire – are even intoxicated by – U.S.-style individualism » although they regard it as dangerous, as The Atlantic puts it.<sup>86</sup> But since this fascination, envy or jealousy is somewhat a shameful feeling – certainly publicly unacceptable – one cannot simply find any official statement that can serve as definite "proof." We must accept to indirectly find traces of it in the behavior of Chinese leaders.

First, China loves to build copycat European towns – cobbled streets and pubs included –<sup>87</sup> and Chinese shoppers love western brands.<sup>88</sup> Tom Doctoroff takes it further: « The Chinese remain intoxicated by the allure of genuine American self-expression but frustrated by its ultimate impossibility in their lives ». <sup>89</sup> As a result, many admire the American can-do spirit: « American-style self-expression is all the rage. Brands that celebrate "me" – from Nike's "Just Do It" spirit to Apple's "Think Different" rallying cry – are embraced, particularly by the young urban elite. »<sup>90</sup>

Moreover, tax evasion and flights of capital to foreign countries remains painfully endemic. According to a

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85. Joshua Cooper Ramo, *op. cit.*

86. See <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/05/buying-a-piece-of-america-why-chinese-shoppers-love-us-brands/257642/>.

87. See more at <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23067082>.

88. See <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/05/buying-a-piece-of-america-why-chinese-shoppers-love-us-brands/257642/>.

89. Tom Doctoroff, *What Chinese Want: Culture, Communism and China's Modern Consumer*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

90. *Ibid.*

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2012 report by Global Financial Integrity, a staggering \$US 3.79 trillion left China in illicit financial flows from 2001 to 2011 alone.<sup>91</sup>

Money is not the only thing to leave China. Children, too. Numerous Chinese leaders send their children to study abroad, especially in the United States. Several have whole family abroad. Their kids often have the dual Sino-American citizenship. It is sometimes said that the leaders of the current China are grandfathers of Americans, since their children studying abroad get married and their children are American citizens.

Taking it further, there is the phenomenon of the « naked officials » (裸官). According to The China Media Project at the University of Hong Kong, « The term “naked official” or, luoti guanyuan, is a popular term referring to Party or government officials whose immediate family members live overseas or have already become foreign nationals. In many cases, such officials are stashing the ill-gotten gains of official corruption in China in overseas accounts or businesses — and preparing to eventually leave China. »<sup>92</sup> Wealthy Chinese citizens can represent almost 100% of applicants for long-term visa in Western countries (especially Canada and Portugal). The baroque conduct of some personalities has attracted further attention, most notably as the improbable journey of blind legal advocate Chen Guangcheng who fled to the American Embassy in Beijing<sup>93</sup>, and the rococco behaviour of Wang Lijun, vice-mayor of Chongqing, who sought refuge in the U.S. consulate in Chengdu.<sup>94</sup>

China may be writing its own book. But those who write it might not entirely believe in it.

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91. Dev Kar, Sarah Freitas, *Illicit Financial Flows from China and the Role of Trade Misinvoicing*, Global Financial Integrity Report, October 25, 2012.

92. See <http://cmp.hku.hk/2012/06/27/24670/>.

93. Read about Mr. Chen's departure at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/20/world/asia/china-dissident-chen-guangcheng-united-states.html?pagewanted=all>.

94. Mr. Lijun's flight and subsequent trial is described at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/world/asia/former-police-chief-wang-lijun-in-bo-xilai-scandal-aided-prosecutors.html>.

