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## Article (Accepted version) (Refereed)

### Original citation:

Buzan, Barry (2014) *The logic and contradictions of 'peaceful rise/development' as China's grand strategy*. [The Chinese Journal of International Politics](#), 7 (4). pp. 381-420. ISSN 1750-8916

DOI: [10.1093/cjip/pou032](https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pou032)

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Available in LSE Research Online: October 2015

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# The Logic and Contradictions of 'Peaceful Rise/Development' as China's Grand Strategy

Barry Buzan

*[Note: This article has been accepted by the Chinese Journal of International Politics, and will probably be published during 2014. It has not been copy-edited, so the published version will differ somewhat from this version once adjusted for house style. Any citation from this version should make these points clear to the reader. This article must under no circumstances be circulated to anyone else without the permission of the author.]*

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## **Abstract**

Despite the widespread view that China does not have a coherent grand strategy, it does not need to invent one. China has already articulated a grand strategy that is based on the home-grown idea of 'peaceful rise/development' (PRD). The key issue is whether the logic of this grand strategy, and the contradictions within it, are fully understood, and whether China has sufficient depth and coherence in its policy-making processes to implement such a strategy. Although there are elements of longer continuity in China's strategic outlook, the transformation from Mao's revolutionist strategy to Deng's strategy of reform and opening up, involved a radical shift in China's perception of itself, the world, and its place in the world. That shift provides a stable and coherent background against which to think about the ends and means of China's grand strategy. The paper opens by looking at PRD's status as a grand strategy. It then surveys the ends and the means of China's foreign and security policy as they have evolved in practice and rhetoric. Finally, it assesses in depth China's practice against three distinct strategic logics within PRD: *cold*, *warm* and *hot* peaceful rise. The conclusion is that China's current practice points firmly

towards cold peaceful rise, but that warm peaceful rise is perhaps still possible and offers many strategic advantages.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

There is a lively debate at the moment about whether China has a grand strategy or not.<sup>2</sup> The general feeling is that it should have such a strategy, but many think it does not, and there is a fairly widespread view that China's foreign policy is incoherent, reflecting the lack of a grand strategy. Shi Yihong, for example, has argued that China doesn't have 'a system of clear and coherent long-term fundamental national objectives, diplomatic philosophy and long-term or secular grand strategy', and that this is 'the No. 1 cognitive and policy difficulty for the current China in her international affairs.'<sup>3</sup> More recently Zhu Liqun reaffirms this view, arguing that 'China has always lacked a global strategy. It is now believed by many scholars that it is time for China to have one'. Not having one is 'hardly sustainable over the next decade'.<sup>4</sup> Westad argues that China has a very limited and conservative view of the world and no grand strategy to speak of.<sup>5</sup> I have also argued that China lacks a coherent strategic vision of its place in international society, and fails to align ends and means, combining rhetorics of peaceful development and harmonious relations with several militarized border disputes with its neighbours, a lot of hard realist rhetoric, and political relationships bordering on enmity with Japan, Vietnam and India.<sup>6</sup> Zhang makes the reasonable argument that while China has a vigorous debate about grand strategy, the country is evolving very fast, and the consequent continuous redefinition of itself and its interests makes it unsurprising that it as yet has no clear grand strategy. That said, he does find some consistency on the desired ends, but much less agreement about how to pursue those in terms of means. He sees China as muddling along, learning by doing.<sup>7</sup> In a subsequent paper Zhang argues that China does have a vision behind its foreign policy in the sense of always seeing itself as a central player in world politics, albeit this is now driven by a defensive, self-centred and self-righteous perspective in which China perceives 'foreign misunderstanding,

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<sup>1</sup> All references to Kindle editions use location numbers.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Wang Jiangli, Zhang Feng and Yongjin Zhang and two anonymous *CJIP* reviewers for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Shi Yihong, 'The Rising China: Essential Disposition, Secular Grand Strategy, and Current Prime Problems', 2001, <http://www.spfusa.org/Program/av2001/feb1202.pdf> (accessed 31/10/2008).

<sup>4</sup> Zhu Liqun, 'Ongoing debates surrounding China's identity', European Union Institute for Security Studies, 27 July 2012, p. 3. <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/ongoing-debates-surrounding-chinas-identity/> (Accessed 1 July 2013.)

<sup>5</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012), locs. 6727-31, 7180, 7206.

<sup>6</sup> Barry Buzan, 'China in International Society: Is "Peaceful Rise" Possible?', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2010, pp. 29-33.

<sup>7</sup> Zhang Feng, 'Rethinking China's grand strategy: Beijing's evolving national interests and strategic ideas in the reform era', *International Politics*, Vol.49, No. 3, 2012, pp. 337-9.

prejudice and misapprehension'.<sup>8</sup> Wang likewise thinks that there is no official statement of China's grand strategy, but argues that indications of its components can be found.<sup>9</sup>

Heath thinks there is more than that. He uses research into Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policy documents to tease out 'guidance on the nation's desired end state and supporting objectives, ways and means', and finds a relatively coherent view of 'national strategy'.<sup>10</sup> But American realists are the biggest believers in China already having a grand strategy. Goldstein argues that by 1996 China had evolved a fairly clear grand strategy aimed at pursuing its own development and rising peacefully within a US dominated order.<sup>11</sup> He sees this strategy as primarily transitional, to get China through a difficult period of relative weakness without generating 'China threat' reactions from other powers. But since he also sees this transition period as being quite long – perhaps several decades – this strategy is likely to be stable for some time so long as there are no big disruptions in the distribution of power. He argues that what will happen after China has risen is too far away to predict. Swaine and Tellis take a similar view and label China's grand strategy as 'calculative'.<sup>12</sup>

The argument in this paper builds on Goldstein's view, but is neither constrained by the hard realist perspective, nor skewed by the US-centric perspective, that underpin both his and Swaine and Tellis's analyses. I do not presuppose, as realists must, either that China's current strategy is necessarily transitional, or that strategy is predominantly driven by the distribution of power. I allow scope for the moral purpose of the state to influence grand strategy, and I try to take a neutral outside perspective. I also have the benefit of an additional decade of China's foreign policy for looking at how coherently or not this grand strategy is being pursued in terms of the relationship of ends and means. And since the economic crisis beginning in 2008, both Goldstein's and Swaine and Tellis's assumption of several decades of unquestioned US hegemony is more under question.

China therefore does not need to invent a grand strategy because it has already articulated one that is based on a home-grown idea: 'peaceful

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<sup>8</sup> Zhang Feng, 'The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol 19, No. 2, 2013, pp. 307, 315, 322. See also Shih Chih-yu and Yin Jiwu, 'Between Core National Interest and a Harmonious World: Reconciling Self-role Conceptions in Chinese Foreign Policy', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2013, pp. 65-6, 72.

<sup>9</sup> Wang Jisi, 'China's Search for a Grand Strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 2, 2011, pp. 68-79.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy R. Heath, 'What Does China Want? Discerning the PRC's National Strategy', *Asian Security*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2012, p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford CA.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present and Future* (Santa Monica CA.: RAND Corporation, 2000), Kindle edn.

rise/development' (PRD).<sup>13</sup> PRD has been something of a mantra in China's foreign policy pronouncements for over a decade,<sup>14</sup> formalising the practices observed by Goldstein and Swaine and Tellis from the mid-1990s. So PRD is not just an abstract idea, but one that has had well-rooted standing in China's policy and rhetoric for nearly two decades. It is an indigenous and original idea deeply embedded in China's reform and opening up, and effectively constituting the core concept for a grand strategy. While not without its ambiguities and contradictions, PRD is both a potentially workable program, and a distinctive way of marking China's return to great power standing in international society. The term 'peaceful rise' had a brief vogue during 2003-4 and was then replaced by the more bland phrase 'peaceful development' on the grounds that 'rise' sounded too provocative. It was a way of synthesizing the linkage between peace and development that was implicit in Deng's original formulation of reform and opening up and also a way of reassuring the neighbours.<sup>15</sup> Development was always the means to rise, not an alternative in any sense, and thus the label PRD for China's grand strategy is the most honest and appropriate one. I combine the two, because only taken together do they capture the essence of China's strategic problematic: 1) the urgent need to develop; 2) the necessity for global engagement to do that quickly; 3) the consequence of China's neighbours and other great powers being unsettled, or feeling threatened, by the rising power generated by the successes of development in such a large country; and 4) the resulting security spiral threatening the global engagement on which the economy depends. China's geopolitical location, like rising Germany's a century ago, is challenging.<sup>16</sup> A big country with many neighbours needs to work very hard to avoid others seeing its rise as threatening.

The question is therefore not whether China does or doesn't have a grand strategy. It does. The key issue is whether the logic of this grand strategy, and the contradictions within it, are fully understood, and whether China has sufficient depth and coherence in its policy-making processes to

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<sup>13</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), Kindle edn., locs. 3042-3201; Bonnie S. Glaser and Evan S. Medeiros, 'The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-Making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of "Peaceful Rise"', *The China Quarterly*, No. 190, 2007, pp. 291-310; Dominik Mierzejewski, 'Public Discourse on the 'Peaceful-Rise' Concept in Mainland China', *Discussion Paper 42*, China Policy Institute, University of Nottingham, 2009, <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cpi/documents/discussion-papers/discussion-paper-42-mierzejewski-power-rise-discourse.pdf> (accessed 25 September 2012); Barry Buzan, 'China in International Society'.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example: 'China's Peaceful Development', Information Office of the State Council, People's Republic of China, Beijing, September 2011. [http://english.gov.cn/official/2011-09/06/content\\_1941354.htm](http://english.gov.cn/official/2011-09/06/content_1941354.htm) (accessed 24 March 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Zhang Feng, 'Rethinking China's grand strategy', pp. 331-2.

<sup>16</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, locs. 374-83; Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*, locs. 384-91.

implement such a strategy. Although there are elements of longer continuity in China's strategic outlook, most obviously in seeing itself as a central player in world politics,<sup>17</sup> I focus in this article on the period since the late 1970s. The transformation around that time from Mao's revolutionist strategy to Deng's strategy of reform and opening up, involved a radical shift in China's perception of itself, the world, and its place in the world. That shift provides a fairly stable and coherent background against which to think about the ends and means of China's grand strategy.

The next section looks at how PRD qualifies to be a grand strategy. The following two sections survey the end and means of China's foreign and security policy as they have evolved since the late 1970s. The penultimate section differentiates PRD into three distinct grand strategy options for China: *cold*, *warm* and *hot* peaceful rise, and examines their implications in some detail. The Conclusion argues that China has a real choice between the first two of these paths to PRD. On its current trajectory, China is heading for a cold peaceful rise, but a grand strategy of warm peaceful rise has many advantages and is still just about within reach.

## PRD as a Grand Strategy

The basic concept of grand strategy is quite straightforward. It is about articulating a set of core aims, or ends, that define the national interest in terms of both domestic goals and how state and society are to relate to the wider world, and relating those ends to the means that the state and society has available.<sup>18</sup> The functions of grand strategy might be thought of as follows:

- To establish criteria for foreign and security policy formulation and evaluation.
- To create coherence in foreign and security policy by providing a stable overarching framework for policy choices.
- To embed and legitimize foreign and security policy politically by explaining it to the citizenry in broad terms, and especially to explain difficult choices.

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<sup>17</sup> Zhang Feng, 'The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations'.

<sup>18</sup> On the definition of grand strategy see: Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry and William C. Wohlforth, 'Don't Come Home America: The Case against Retrenchment', *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2012/13, p. 11; Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Routledge, 2012) Kindle edn., locs. 283-92; Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, loc. 239; Rodger A. Payne, 'Cooperative Security: Grand Strategy Meets Critical Theory', *Millennium*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2012, p. 608. On US grand strategy see Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry and William C. Wohlforth, 'Don't Come Home America', pp. 11-13; Paul D. Miller, 'Five Pillars of American Grand Strategy', *Survival*, Vol. 54, No. 5, 2012, pp. 7-44.

- To project an image of the country to the rest of the world (and that image might be anything from offensive and revolutionary, such as Mao's China, to defensive and status quo, such as Sweden).

Wang discusses how China's policy options suggest some classical choices in grand strategy, the main one being between self-strengthening versus cooperation, transparency and reassurance, or in other words going it alone or pursuing multilateral solutions to problems of shared fate.<sup>19</sup> This is the classical choice between the realist idea of *raison d'état*, and the English School concept of *raison de système* ('the belief that it pays to make the system work').<sup>20</sup> In the case of an authoritarian state like China there is also the issue of finding the balance between the state as the main agent for grand strategy, and allowing civil society to project itself outward as the foundation of soft power.

PRD was implicit in Deng's linking of peace and development from the late 1970s as the underpinning for reform and opening up:

Deng transformed the main foreign policy task to be the search for a peaceful environment for China's modernization. As a further justification for the new policy, he began to propose in the mid-1980s that 'peace and development', not war and revolution, had become the main themes of international politics of the era.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, China abandoned alliances as a policy and moved towards an independent and nonaligned foreign policy.<sup>22</sup> China thus made a big shift away from revolutionist assumptions about itself and the world. The new analysis saw the threat of great power war as low, the need for economic development in China as very high, and therefore the opportunity for China to engage with the global economy as both necessary and relatively safe. China needed both to make up the ground it had lost and to move away from the failing Soviet model. It had to recover from the excesses of the Maoist years and focus on becoming wealthy and powerful, while at the same time maintaining the legitimacy of socialism and the CCP.<sup>23</sup> It could only do this if it abandoned total state control over the economy, and created significant space for the market to operate. This move in turn required that China engage economically with both its neighbours and the world, and become part of the global systems of trade, investment and finance. China's commitment to PRD was thus instrumental, but deep. China put its own economic development as top priority, and deduced from that the need for stability in its international relations both regionally and globally.<sup>24</sup> This change was driven by internal

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<sup>19</sup> Wang Jisi, 'China's Search for a Grand Strategy'.

<sup>20</sup> Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Zhang Feng, 'Rethinking China's grand strategy', p. 322.

<sup>22</sup> Zhang Feng, 'China's New Thinking on Alliances', *Survival*, Vol. 54, No. 5, 2012, pp. 129-30.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*.

<sup>24</sup> Zhang Yongjin, *China in International Society Since 1949* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) pp. 102-25, 194-243.



developments in China during the late 1970s and early 1980s in which the country underwent a profound change of national identity, strategic culture and definition of its security interests, all of which transformed its relationship with international society.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the basic idea of PRD has been implicitly in place as China's grand strategy since the early 1980s. It linked peace and development both in the sense that it contained an assessment of the international environment as basically peaceful and orientated towards development, and in the sense that China's policy would be one of peace and development to fit into this. Deng's still influential idea that China should keep a low profile and not flaunt its strength was part of the package of putting development as the first priority, and gave an important indication about the means element of China's grand strategy. This idea is still very influential in China's foreign and security policy, but with increasing debate about whether China's rise is now sufficiently advanced that it should be modified or even abandoned.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, PRD still remains in place, with a notable recent restatement by Dai Bingguo.<sup>27</sup>

PRD was remarkable not only because it was a clever, expedient policy to cover a transitional period of Chinese weakness, but also because, unlike many great power grand strategies, it had the sophistication to take into account how others would be likely to react to the rise of China's power. Grand strategies require a choice. They can be status quo or revisionist. Status quo powers are generally happy with both the rules and the status distribution of the prevailing international society. Revisionist powers come in three gradients. They can be revolutionary revisionist, wanting to change both the rules and the status hierarchy, prepared to resort to fair means or foul, and not caring too much about who gets in the way. Or they can be radical revisionist, pursuing changes in the rules, but doing so mainly within the existing framework of international society. Or they can be orthodox revisionist, generally happy with the rules, but wanting changes in the distribution of status.<sup>28</sup> China under Mao was a revolutionary revisionist power. PRD points at least to orthodox revisionism, leaving open the possibility of radical revisionism. Some have

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<sup>25</sup> Qin Yaqing, 'Nation Identity, Strategic Culture and Security Interests: Three Hypotheses on the Interaction between China and International Society', *SIIS Journal*, No. 2, 2003, <http://irchina.org/en/xueren/china/view.asp?id=863> (accessed 4 December 2008); Qin Yaqing, 'China's Security Strategy with a Special Focus on East Asia', transcript of a talk and discussion for the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 7 July 2004 <http://www.spf.org/e/report/040707.html> (accessed 4 December 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Zhang Feng, 'China's New Thinking on Alliances', pp. 138, 141; Ma Lien 'Thinking of China's Grand Strategy', pp. 163-5.

<sup>27</sup> Dai Bingguo, 'We Must Stick to the Path of Peaceful Development,' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China, December 6, 2010. <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/cpop/t777704.htm#> (Accessed 22 August 2013). See also Information Office of the State Council, 'China's Peaceful Development'.

<sup>28</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2007 [1991]) pp. 237-46.

claimed that China is a status quo power,<sup>29</sup> but that does not seem plausible within the framing of PRD.

PRD therefore qualifies as a grand strategy. It contains a theory about how the world works and how China should relate to that world in the light of its overriding priority to development. It takes military, political and economic elements into account, and is sensitive to what kind of image China should project to the world. It thus sets a framework for defining China's national interests, and offers a basic principle about how to relate means to ends. Having established the plausibility of PRD as a grand strategy, the next task is to look in more detail at the ends and means of China's foreign and security policy as they have evolved in practice and rhetoric over the past three decades. With that established, one can then assess the relationship between the actual practice of China's foreign and security policy and PRD as a grand strategy.

### **The Ends of China's Foreign and Security Policy**

The literature about China's aims and national interests in its relations with the world since the reform and opening up, shows a considerable consensus on the country's core goals, and lines up reasonably well with the declarations of China's government about its strategic objectives. From the beginnings of its reform and opening up China was clear that its aim was to increase both prosperity and power, explicitly rejecting the Japanese model of focusing primarily on prosperity and suppressing the issue of great power status.<sup>30</sup> Deng's three goals from the 1980s were: national unification, anti-hegemony and economic development,<sup>31</sup> and these have remained central aims for China's grand strategy.<sup>32</sup> Territorial integrity is mainly about Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang, and success on these issues is closely linked to the cultivation of China's capabilities and status as a great power.<sup>33</sup> It has been a longstanding aspiration of China's leaders and people to restore China's great

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<sup>29</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Is China a Status Quo Power?', *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2003, pp. 5-56; Qin Yaqing, 'Nation Identity, Strategic Culture and Security Interests'; Qin Yaqing, 'China's Security Strategy with a Special Focus on East Asia'; Feng Huiyun 'Is China a Revisionist Power?', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2008, pp. 313-34; Pan Zhongqi, 'China's Changing Image of and Engagement in World Order', in Sujian Guo, Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, (eds.), *Harmonious World and China's New Foreign Policy* (New York/Lexington: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), pp. 39-63.

<sup>30</sup> Gerald Segal, 'As China Grows Strong', *International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 1988, pp. 231.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*, locs. 411,1537.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy R. Heath, 'What Does China Want?' pp. 63-6

<sup>33</sup> Wu Xinbo 'China: Security Practice for a Modernizing and Ascending Power', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.) *Asian Security Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) pp. 129-32.

power status,<sup>34</sup> and this of course is also central to the pursuit of anti-hegemony. For Deng, economic development was a necessary condition for achieving the other two main goals of recovering Taiwan and opposing US hegemony.<sup>35</sup> The aim has been to secure a relative increase in China's power, status and influence in international society in relation to the US especially, but also Japan, Russia and Europe globally, and within its region.<sup>36</sup> China wants a more multipolar world with more autonomous regions.<sup>37</sup>

Economic growth was also instrumental to the goal of sustaining the legitimacy of the CCP for one-party rule,<sup>38</sup> which could be read as an aspect of national unification. There were two instrumental logics behind the need for economic growth: to support China's aspiration to be a great power, and to support the legitimacy of the CCP by sharing wealth with the Chinese people.<sup>39</sup> Economic growth could also be an important end in itself, as in the liberal tradition, in the sense of serving the people, and indeed by contributing to the global economy, also serving the rest of humankind.<sup>40</sup> Although the pursuit of economic growth seemed to be a win-win formulation in several ways, in a deeper sense it opened the way for a contradiction between the goal of preserving China's political system and social stability, and the goal of pursuing economic development as the first priority. Rapid economic development is in itself a socially destabilising process, requiring huge numbers of people to change both their location (rural to urban), and their class identity. Down the line it also opened up a tension for the CCP. While people might appreciate the delivery of increasing prosperity to wider sections of society, market development generates a market society full of wealthy, educated, opinionated, and self-seeking people. Such a society is not a comfortable constituency for a ruling party still thinking of itself as communist. China has not yet developed a convincing model of state-society relations, and this is a key problem for its

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<sup>34</sup> Wu Xinbo 'China: Security Practice for a Modernizing and Ascending Power', p.115; Yan Xuetong, 'The Rise of China in Chinese Eyes', *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 10, No. 26, 2001, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*, locs. 528-62

<sup>36</sup> Wu Xinbo 'China: Security Practice for a Modernizing and Ascending Power', pp. 135-6; Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2004) pp. 2-3; Rosemary Foot, 'Chinese strategies in a US-hegemonic global order: accommodating and hedging', *International Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 1, 2006, pp. 77-94.

<sup>37</sup> Wu Xinbo 'China: Security Practice for a Modernizing and Ascending Power', pp. 136-9; Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, loc. 316.

<sup>38</sup> Liselotte Odegaard, *China and Coexistence: Beijing's National Security Strategy for the Twenty-First Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012) p. 197.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*, loc. 1503-1639.

<sup>40</sup> Wu Xinbo 'China: Security Practice for a Modernizing and Ascending Power', pp. 127-9; Yan Xuetong, 'The Rise of China in Chinese Eyes', pp. 35, 38; Jeffrey W. Legro, 'What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power', *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2007, pp. 505-34; Information Office of the State Council, 'China's Peaceful Development'.

global image and legitimacy.<sup>41</sup> There is also the enduring contradiction of China needing to participate in a US-led global economic order in order to forward its development goals, while at the same time opposing US hegemony/unipolarity, and seeing the US as its main rival.<sup>42</sup> The widening of China's security perspective during the 1980s opened up tensions between the requirements of economic interdependence, and the more traditional security goals around sovereignty, territory and regime security.<sup>43</sup> Concern about regime security heightened after 1989 when the fall of the Soviet Union left China as a political outlier among the great powers.<sup>44</sup>

Domestic concerns have primacy in China's foreign policy.<sup>45</sup> Wang identifies three strategic goals for China: 1) safeguard the CCP leadership and socialist system; 2) safeguard sovereignty, territory and unity; and 3) sustain the country's economic and social development.<sup>46</sup> There is certainly evidence to support the view that maintaining the continuity of CCP rule and the socialist system is one of the core aims of China's strategy.<sup>47</sup> Deng used the tension between globalization and nationalism to justify the one-party rule of the CCP as a way of handling the stresses of rapid modernization.<sup>48</sup> This linkage of regime security to continued economic growth has been maintained.<sup>49</sup> Wu notes that: 'regime security is usually considered an element of national security'.<sup>50</sup> Even China's concern to maintain cultural distinctiveness and avoid Westernization,<sup>51</sup> can be read as eliding with regime security and sovereignty: it has even been argued that the recent concern with soft power reflects the

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<sup>41</sup> Liselotte Odegaard, *China and Coexistence*, pp. 162, 188-94.

<sup>42</sup> Rosemary Foot, 'Chinese strategies in a US-hegemonic global order', pp. 84-94.

<sup>43</sup> Wu Xinbo 'China: Security Practice for a Modernizing and Ascending Power', pp. 132-5, 139-56.

<sup>44</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, locs. 316-37.

<sup>45</sup> Wang Jisi, 'China's Search for a Grand Strategy'; Zhang Feng, 'Rethinking China's grand strategy', pp. 338.

<sup>46</sup> Wang Jisi, 'China's Search for a Grand Strategy'; He Kai and Huiyin Feng, 'Debating China's assertiveness: Taking China's power and interests seriously', *International Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 5, 2012, p. 639.

<sup>47</sup> Wu Xinbo 'China', pp. 132-5; Liselotte Odegaard, *China and Coexistence*, p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*, loc. 1503-1639; Christopher Hughes, 'Globalization and Nationalism: Squaring the Circle in Chinese International Relations Theory', *Millennium*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1997, pp. 103-24.

<sup>49</sup> Zhang Yongjin 'China's Security Problematique: critical reflections', in Zhang, Yongjin and Greg Austin (eds.), <sup>49</sup>*Power and Responsibility in Chinese Foreign Policy* (Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2001) pp. 261-5; Mark Beeson, 'Hegemonic transition in East Asia? The dynamics of Chinese and American power', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2009, p. 102; Timothy R. Heath, 'What Does China Want?' pp. 63-6.

<sup>50</sup> Wu Xinbo 'China', p. 123.

<sup>51</sup> Zhu Wenli, 'International Political Economy from a Chinese Angle', *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 10, No. 26, 2001, pp. 47-9.

necessity to defend the legitimacy of the CCP against Western cultural penetration.<sup>52</sup>

In the eyes of the regime there is therefore a close two-way linkage between the security of CCP rule (necessary to guide the turbulent path of rapid development), and the maintenance of economic growth (necessary both to support the legitimacy of CCP rule, and to lift all boats at the same time as capitalist-style development raises inequalities within China). China has a GINI coefficient of 0.48, a level of inequality around 50% higher than when it began its market reforms.<sup>53</sup> That is significantly higher than in prominent liberal democratic states such as the US and Britain, and twice the level of many social democratic states, most notably the Nordic countries. Because China is now embarked on a market mode of development, albeit an authoritarian one, this interdependence between regime security and economic development is extended into the international sphere<sup>54</sup>. Market development requires sustained access to external consumers, products and resources.<sup>55</sup> Peaceful development and the pursuit of a harmonious society and world, thus require linking China's domestic and overseas policies.<sup>56</sup> This linkage is reflected in more recent statements about China's aims. Shih and Yin cite the 2002 government White Paper giving the official position on China's national interests as:

'safeguarding state sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security; upholding economic development as the central task and unremittingly enhancing the overall national strength; adhering to and improving the socialist system; maintaining and promoting social stability and harmony; and striving for an international environment of lasting peace and a favourable climate in China's periphery.'<sup>57</sup>

This White Paper takes a somewhat harder line than Deng's, focusing more on China's development, autonomy and power, with anti-hegemony less explicit.

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<sup>52</sup> Li Mingjiang, 'China Debates Soft Power', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2008, p. 302.

<sup>53</sup> Justin Yifu Lin, *Demystifying the Chinese Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 17.

<sup>54</sup> It is now common in the rest of the world to identify China as a capitalist country: Michael A. Witt, 'China: What Variety of Capitalism?', Singapore: *INSEAD Working Paper* 2010/88/EPS, 2010; Christopher McNally, 'Sino-Capitalism: China's Reemergence and the International Political Economy', *World Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 4, 2012, pp. 741-76; Christopher McNally, 'How Emerging Forms of Capitalism are Changing the Global Economic Order', *East-West Center: Asia-Pacific Issues*, No. 107, 2013; Barry Buzan, and George Lawson, 'Capitalism and the Emergent World Order', *International Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 1, 2014, pp. 71-91.

<sup>55</sup> Timothy R. Heath, 'What Does China Want?', pp. 63-6.

<sup>56</sup> Timothy R. Heath, 'What Does China Want?', pp. 66-7; Zhang Feng, 'The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations', pp. 332-4.

<sup>57</sup> Shih Chih-yu and Yin Jiwu, 'Between Core National Interest and a Harmonious World', p. 71; Information Office of the State Council, 'China's Peaceful Development'.

More explicit than in Deng's formulation is that China has to strive to maintain a peaceful or 'favourable' global and regional international environment within which to pursue its development,<sup>58</sup> a line that became prominent after 1989.<sup>59</sup>

But what does 'a favourable regional environment' mean? It could mean that China has relaxed, friendly, consensual and cooperative relations with its neighbours, facilitating economic relations and minimising security concerns. But it could also mean that China successfully intimidates its neighbours into compliance with its interests, effectively creating a 'favourable environment' by hegemonic means at the expense of its neighbours. The Chinese government denies this: 'China does not seek regional hegemony or sphere of influence'.<sup>60</sup> Yet several analysts argue that embedded in the 'favourable regional environment' goal, is an aim or expectation of Chinese pre-eminence in the East Asian region.<sup>61</sup> The language is certainly flexible enough to support such an interpretation, and it fits smoothly with the greater emphasis on increasing China's national power. If one of the aims of China's strategy is some kind of regional hegemony in East Asia, then this will not only generate resistance to China within the region (already visible in response to China's more assertive pursuit of maritime claims since 2008), but also make it much more difficult for the US to accept China's rise. That in turn would reinforce the view of those in China who think that the US is blocking China's rise.<sup>62</sup> There is also a tension between the pursuit of power and regional suzerainty on the one hand, and China's commitment to anti-hegemonism on the other.<sup>63</sup> Though in Chinese eyes this can perhaps be squared by the Chinese tradition of harmonious centrality, others are likely to see it as a Chinese version of the US's Monroe Doctrine of regional hegemony.<sup>64</sup> This is a crucial issue for what kind of image of itself China projects abroad. The potential for this clash was illustrated by the tensions between the US and China that sprang up in 2010 when China appeared to extend its core national interests to include the South China Sea, by implication raising its commitment there to the same level as that over

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<sup>58</sup> Yan Xuetong, 'The Rise of China in Chinese Eyes'; Rosemary Foot, 'Chinese strategies in a US-hegemonic global order', p. 84.

<sup>59</sup> Zhang Feng, 'Rethinking China's grand strategy', pp. 323-7; Brantly Womack, 'Beyond win-win: rethinking China's international relationships in an era of economic uncertainty', *International Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 4, 2013, p. 915.

<sup>60</sup> Information Office of the State Council, 'China's Peaceful Development', Part 3.

<sup>61</sup> Timothy R. Heath, 'What Does China Want?', pp. 58-61; Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, loc. 123; Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*, loc. 477.

<sup>62</sup> Ma Lien 'Thinking of China's Grand Strategy: Chinese Perspectives', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2013, pp.165-6.

<sup>63</sup> Timothy R. Heath, 'What Does China Want?', p. 60.

<sup>64</sup> Barry Buzan and Michael Cox, 'China and the US: Comparable Cases of "Peaceful Rise"?', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2013, p. 120.

Taiwan;<sup>65</sup> and in 2013 over China's assertion of an air defence zone covering islands administered and claimed by Japan, and areas claimed by Korea.

There is now a debate within China about the need to find a new path that moves away from Deng's idea of keeping a low profile.<sup>66</sup> The difficulty is how to play China's new power, status and responsibility within international society, while not tipping over into a stance that looks threatening and domineering to others. Unsurprisingly, especially since 1989, China has been concerned to counter the 'China threat' theory, which arose partly as a result of its rising power, but also because of foreign reactions to the internal crackdown of 1989.<sup>67</sup> This issue underlines an ongoing problem for China which Zhang presciently characterised as its 'entrenched ambivalence towards its full integration into international society'.<sup>68</sup> China has been successful in adapting to most of the classical Westphalian norms of international society (sovereignty/non-intervention, territoriality, diplomacy, international law, balance of power, war and nationalism), and since 1978 has notably adapted to the market. But while adapting to economic liberalism, it has then been caught by the Western move to shift international society towards more politically liberal norms, especially human rights and democracy, which China under the CCP could not follow.<sup>69</sup> Arguably China is also ambivalent about the Westphalian institution of great power leadership, opposing US leadership under the anti-hegemony principle, but not wanting itself to take a leadership role. This reflects a tension between China's desire to increase its power and status within international society, while at the same time being reluctant to take responsibility on the grounds of needing to prioritize its own development, which also benefits the rest of the world.<sup>70</sup> Its position seems to be that it is in principle prepared to take more international responsibility, but in practice will not do so until it has made considerably more progress in increasing its own wealth and power.<sup>71</sup> China faces the additional difficulty that it is an outlier amongst the great powers in not being a democracy. This opens another contradiction with the resort to classical culture as a soft power resource: Yan

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<sup>65</sup> He Kai and Huiyin Feng, 'Debating China's assertiveness', pp. 640-41.

<sup>66</sup> Ma Lien 'Thinking of China's Grand Strategy', pp. 163-5.

<sup>67</sup> William A. Callahan, 'How to understand China: the dangers and opportunities of being a rising power', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2005, pp. 701-14; Bonnie S. Glaser and Evan S. Medeiros, 'The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-Making in China', pp. 293, 301, 308; Li Mingjiang, 'China Debates Soft Power', pp. 300-1; Zhang Feng, 'Rethinking China's grand strategy', pp. 323-4.

<sup>68</sup> Zhang Yongjin, *China in International Society Since 1949*, p. 246.

<sup>69</sup> Zhang Yongjin, *China in International Society Since 1949*, pp. 244-51; Rosemary Foot, 'Chinese Power and the Idea of a Responsible State', *The China Journal*, Vol. 45, 2001, pp. 1-19; Zhang Xioming, 'A Rising China and the Normative Changes in International Society', *East Asia*, Vol. 28, 2011, pp. 235-46.

<sup>70</sup> Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, 'After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of US Decline', *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2011, pp. 64-70.

<sup>71</sup> Information Office of the State Council, 'China's Peaceful Development', Part 2.

argues from the theme of 'humane authority' in the Chinese classics that China needs to become more open and democratic internally if it is to acquire status as a leading world power.<sup>72</sup>

Distilling this discussion down to its essentials yields seven core aims of China's grand strategy in practice over the last thirty-five years.

- Maintaining the exclusive rule of the communist party;
- Maintaining high economic growth;
- Maintaining the stability of Chinese society;
- Defending the country's territorial integrity, including reunification and territorial disputes;
- Increasing China's national power relative to the US, other great powers and China's neighbours, and achieving a more multipolar, less US-dominated, world order (anti-hegemonism);
- Maintaining favourable regional and global conditions for China's development;
- Avoiding having others perceive China as threatening.

Domestic concerns do indeed seem to have a strong priority in China's foreign policy. Although both China and the US want to increase domestic prosperity, unlike China the US does not securitize either its form of government or its social stability, whereas China quite openly feels insecure about both. As one would expect, many elements of China's grand strategy are pretty conventional and unexceptional in a general sense, such as safeguarding territorial integrity and sovereignty and pursuing development and prosperity. Perhaps a bit more surprising given the pace of change in China, is the notable consistency of this set for over three decades. But the particulars are important, especially where normally uncontroversial general goals such as sovereignty and territorial integrity incorporate seriously disputed claims such as over Taiwan, along the border with India, and over the islands in the East and South China Seas. Unlike for the US, at least since the US civil war, China's territorial issues blend standard, status quo, defensive aims with a set of unresolved disputes that have large revisionist implications both for its relations with its neighbours, and for whether or not the rest of the world see China's rising power as peaceful or threatening.<sup>73</sup> While the US goals of promoting a liberal order and managing international institutions speak to its status quo position as the dominant power,<sup>74</sup> China's aims are more those of a revisionist power. It wants to change the global distribution of power in its favour, resolve territorial disputes on that basis, and contest some of the rules of international society. Like the US, China wants to manage its external

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<sup>72</sup> Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese thought modern Chinese power* (edited by Daniel Bell and Sun Zhe) (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2011) pp. 17, 98-102, 137-44.

<sup>73</sup> Barry Buzan and Michael Cox, 'China and the US', p. 118.

<sup>74</sup> Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry and William C. Wohlforth, 'Don't Come Home America'.



environment, but unlike the US China projects no ideological preference on the system level, confining that aspect to preserving its own domestic political order.

## **The Means of China's Foreign and Security Policy**

As hinted above, over the last thirty years, the success of Deng's development policy has transformed the 'means' part of China's foreign and security policy even while the ends have remained fairly stable. The rise in China's material capabilities is now such a commonplace observation that it does not need much documenting here. Between 1993 and 2012 China's GDP has grown six fold in absolute terms, and has closed the gap with the US from being less than 10% of the US's GDP in 1993 to being about one-third of it in 2012.<sup>75</sup> China's military expenditure has increased more than eight-and-a-half times between 1989 and 2012, rising from about 1/30<sup>th</sup> of the US level to about one-quarter of it.<sup>76</sup> China has also improved its position in international society terms, most notably by developing an active role in East Asian regional organizations during the 1990s, and by joining the WTO in 2001. The effect of its rapid development is amplified by its being such a huge country. During the past thirty years China has been transformed from being a relatively minor great power to being in many respects number two in the world. Its growth has thus impacted strongly not only on its neighbours, where it looms much larger within East, Central and South Asia, but also on the distribution of power at the global level.

But while simple capabilities are important, they are certainly not the whole story. Equally important is what choices a country makes about how to deploy the capabilities it has. Does it prefer hard power and military means as its first choice, or soft power and economic, political and cultural means? Uncertainty about how China will deploy its new strength means that the absolute and relative growth of China's power generates unease and hedging behaviour in others.

When Deng set out the basic framework of PRD, it came not only with his three goals, but also with a policy about means. Deng shifted to an assumption of a relatively benign international environment for China with a low risk of war and a high opportunity for economic interdependence. His strategy was to take advantage of this to accelerate China's economic development and increase its power. Deng's policy meant that China gave priority to economic over military development, and mainly played along with the existing rules of international

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<sup>75</sup> World Bank

<http://search.worldbank.org/data?qterm=China%20GDP%20growth&language=EN>  
(accessed 9 September 2013).

<sup>76</sup> SIPRI (2013) Military Expenditure Database.

<http://milexdata.sipri.org/files/?file=SIPRI+milex+data+1988-2012+v2.xlsx> (accessed 9 Sept. 2013).

society so as to avoid appearing to be a challenger to the status quo. This strategy was designed to enable China to focus as much as possible on its own development and self-strengthening by avoiding the burden of international commitments, conflicts and leadership roles. Probably it was intended as a temporary and instrumental strategy meant to cover the transitional period in which China would be rising, but still relatively weak. This left open the question about what the strategy should be once China had got through that transition. That question could be discounted while China was still weak, but now that China is well up in the ranks of the world powers, it has become much more important both to China's neighbours and the other great powers. As noted above, there is now a debate within China about the need to find a new path that moves away from Deng's idea of keeping a low profile. Although China is still keen to hang onto its status as a developing country,<sup>77</sup> some argue that it has already accomplished its rise.<sup>78</sup> If this is correct, along with the weakening of the US since 2008, it would undermine Goldstein's assumption that the transition would take several decades.

The importance of this question has been underlined by the widespread view that China's policy has become more assertive since the onset of the global economic crisis and the perceived weakening of the US in 2008.<sup>79</sup> This view is supported by the much quoted 2010 remark of foreign minister Yang Jiechi at an ASEAN meeting in 2010 that: 'China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that's just a fact'.<sup>80</sup> That remark suggested the abandonment of both the low profile position and the restrained view on means. There is a contrary view arguing that very little of what is seen as China's 'new assertiveness' is either notably aggressive or out of line with what came earlier,<sup>81</sup> but also evidence that many Chinese analysts agree with the idea of a more assertive turn after 2008, and mostly think that this has had negative consequences for China.<sup>82</sup> Others also argue that this new assertiveness since 2008, when combined with the growth of China's power,

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<sup>77</sup> Dai Bingguo, 'We Must Stick to the Path of Peaceful Development'; Information Office of the State Council, 'China's Peaceful Development', Part 4.

<sup>78</sup> Brantly Womack, 'Beyond win-win', p. 927.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Ross, 'Chinese Nationalism and its Discontents', *The National Interest*, No. 116, 2011, pp. 45-6; Wang Jisi, 'China's Search for a Grand Strategy'; He Kai and Huiyin Feng, 'Debating China's assertiveness', pp. 633-4; Zhang Feng, 'Rethinking China's grand strategy', pp. 334-7.

<sup>80</sup> Andrew Scobell and Scott W. Harold, 'An "Assertive" China? Insights from Interviews', *Asian Security*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2013, p. 121.

<sup>81</sup> Johnston, Alastair Iain 'How New and How Assertive is China's New Assertiveness?', *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2013, pp. 7-48. This academic literature lags somewhat behind events and does not yet factor in, for example, the escalation of rhetoric and confrontations during 2012-13 between Japan and China over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess either validity, or the causes, or the durability or not, of China's alleged assertive turn.

<sup>82</sup> Andrew Scobell and Scott W. Harold, 'An "Assertive" China?', p. 114.

has alienated China's neighbours in Southeast Asia and reversed its diplomatic gains there from the 1990s.<sup>83</sup>

This shift plays into the view long held by many external commentators on China that, Confucian rhetoric notwithstanding, its strategic thinking is fundamentally guided by realist power politics.<sup>84</sup> It is not difficult to find examples of such thinking in China,<sup>85</sup> and to the extent that such views prevail in China, or are thought by outsiders to prevail, this creates a risk that PRD will be seen as mere propaganda: a strategy of deception.

There has, for example, been a durable contradiction between the rhetoric of PRD and a stable regional environment on the one hand, and China's threat to reunify Taiwan by force if necessary on the other.<sup>86</sup> A similar contradiction has attended China's ongoing bad relations with Japan.<sup>87</sup> China remains highly suspicious of Japan and gives it no credit at all for its over seventy years of pacifism.<sup>88</sup> Roy's prediction that the growth of China's power would eventually trigger Japanese rearmament, overriding the domestic constraints, seems to be happening now under the Abe administration.<sup>89</sup> It is a worrying thought that the current leaderships in both Japan and China might welcome the rise in tensions between the two countries as a means to help them pursue difficult domestic reform agendas. The turn since 2008 extends this contradiction to China's relations with Southeast Asia. The tension is very clear in a recent authoritative statement.<sup>90</sup> On the one hand this document contains lines that seem to reaffirm PRD, by maintaining China's rejection of hegemonism, and committing China to a strategy of peace and harmony:

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<sup>83</sup> Zhang Feng, 'Rethinking China's grand strategy', pp. 334-7; Brantly Womack, 'Beyond win-win', pp. 915-23.

<sup>84</sup> Denny Roy, 'Hegemon on the Horizon? China's Threat to East Asian Security', *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1994, pp. 156-62; David Shambaugh, 'Growing Strong: China's Challenge to Asian Security', *Survival*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1994, p. 44; Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); Christopher Hughes, 'Globalization and Nationalism', pp. 116, 118; Wu Xinbo, 'China', p. 116; Daniel Lynch, 'Chinese Thinking on the Future of International Relations: Realism as the *Ti*, Rationalism as the *Yong*?', *China Quarterly*, Vol. 197, 2009, pp. 87-107; David Shambaugh, and Ren Xiao, 'China: The Conflicted Rising Power', in Henry R. Nau and Deepa M. Ollapally (eds.), *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) (Kindle edn.), locs. 767-1323.

<sup>85</sup> Yan Xuetong 'The Rise of China and its Power Status', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 1, No.1, 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*, locs. 3042-3201.

<sup>87</sup> James Reilly, 'China's History Activists And The War Of Resistance Against Japan: History in the Making', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 44, No. 2, 2004, pp. 276-94; Peter Hays Gries, 'China's "New Thinking" on Japan', *China Quarterly*, No. 184, 2005, pp. 831-50; Rosemary Foot, 'Chinese strategies in a US-hegemonic global order', pp. 84-94; Barry Buzan, 'China in International Society', pp. 26-9.

<sup>88</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, locs. 1181-1225.

<sup>89</sup> Denny Roy, 'Hegemon on the Horizon?', pp. 163-4.

<sup>90</sup> Dai Bingguo, 'We Must Stick to the Path of Peaceful Development'.

‘peaceful development and cooperation’ as ‘the irresistible trend of the times’, and ‘if a country wants to develop itself it must let other develop too; if a country wants to have security it must make others feel safe too’, ‘This is the policy that will not change in 100 or 1000 years’. On the other hand, it contains lines that seem to reaffirm a hard realist disposition, explicitly defining its neighbours as threatening, and threatening harsh policies against them. It reaffirms China’s claim to Taiwan, and threatens to deny access to co-development with China to anyone who finds fault with, or makes trouble for, China, or engages in containment of China by ‘conducting joint military exercises in China’s adjacent waters’. That last criterion would apply to Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and quite a few of the members of ASEAN, and supports the argument that China wants regional pre-eminence.

China therefore seems to be on a cusp in relation to the question of means. Deng’s old formula for a low profile seems less relevant given that China’s is no longer so weak, and the US not so strong. But turns to a more assertive use of power bring negative reactions that threaten the aim of keeping neighbours and other great powers from seeing China as a threat. This tension speaks to contradictions within China’s aims between pursuing unification, and thus a range of territorial disputes, and cultivating a friendly and harmonious international environment for China’s development. It also speaks to a contradiction between ends and means: between China’s rhetoric of PRD and its apparent turn to more assertive, even aggressive, behaviour. It is a very predictable consequence of this mix of PRD rhetoric and assertive/aggressive behaviour that it will generate fear, and suspicion that China’s PRD rhetoric is just a hypocritical cover for what is actually a rising power looking to dominate its region. The many foreign readers of Sun Tse’s *Art of War*, will have taken note of its strong emphasis on strategic deception, and read China’s policy in that light. Even a mix of some peaceful and some assertive/aggressive behaviour will, on the realist logic of prudence, generate hedging and power-balancing behaviour by China’s neighbours. This issue will be crucial to the viability or not of PRD as a grand strategy for China, on which more below.

The evidence to date suggests that China’s leaders have yet to make up their minds about the relationship between ends and means in the practice of its foreign and security policy. The Dengist line is still influential, but increasingly questioned. What should replace it, and how that might or might not relate to PRD remains an open question. There is no consensus in China about how to conduct its foreign policy, with many different lines of thought and much argument.<sup>91</sup> China’s foreign policy thus reflects a conflicted identity torn between harmonious world and core national interests.<sup>92</sup>

The difficult issue of nationalism plays strongly into this uncertainty. Deng introduced nationalism during the 1980s as a way of handling the legitimacy

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<sup>91</sup> David Shambaugh, and Ren Xiao, ‘China’.

<sup>92</sup> Shih Chih-yu and Yin Jiwu, ‘Between Core National Interest and a Harmonious World’.

crisis for socialism and the CCP created by the shift to reform and opening up. Nationalism usefully bridged between left and right opinion.<sup>93</sup> But nationalism then took on a life of its own, feeding on the ‘victimhood’ view of history which constructs Japan and the US as China’s enemies. This narrative, introduced during the 1990s,<sup>94</sup> puts increasing pressure on the pursuit of a peaceful global and regional international environment within which to pursue China’s development.<sup>95</sup> It creates a danger of negative feedback loops among northeast Asian nationalisms,<sup>96</sup> a phenomenon all too visible during Sino-Japanese tensions over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute during 2012-14. From the 1990s, pressure from nationalist public opinion to take a tougher line with the US and China’s neighbours has been an important factor in Chinese foreign policy and the struggle of the party to preserve its legitimacy.<sup>97</sup> Hughes details the damage done to China’s foreign and domestic policy goals by the extent to which both have become hostages to the nationalist opinion that was unleashed and cultivated by the CCP itself.<sup>98</sup> Ross follows this line, seeing the rising influence of nationalist opinion, and the vulnerability of the CCP to it, as being mainly responsible for the more assertive turn in China’s foreign policy since 2009.<sup>99</sup> In its very nature, strong nationalism tends to be corrosive of the sensitivity to how others will react that was one of the key features of Deng’s original PRD policy. A mix of realist behaviour and strident nationalist rhetoric makes it difficult to project a strategic image of China’s rise as benign and peaceful.

China’s choices about the ends and means of its foreign and security policy, and the impact that they make, are heavily constrained by the CCP’s preference for maintaining a lot of state control not only over its domestic economic and political sphere, but also over the country’s international engagements. China’s authoritarian style of market economy, for example, means that the government wants to keep control of its currency and insulate it from global market turbulence, which in turn means that it cannot easily promote the RMB as a challenger to the US dollar as a global reserve currency.<sup>100</sup> As noted above, there is a consensus that China is weak in soft power, and needs to cultivate it to help counter the China threat thesis, resist the penetration of Western culture, and as a general attribute of a great power.

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<sup>93</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*, locs.403-58, 562-69.

<sup>94</sup> Peter Hays Gries, *China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Kindle edn., ch. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Liselotte Odegaard, *China and Coexistence*.

<sup>96</sup> Wang Zheng, ‘National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China’, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 2008, pp. 801-4.

<sup>97</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*, locs. 1858-2567.

<sup>98</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*.

<sup>99</sup> Robert Ross, ‘Chinese Nationalism and its Discontents’.

<sup>100</sup> Christopher Mc Nally, ‘Sino-Capitalism’, pp. 765-6.

Yet there is a problem of how to reconcile the potential soft power resource of China's traditional culture with the legitimacy needs of the CCP.<sup>101</sup> And the government mistakenly tries to cultivate soft power at the state level rather than allowing it to emanate naturally from civil society.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, the CCP's controlling attitudes towards the arts and civil society actively stifles the natural development of China's soft power and amplifies concern about how China will use its rising power. Even the promotion of Confucianism and China's classical heritage as a soft power resource is problematic. The rhetoric of harmonious relations comes out of Confucian logic, yet as Qin admits, in that logic harmony is closely linked to a framing of hierarchical relationships.<sup>103</sup> If China promotes harmony, does it thus also promote hierarchy despite its continuous rhetoric about supporting sovereign equality? If so who is envisaged as being at the top of the pile, and is the hierarchy consensual or imposed? Given its anti-hegemony/multipolarity line against the US, and its rejection of a leadership role for itself,<sup>104</sup> China clearly does not envisage harmony in a US-led system, but does not want to take over the US role. The unresolved link between harmony and hierarchy reinforces the suspicions of those who worry that China's pursuit of a stable regional environment involves establishing its own primacy in East Asia.

To sum up this discussion, one can see that in the practice of China's foreign and security policy over the last three decades there are a number of quite serious contradictions, some of them among ends, some of them between ends and means. The general problem for China is how to increase its power without creating insecurities and fears among its neighbours and/or the other great powers sufficient either to threaten China's economic ties to the global economy, or trigger major military competition. Within this there are several more specific dilemmas:

- How to pursue territorial disputes and an aspiration to regional primacy, while striving to maintain a peaceful and favourable international environment and harmonious relations with both neighbours and the US, especially in the context of the more assertive turn since 2008 and the threat to reunify Taiwan by force?
- How both to integrate China into a US-led global economic order and promote a stable international environment for China's development, while

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<sup>101</sup> Li Mingjiang, 'China Debates Soft Power'.

<sup>102</sup> Wang Jisi, 'China's Search for a Grand Strategy'.

<sup>103</sup> Qin Yaqing 'Rule, Rules and Relations: Towards a Synthetic Approach to Governance', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 4 No. 2, 2011), pp. 132-9. See also: Zhao Tingyang, 'Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept "All-Under-Heaven" (Tian-xia)', *Social Identities*, Vol.12, No. 1, 2006, pp. 29-41; William A. Callahan, 'Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-hegemonic or a New Hegemony?', *International Studies Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2008, pp. 749-61.

<sup>104</sup> Dai Bingguo, 'We Must Stick to the Path of Peaceful Development'.

treating the US as a strategic rival and the focus of anti-hegemonism, while China refuses to take a leading role itself?

- How to feature anti-hegemonism as a general goal while apparently coveting primacy within its home region?
- How to pursue stability domestically by the use of internal crackdowns (as in 1989 and recently), while countering the 'China threat theory', when such crackdowns tarnish China's image abroad and make its regime look more threatening in the context of its rising power.
- How to cultivate nationalism and a sense of historical victimhood to bolster regime legitimacy domestically, without becoming hostage to nationalist opinion regarding the military pursuit of territorial disputes, and the casting of Japan and the US as enemies, and so ramping up the 'China threat theory'.
- How to achieve rapid development without not only destabilising Chinese society, but also creating a market society ruled by a communist party, thus threatening the goals of social stability/harmony and maintaining the rule of the CCP?
- How to reconcile the high priority to domestic and regime security issues with the unavoidable linkage of China's development to a Western-dominated global economy?
- How to pursue soft power by re-legitimizing the use of classical Chinese thought and culture, while maintaining the legitimacy of the CCP and the anti-democratic line, and seeming to link China's rhetoric of harmony with hierarchical relationships?

Underlying all this is the question of whether PRD is just a temporary expedient to cover a transitional period of weakness (the realist view), or a long run grand strategy to define China's place in international society?

With this overview of ends and means in mind, we can now turn to the consideration of PRD as a grand strategy for China.

### **PRD as a Grand Strategy for China**

From the discussion so far we can see that China has a reasonably clear and stable set of aims that involve continued increases in the country's absolute and relative power, continued development and increase in prosperity, defence of territorial integrity, and continued domestic stability and CCP rule. It seems reasonable to assume that the broad pattern of these aims will remain stable, leaving the question as to what kind of grand strategy might best and most cost-effectively pursue them. The difficult question in relation to aims is whether China seeks a stable and harmonious regional and global environment as a desirable end in itself, or merely as an instrumental goal to underpin its own development and rise. Put another way, was PRD just a transitional strategy, to be abandoned now that China is strong, or is it a long-term

strategy? Another difficult question is about the means of China's policy. These will almost certainly continue to increase, raising the question about how these rising capabilities should best and most cost-effectively be deployed in a grand strategy.

If there is no question that China's grand strategy must focus on enabling its rise, then, as Buzan and Cox argue, there are two broad options: warlike rise and peaceful rise.<sup>105</sup> Warlike rise looks to the precedents set by most European powers and Japan, and rests on the realist expectation that the rising power will inevitably precipitate a great power war, and that all need to prepare for such a war. There is no sign that China wants, or is preparing for, a warlike rise, and as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>106</sup> it would be irrational for it to do so. The conditions of global politics, most obviously nuclear deterrence, economic interdependence, and the illegitimacy of imperialism, rule out great power war as a rational option. The normative environment does not support great power wars, and the material risks and costs far outweigh any possible gains. We are no longer in the 1930s, when such wars were both still legitimate, and cost-effective gambles in bids for superpower status.

If warlike rise is ruled out as a rational grand strategy option then only peaceful rise remains. With the realist criteria in mind, one might thus say that the minimum condition for peaceful rise is that a growing power is able to make both absolute and relative gains in both its material and its status positions, in relation to the other great powers in the international system without precipitating major hostilities between itself and other great powers. Peaceful rise involves a two-way process in which the rising power accommodates itself to the rules and structures of international society, while at the same time other great powers accommodate some changes in those rules and structures by way of adjusting to the new disposition of power and status. As Buzan and Cox also argued, there are few if any historical precedents for the peaceful rise of a great power, the US being the only other candidate, and then only in a qualified way.<sup>107</sup> Historical comparisons and lessons are therefore few, necessitating a more theoretical approach to understanding peaceful rise.

All of the historical cases of warlike rise have involved hot wars and can more or less be seen as a single type. Peaceful rise, however, is more nuanced. The classical work of Galtung suggests a subdivision into two distinct types: *negative* peaceful rise (no direct use of force or great power war, but an environment of threat and suspicion; think of Israel and Egypt or Russia and the West); and *positive* peaceful rise (a friendly environment with a considerable depth of trust, and a low sense of threat: think of the EU, or US-

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<sup>105</sup> Barry Buzan and Michael Cox, 'China and the US', pp. 111-15.

<sup>106</sup> Barry Buzan, 'A World Order Without Superpowers: Decentered Globalism', *International Relations*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2011, pp. 1-23.

<sup>107</sup> Barry Buzan and Michael Cox, 'China and the US'.



Canada).<sup>108</sup> Miller's more recent work suggests a three, or possibly four, way subdivision using the following scheme:

- *High-level peace* – is the equivalent of a security community in which the participants neither expect nor prepare for war against each other, and have mechanisms in place for peaceful change.
- *Normal peace* – is like a strong security regime, when war is unlikely but not unimaginable, and most though not all conflict issues have been resolved.
- *Cold peace* – is a weaker form of security regime, but still significant enough that states do not deploy military force in their relations with each other, even for diplomatic signalling, though they do prepare for war as a long term possibility.
- *Cold war* – is on the boundary between warlike and peaceful rise. War is possible in the short term and states do use military instruments as part of their regular diplomatic relations.<sup>109</sup>

Negative peace in Galtung's scheme roughly equates with Miller's cold war, while his positive peace roughly equates to Miller's high-level peace. Miller is correct in suggesting the need for something between these two extremes, but in my view not very convincing in his differentiation between normal peace and cold peace, where the boundary is very hazy, and even for cold peace the criteria are extremely demanding in relation to military restraint. In relation to thinking about peaceful rise, I will therefore use three general models, which, sticking with Miller's temperature metaphor, I will label *hot, warm and cold* peaceful rise.

- A hot peaceful rise (HPR) would be conducted in the terms of the behaviour appropriate to a security community, and aim for that as an outcome. While theoretically possible, and perhaps desirable, this would be an extremely demanding form of peaceful rise and perhaps therefore not a very likely one except in the longer term.
- A warm peaceful rise (WPR) would be conducted in terms of the behaviour appropriate to a security regime and aim for that outcome.<sup>110</sup> A security regime is a pattern of security interdependence still shaped by fear of war

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<sup>108</sup> This argument draws on Galtung: Johan Galtung, 'Foreign Policy Opinion as a Function of Social Position', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 1, No. 3/4, 1964, pp. 206-31; Johan Galtung, 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1969, pp. 167-91. See also Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, 'Reflections on the Discussion: *The Evolution of International Security Studies and Non-Traditional Security Studies in China*', *International Politics Quarterly* (Beijing University, in Chinese), Vol. 33, No. 1, 2012, pp. 49-62.

<sup>109</sup> Benjamin Miller, *States, Nations and the Great Powers: The Sources of Regional War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2007), 42-8. Miller does not apply his theory to East Asia. His theory requires a clear distinction between regions and great powers that is not available in East Asia, where China and Japan are inside the region, not outside.

<sup>110</sup> Robert Jervis, 'Security Regimes', *International Organization*, Vol 36, No. 2, 1982, pp. 357-79.

and expectations of violence in political relations, but where those fears and expectations are restrained by agreed sets of rules of conduct, and expectation that those rules will be observed. This obviously covers a spectrum of possibilities stretching between the two extremes from quite warm to tepid.

- A cold peaceful rise (CPR) would be conducted in raw power political terms using threat and intimidation, but avoiding hot war. In some ways this would be close to traditional warlike rise: exercising power to force change, but relying on the all-round fear of great power war to act as a restraint.

As shown above, China's foreign policy rhetoric and behaviour stretch awkwardly across these three models. On the one hand, with its talk of harmony and co-development, and of itself as a status quo power, and its practices of joining intergovernmental arrangements, and contributing to peacekeeping operations, China leans towards WPR or even, especially in some of its rhetoric, HPR. On the other hand with its talk of nationalism, victimhood, and the rights of the big over the small, and its practices of assertive military pursuit of territorial claims and gagging of its own civil society, China leans towards CPR. China's military development has been relatively modest for a country of its size,<sup>111</sup> and despite all the foreign fuss about its aircraft carriers and missiles does not yet point decisively in either direction. This seemingly incoherent, or at best drifting, strategy nevertheless points firmly towards an outcome of tepid WPR or CPR. Given such a mixed picture, the rational response of China's neighbours and other great powers is a realist one of prudence: seeking to engage China peacefully where possible, while hedging against its rising power in case things turn nasty. On this reasoning, if China carries on with its current lines of rhetoric and behaviour, it will de facto have opted for a policy of tepid WPR or CPR.

Since CPR, WPR and HPR represent quite different grand strategies, and since China's leaders do not yet seem to have made up their mind which they wants to pursue, it is worth looking more closely at the rhetorical and behavioural requirements for each of them. If China's seven core aims identified above remain relatively constant, by what means can they best be pursued? This exercise assumes that China's absolute and relative capabilities will continue to rise. It focuses on contradictions amongst the ends, and between ends and means, with a view to highlighting how these might be differently handled within the three models, or if not handled, what the consequences would be.

### Cold Peaceful Rise

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<sup>111</sup> Barry Buzan and Michael Cox, 'China and the US', pp. 118-20.

If China chooses CPR then it can just carry on with its present mixed policy of drift, or even somewhat intensify the more assertive line it has taken since 2008. Either choice would quickly reveal that the whole PRD rhetoric from Deng onward in China was and is simply propaganda: a transitional strategy to cover a period of weakness until China became strong enough to assert itself in power terms. It would vindicate those realists who always suspected that PRD was a Sun Tze style *Art of War* strategic deception, and that as China grew stronger it would become more assertive.<sup>112</sup> A choice for CPR by either route thus declares openly that from here on in China thinks itself strong enough to play a straightforward game of power politics. Because the constraints on great power war are high all round, the risk is small that even a measured increase in Chinese assertiveness will escalate into de facto warlike rise. Going with CPR would enable China to focus on hard power means, where it will be increasingly strong, while not worrying too much about soft power ones, where high levels of state control make it much less competitive. But a choice for CPR would mean that some contradictions amongst China's ends, and also between its ends and means, would either remain or intensify.

There is no obvious, immediate, contradiction between CPR and China's first five ends: maintaining the exclusive rule of the communist party; maintaining high economic growth; maintaining the stability of Chinese society; defending the country's territorial integrity, including reunification and territorial disputes; and increasing China's national power relative to the US, other great powers and China's neighbours, and achieving a more multipolar, less US-dominated, world order. There is a very obvious contradiction between CPR and the aim of avoiding others perceiving China as threatening. Under CPR this aim would have to be abandoned because the contradiction is unresolvable. A China determined to play a game of power politics on the strength of its rising hard power simply cannot avoid looking threatening to others. China's much commented upon bigness matters crucially here. Because the country is so immense, a strategy based mainly on its rising hard power will alarm everyone. It will most likely trigger balancing realist responses in the form of some combination of alignment, alliance and self-strengthening, though some bandwagoning cannot be ruled out.

The sixth aim – maintaining favourable regional and global conditions for China's development – is the tricky one because of the two ways of pursuing it. 'Favourable conditions' defined as favourable to China with no regard to how others feel about it, would be compatible with CPR, and open the door to the creation of such conditions by power political means and the pursuit of Chinese primacy within the region. Such a move would certainly intensify 'China threat' dynamics. It would also require China to abandon its anti-hegemonism rhetoric,

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<sup>112</sup> Wang Jisi, 'China's Search for a Grand Strategy', pp. 68-79; Liselotte Odegaard, *China and Coexistence*, pp. 80, 162, 201.

or if not, put itself in the invidious and hypocritical position of arguing for anti-hegemonism at the global level while pursuing what most outsiders and others within East Asia would perceive as hegemonism at the regional one. Securing a 'favourable environment' by such power political means might work up to a point, but it risks reaction and instability. If it backfires, this strategy could feed back negatively into economic growth, and eventually into the legitimacy of CCP rule, by making others hesitant to strengthen Chinese power through trade and investment. If 'favourable conditions' is defined as 'favourable to all concerned', then this points to WPR or HPR and will be discussed below.

Because of its mixed behaviour and policy of drift, China already has some track record of CPR, especially so since its assertive turn in foreign policy after 2008. China's relations with the US as the prevailing hegemon are mainly lukewarm or cold peace, as are its relations with two of its major power neighbours, Japan and India. China's strategic partnership with Russia is instrumental (shared anti-Western views, a temporary need to stand back-to-back) rather than warm, and remains fundamentally shallow and fragile.<sup>113</sup> Its political relations with Europe are thin apart from trade, and politically more about indifference than either cold or warm. China's relations with its smaller neighbours have been mixed. Up until 2008, there was a slow but quite steady trend towards warming relations with Southeast Asia. But since then China has taken a more aggressive line, pushing most of its relations with Southeast Asia into the tepid WPR or CPR models.

There is a substantial academic view that China has reaped mainly negative international consequences from its assertive nationalism towards its neighbours. Hughes sees negative outcomes for China when the nationalist line has prevailed, whether over Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, Xinjiang, social stability in China, or China's ability to operate within the global economy.<sup>114</sup> Zhang sees negative outcomes for China when it resorted to aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea and Taiwan during the mid-1990s.<sup>115</sup> Others see the new assertiveness since 2008 as alienating China's neighbours in Southeast Asia and reversing its diplomatic gains there from the 1990s.<sup>116</sup> Womack sees a danger that China will replicate the mistake of the USSR and achieve self-containment by alienating its neighbours.<sup>117</sup> Several Chinese analysts agree that the assertive turn after 2008 has had mostly negative

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<sup>113</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, locs. 1461-1526; Liselotte Odegaard, *China and Coexistence*, pp. 101-12; 187-8.

<sup>114</sup> Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era*, locs. 2702-2877.

<sup>115</sup> Zhang Feng, 'The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations', pp. 323-4.

<sup>116</sup> Zhang Feng, 'Rethinking China's grand strategy', pp. 334-7; Zhang Feng, 'The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations', pp. 323-4; Brantly Womack, 'Beyond win-win', pp. 920-23.

<sup>117</sup> Brantly Womack, 'Beyond win-win', pp. 925-8. Russia's annexation of Crimea seems to be replicating the Soviet model.

consequences for China.<sup>118</sup> China's recent resort to gunboat diplomacy over the Daiouyu/Senkaku dispute with Japan helped a more nationalist, right-wing Abe government to get elected there, and legitimises both stronger ties between Japan and the US, and Japan's moves towards military self-strengthening. From a hard strategic calculus point of view, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that China's CPR moves are mainly advantageous to the US, legitimising its position in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans, and motivating many of China's neighbours to hedge by moving closer to each other and the US. There are indications that even Russia and Japan are putting aside their differences to hedge against China.<sup>119</sup> Very predictably, as Womack says, the CPR side of China's behaviour is uniting its neighbours in fear of it.

To sum up, going for a grand strategy of CPR would have the following consequences. It would make unviable the end of avoiding having China appear threatening to others, though this might not matter if PRD was anyway just a deception strategy. In that case, concern about 'China threat' was not really a core aim, but just a temporary instrumental tactic no longer compatible with the exercise of China's new power. This shift in China's aims would encourage hedging and balancing against China in Asia, which in turn would, as it is already doing, strengthen the US position in East and South Asia. Within China, these foreign reactions would very likely reinforce the culture of ultra-nationalism and looking backward to a history of victimhood and exploitation by outsiders. The CCP leadership might see that as a positive gain to the extent that its own tenure was thereby underpinned, and its inclination to curtail Chinese civil society made easier to implement. The risk would be of run-away negative security spirals strong enough to threaten both sustained economic growth and the pursuit of favourable regional and global conditions for China's development. Negative security spirals would also trigger regional military responses to China's own increasing military strength, a process already visible.<sup>120</sup> China's size and capabilities would probably allow it to retain a military edge over its neighbours, but it would have to spend a lot more to do so, and if handed such a strategic gift, the US would doubtless be glad to sell balancing weaponry to China's neighbours, and to use their fear of China to its own ends. China does not have the option, as the US did, of insulating its region from outside powers, and then dominating it.

### Warm Peaceful Rise

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<sup>118</sup> Andrew Scobell and Scott W. Harold, 'An "Assertive" China?', p. 114.

<sup>119</sup> Stephen Blank, 'Russia and Japan: Can Two-Plus-Two Equal More than Four?'. *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, East-West Center, No. 251, 6 March 2014.

<sup>120</sup> Iskander Rehman, 'Keeping the Dragon at Bay: India's Counter-Containment of China in Asia', *Asian Security*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2009, pp. 114-43; Nicholas Khoo, 'Fear Factor: Northeast Asian Responses to China's Rise', *Asian Security*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2011, pp. 95-118.

If China chooses WPR then it has a much more demanding, but also potentially much more rewarding, task before it. China would need to conduct its foreign and security policy in a much more strategically focused and coordinated way than it has done in recent years. WPR requires deploying China's increasing means in ways that reduce the contradictions among its ends. It would require a consensual approach to maintaining favourable regional and global conditions for China's development, and it would mean that all seven of China's core aims, including avoiding having others perceive China as threatening, could be pursued simultaneously. It would mean making 'favourable' and 'harmonious' relations a meaningful two-way street, and not just a product of hierarchical relations projected by China. As noted above, WPR addresses the difficult problem for China of how to increase its power without creating insecurities and fears among its neighbours and/or the other great powers. WPR as a grand strategy has to deliver on China's seven aims while at the same time enabling China to increase its absolute and relative capabilities within international society. If it can do this, WPR is a potential grand strategy for the long haul, not just a transitional tactic to cover a period of weakness. It rests on the assumption that Deng's analysis of international relations from 1978 remains fundamentally valid: i.e. that peace and development have become the main characteristics of international society;<sup>121</sup> that China is no longer existentially threatened by other great powers; and that China's own development depends on it being engaged with the world economy. These do indeed remain valid. The main change since 1978 is that China is now strong and very consequential in international society, whereas then it was weak and relatively inconsequential.

There is no doubt that China can do WPR if it wants to. As Ren argues, it did so quite successfully in relation to Southeast Asian and global IGOs during the 1990s and the first few years of the 2000s.<sup>122</sup> There is also no doubt that international society remains quite benign towards China's rise and would be more so if that rise was conducted as a warm one. As Payne observes, 'security is now more frequently believed to be indivisible', and cooperative security is embedded in the security strategies of the OSCE and the EU.<sup>123</sup> There is a rising sense of shared threats and shared fates, whether to do with economic (in)stability, WMD proliferation, internet security, terrorism, climate change, and/or global diseases. A key underpinning of responsible great power behaviour is therefore the recognition of common problems that require collective action because they generate shared fates. Shared fates amplify the

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<sup>121</sup> 'Peace' here means mainly Galtung's 'negative peace' in the sense of an absent or very low threat of great power war. I am not trying to sweep under the carpet the many local, but often very intense, uses of political violence in the world. But significant elements of 'positive peace' especially in terms of widespread commitment to development, also accompany this.

<sup>122</sup> Ren Xiao, 'Between Adapting and Shaping: China's role in Asian regional cooperation', *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 18, No. 59, 2009, pp. 303-20.

<sup>123</sup> Rodger A. Payne, 'Cooperative Security', p. 609.

necessity to give priority to *raison de système* over *raison d'état*, and require a turn towards the principle of *common or cooperative security*: security 'with' rather than security 'against'.<sup>124</sup> In the absence of threats of either great power war, or any great power striving to replace the US as sole superpower, and without any commanding ideological differences about 'market economy or not', the national security agenda no longer has the stark existential quality that it traditionally held. Security 'with' is now more important, and increasingly more obvious, than security 'against'. There is a resource within the region that might facilitate building WPR along these lines: the fact that most countries within East Asia have similar views about *comprehensive security*, embodying the logic of security across cultural, societal, political, environmental as well as military sectors.<sup>125</sup>

There is not much intrinsic opposition to China's rise, which is widely seen as not only inevitable; but in terms of the norms of international society also justified, and in many ways welcome. China's rather self-serving rhetoric about how its own development will benefit everyone else is not wrong, and at least in economic terms is widely appreciated. The more locomotives pulling the global economy along, the better. That rising powers should get a bigger role and a higher status in international society is also an acknowledged trend of the times, as visible in the shift from the G8 to the G20. China's rise is not an isolated phenomenon but part of the 'rise of the rest',<sup>126</sup> and a more decentred, pluralist, global order with a more diffuse distribution of power,<sup>127</sup> and a narrower ideological bandwidth.<sup>128</sup> Except for hard realists, whose theory excludes the possibility of peaceful rise by definition, China's rise is not itself a problem: reactions to it depend mainly on whether it will be conducted in WPR or CPR mode.

To address the eight policy dilemmas sketched above a WPR strategy would need to work simultaneously on three levels: domestic, regional, and global. The most basic point about a grand strategy of WPR is that it would require China to have confidence that the natural rise in its power, when combined with a benign face, would achieve its main aims more effectively and more efficiently than a CPR strategy. It is widely accepted that nothing is going to stop China's rise, and therefore that international society has to

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<sup>124</sup> David Dewitt, 'Common, Comprehensive and Cooperative Security', *Pacific Review*, Vol. 7, No.1, 1994, pp. 1-15; Gareth Evans, 'Cooperative Security and Intrastate Conflict', *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 96, 1994, pp. 3-20; Rodger A. Payne, 'Cooperative Security'; Information Office of the State Council, 'China's Peaceful Development', Part 2.

<sup>125</sup> John Chapman, Reinhard Drifte and Ian M. Gow. *Japan's Quest for Comprehensive Security* (London: Pinter, 1983); David Dewitt, 'Common, Comprehensive and Cooperative Security'; David Shambaugh, 'Growing Strong'.

<sup>126</sup> Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World And the Rise of the Rest* (London: Penguin, 2009).

<sup>127</sup> Barry Buzan, 'A World Order Without Superpowers'.

<sup>128</sup> Barry Buzan, and George Lawson, 'Capitalism and the Emergent World Order'.

accommodate increases in its status and influence. Making the necessary accommodations will be much easier the more that the rest of world sees China as benign and stable, and this is the basis of the virtuous cycle – in contrast to the negative security spiral that accompanies CPR – on which the strategy of WPR rests. What would China have to do in order to rise in a warm peaceful way?

### *Domestic*

Because regime security is one of China's core aims, there is a close link between its domestic, and foreign and security policies. Like all the other great powers, China is playing the market game, but unlike most of them it is not a democracy. Its commitment to one-party rule means that it cannot even play the Russian strategy of pretending to be democratic while in fact being authoritarian. This political outlier status is part of China's security problem. Unlike the US, China cannot easily make a plausible claim either that its domestic political structure necessarily makes it a peaceable player in international society; or that outsiders can with high reliability both know what China stands for and safely assume that its internal structure will have a high continuity over the coming decades. Even with a strong defence of non-intervention, China cannot avoid that how it conducts its internal affairs affects the kind of image it projects abroad. A strategy of WPR can address this apparent contradiction between regime security and how others see China in three ways.

First, if the CCP is to remain in power permanently, then it must openly and credibly commit itself to continue to evolve, as it has been doing ever since the reform and opening up began. Reform of the Party needs to keep pace with the social market society that its successful economic reform is generating, and this may require radical changes equivalent to those made in the late 70s and early 80s. The transformation in China over the last thirty years has been both deep and impressive, and there is some risk that the Party is not keeping up with the society it has created. Having made 'market communism' work, the CCP next needs to invent what might be called 'pluralist communism', in which, within the context of one-party rule, the diversity of civil society is allowed more voice on issues such as the environment, education, corruption, justice and social policy. Complex modern societies like China now is, need feedback and debate if they are to manage their evolution effectively, and benefit from the expanding resource of educated citizens that they have created. Alongside this, the CCP needs to find the confidence to make its legitimacy forward-looking, as any communist party should do. It needs to roll back the strategy begun in the 1990s of reinforcing its own legitimacy by promoting patriotic education and a backward-looking Chinese nationalism rooted in the century of humiliation and hatred of Japan and the US. This strategy is both unnecessary, and inevitably corrosive of WPR on the regional and global levels. Instead, the CCP needs to



root its legitimacy in the progressive unfolding of a pluralist social market society; the continued management of China's successful development policy; and the restoration of China's status and power in international society. Nationalism can be re-based around the ample resources of both China's classical past and its present achievements. The widespread desire amongst Chinese to avoid any return to political fragmentation provides a firm foundation for both moves.

Second, and as part of the move to 'pluralist communism', China needs to cultivate a more laid back and relaxed approach to the domestic side of its territorial integrity aims. China's position here is quite complicated, because the country is still in the long historic transition process from being an empire to being a state. Although there are many minor border disputes, there are no serious general challenges to China's existing land borders, and since China is not a democracy the peoples within it have no constitutional right of secession. Tibet and Xinjiang are therefore mainly image problems for China. Nobody is going to tear them away from China, and China is not going to let them go, but how they are handled by China matters to how outsiders interpret the nature of China's rising power. Harsh repression and large scale settlement by Han Chinese play badly abroad by making China's behaviour look imperialist. There are practical policy options around multiculturalism from many countries for dealing with minority peoples, and respecting cultural difference, while not bringing into question the sovereignty of the state. These provide a resource from which China might learn.

Taiwan is even more complicated, because while China sees it as a purely domestic issue, much of the rest of the world reads it as at least partly an international one even while acknowledging 'one China'. On the international side, Taiwan's status as a democracy matters here, while on the domestic side the deep commitment of the CCP to completing the revolutionary unification of China is also a complicating factor. Heath notes 2020 and 2050 as dates where the CCP has committed itself to deliver on some key objectives, and if these commitments are taken seriously, they could easily generate real problems between China, its neighbours and the US, particularly over Taiwan.<sup>129</sup> Again, there is no question about the ends, but a big one about the means, and how they affect China's image. Bullying and threats make China look imperialist. China needs to look to its legendary ability to play the long game, and have the confidence that its own market and pluralist evolution, along with ever-deeper economic integration will steadily, naturally and peacefully close the gap across the Straits. The Taiwan problem will be much more effectively, cheaply, and impressively solved by seduction than by coercion.

Thirdly, China needs to give priority to constructing a more coherent and controlled foreign policy process. Things have drifted because the Central

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<sup>129</sup> Timothy R. Heath, 'What Does China Want?', pp. 58-61, 68-9.

Committee has had too little interest in foreign policy, and the foreign ministry has been weak, divided and remote from the centre of power. This contrasts with other great powers, where the foreign minister is usually one of the central figures in the government. The military, fishing industry, oil industry, various maritime agencies, provincial governments, and other local actors have had too much autonomy in making China's foreign policy. There is a serious need for China to get better control over its foreign policy making process, reigning in the plethora of uncoordinated agencies.<sup>130</sup> The effect of this fragmentation has been to make China's foreign and security policy look inconsistent, incoherent and unreliable. If it is to avoid being seen as strategic deception, WPR demands a high level of coherence and consistency in the deployment of means, especially so at the regional level. A more coherently managed foreign and security policy would reassure others about China's reliability as a diplomatic player. Given its commanding position and longevity in office, the CCP should be well placed to deliver such coherence, though in practice so far it has not.<sup>131</sup>

### *Regional*

The regional level is the most crucial one for China's PRD strategy for it is there that the choice between CPR and WPR will largely be made. As noted above, China does not have the option that the US did of easily dominating its neighbours and keeping its relationships with them separate from its relations with other great powers.<sup>132</sup> Many of China's neighbours are substantial rising powers in their own right, and even a declining US will be a major presence in the region for a long time. The key to WPR at the regional level is thus that China has to be nice to its neighbours in a sustained way, using its power not to intimidate them into submission, but to build relationships of trust with them. Germany, Indonesia and Brazil all provide lessons about how a big power can pursue WPR in its region; Russia, Israel and India provide lessons about the costs of not doing so. It is on this level that the WPR strategy requires China to have confidence that the natural rise in its power, when combined with a benign face, will achieve its main aims more effectively and more efficiently than a CPR strategy. Within Asia, China has the most to gain from WPR and the most to lose from CPR. And unfair though it may be, because China is the big rising power that others fear, it has to take the lead for WPR, and bear the biggest burden in making it work. How other countries react to such initiatives of course matters: it takes two to tango. But given the extent to which

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<sup>130</sup> Liselotte Odegaard, *China and Coexistence*, pp. 2-4; Wang Jisi, 'China's Search for a Grand Strategy'.

<sup>131</sup> Whether the new State Security Committee set up in November 2013 will deliver such coherence, and if it does whether this will be aimed at CPR or WPR, remains to be seen.

<sup>132</sup> Barry Buzan and Michael Cox, 'China and the US'.

international relations within East Asia have slipped towards CPR, there may be a lot of work to do. Sceptical partners may need to be asked many times before they agree to dance, so in pursuing WPR China need to be patient, persistent, and to play the long game. Reacting to short-term rebuffs in a tit-for-tat way, as hard-minded nationalists will demand, would simply revert to the existing track towards CPR. Expecting others in the region to take the lead for WPR when it is China that is growing strong is simply unrealistic. As Womack observes, because hegemony is mainly in the eye of the beholder, China needs to devote a lot of effort to reassurance to prevent self-containment in its region.<sup>133</sup> It is in this challenging form that the maxim 'with great power comes great responsibility', faces China today. If China does not take the lead for WPR nobody else will.

There are three problems for China, and indeed for the region, in implementing WPR: the malign role that history plays in East Asian regional politics; the existence of border disputes; and the ambiguity both in China and amongst its neighbours about whether domination of the region is one of China's aims. None of these will be easily or quickly solved, especially not after the escalations of the past few years have poisoned the atmosphere. Addressing them will require commitment to consistent behaviour over a long period, and the sooner this begins, the better. It is well understood that it takes a long time to build relations of trust and only moments to destroy them. A strategy along these lines should play to China's strengths and skills in relationalism.<sup>134</sup>

To address the history problem, as already noted, China needs to define and promote its own patriotism and nationalism in ways that do not place anti-Japanese historical memories at its core. While the facts of history are a narrow technical matter governed by academic rules, how history is interpreted and reinterpreted is always a political choice. China made such a choice in the early 1990s,<sup>135</sup> and it needs to revisit this. China certainly has enough splendid history of its own, and splendid prospects of re-emergence to look forward to, to provide ample resources for a more positive nationalism, that does not depend on looking back to the century of humiliation. It is possible, though politically difficult, to tell East Asian history over the last two centuries in a way that does justice to the facts, but would be neutral, or even ameliorative, in relation to contemporary politics.<sup>136</sup> All of the countries in Northeast Asia can

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<sup>133</sup> Brantly Womack, 'Beyond win-win', pp. 925-8.

<sup>134</sup> Shih Chih-yu and Yin Jiwu, 'Between Core National Interest and a Harmonious World'; Qin Yaqing 'Rule, Rules and Relations'.

<sup>135</sup> Wang Zheng, 'National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory'.

<sup>136</sup> Various formal and informal attempts to do this have been made, see: Lionel Babicz, 'South Korea, Japan, and China: In Search of a Shared Historical Awareness', *6th Biennial Conference of the Korean Studies Association of Australasia KSAA (Australia: Korean*

claim part of the credit for the way in which the region has both freed itself from Western domination and become rich and powerful; and all deserve part of the blame for its humanitarian disasters and poisonous political relations. This balance sheet, and the Western role on both sides of it, needs to be drawn up, put on the table, and made a core part of WPR strategy. Europe offers some lessons on this. It is clear that Japan is incapable of taking the lead, and is indeed part of the problem to be solved.<sup>137</sup> So China needs to take the lead, confronting its own past in the process, and collaborating with its East Asian neighbours to produce a consensual history of the region on which to re-base the current relations of East Asia's states and peoples with each other. Putting the past into a shared perspective, in which all get due credit and blame, is a necessary condition for looking forward together in terms of common interests rather than looking backward to what once divided them.

To address the border disputes problem, China needs to turn sharply away from its present policy of dismissing the claims of other states, asserting its own claims unilaterally, and resorting to gunboat diplomacy. Perhaps more than anything else these tactics are pushing China towards a CPR outcome, and rather like the US, China seems to be drifting towards a policy in which military options are its default first choice when problems arise in its international relations. This policy needs to be reconsidered, and brought under strict central control. Under a WPR strategy, military means should be the absolute last resort: available if necessary, but used seldom, preferably never. China has a good record in pursuing a relatively restrained program of military modernization, and this should be continued. China needs to balance its security and symbolic needs for military capability with the need to avoid making its neighbours feel militarily threatened. Military restraint needs to be accompanied first by acknowledgment that disputes exist and are genuine. Most of the border issues in Asia have such long, murky and complicated histories that self-righteous unilateral claims by either side look both provocative and implausible. Second, it needs to be accompanied by sustained willingness to promote and commit to peaceful means for the resolution of territorial and other disputes. China should seize the moral high ground by declaring its willingness to submit all territorial disputes to international arbitration and to abide by the results. Its failure so far to do so makes it vulnerable, as the Philippines has shown, to others seizing the moral high ground and putting China on the back foot. If the existing machineries for such arbitration are thought to lack sufficient objectivity, then China should offer to collaborate with its neighbours in creating machineries that they all trust. In an

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[Studies Association of Australasia, 2009](#)) pp. 115-27. Much more political support and drive needs to be given to this project.

<sup>137</sup> Shiping Tang, 'Reconciliation and the Remaking of Anarchy', *World Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 4, 2011, pp. 711-49; Gilbert Rozman, 'East Asian Historical Issues in a Contemporary Light', in Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo, eds., *East Asia's Haunted Present* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), pp. 42-58.

economically open world, nothing is at stake in these border disputes that is anything like as valuable as the political and societal relationships of trust within the region that are being destroyed by pursuit of them.

To accompany this turn to dispute settlement, China should offer confidence-building measures (CBMs) and the machinery of a security regime to neighbours and to the US: protocols for avoiding incidents both air and naval; transparency about military budgets and exercises; regularized high-level military meetings and exchanges; and suchlike. Again there is an opportunity here for China to seize the moral high ground. More widely as part of this charm offensive, China should resume a positive engagement with ASEAN and its offshoots, and rebuild relationships with Japan, South Korea and India. It should stop opposing Japan's and India's bids for UNSC membership. These powers have reasonable claims to a seat at the top tables of global management. China's opposition to them both contradicts its frequent declarations about favouring a multipolar international order, and makes China look like it is playing a hypocritical and hegemonic game.

If the history and border disputes problems were addressed in this way, then the regional hegemony problem would largely disappear. All that would remain is for China to be clear in its rhetoric that it did not seek to dominate the region, and was prepared to bind its power, as the US did so successfully after 1945, in regional institutional arrangements.

One payoff for China in doing this would be the construction of a favourable regional environment for its development that would be much more stable and easy to maintain than one imposed by fear and coercion. Within such a consensual region China's naturally greater weight would deliver on its aims at low cost and low risk. Another, equally significant, payoff would be to reduce US influence and legitimacy in East and South Asia by minimising threat perceptions of China amongst its neighbours. The US is far from being unequivocally loved in East and South Asia. Much of the legitimacy of its presence there rests on the fact that the local states need its presence to offset their fear of Chinese power. In the modern world China will never be able to restore the civilizational centrality it enjoyed in East Asia during classical times. But it does have the option to live up to its rhetorics of peace, harmony and multipolarity by minimizing threat perception of it amongst its neighbours, and cultivating their shared commitment to a politics of relationalism rooted in their shared culture. Care would need to be taken to distance relationalism and harmony from their classical association with hierarchical relations organized around the central kingdom. By so doing China could weaken the US position in the Western Pacific in an entirely risk-free way.

### *Global*

Because of the strong links between the regional and global levels in Asia, if China can succeed with WPR in its region, then it would have gone a

long way towards successful WPR amongst the great powers generally and the US in particular. This is particularly true of its relationship with Japan. As argued above, WPR with Japan will be particularly difficult: on past record, the Japanese are unlikely to be helpful, and China will have to make changes to its own telling of history. But as I have argued elsewhere, Japan is absolutely crucial to China's PRD because of its major roles both at the regional level (where Japan is the other great power) and at the global level (where it is the key to the US position in the Western Pacific, and more arguably also to the global superpower standing of the US).<sup>138</sup> This is another reason for China to support Japan's and India's bids for place on the UNSC, and more generally to acknowledge the rise of the rest both within its region and in the rest of the world. China cannot coherently both call for a more multipolar world and then stand in the way of other 'poles' being given their due status. Great power relations in a world of decentred globalism will not be about system dominance, because none will be in a position to do so, and like China now, probably none will aspire to the thankless and expensive job. It will be about the great powers managing their collective shared fates in relation to the global economy, the proliferation of WMD, terrorism, the environment and suchlike. China needs to position itself for this world, not start playing an obsolete game of great power one-upmanship.

That said the pursuit of WPR does have implications for China's relationship with the US. That relationship has so far been reasonably well managed inasmuch as both sides are highly conscious that neither wants a war with the other, and both take some care to avoid letting the tensions between them go too far. Yet the overall relation between them is more cold than warm, and since both are quite strongly driven by realist thinking there is a significant danger that their mutual realism will generate a self-fulfilling prophecy. If both believe that they are playing a traditional power transition game, then there is a serious risk that their cold relationship could become more rivalry than coexistence. As I have argued, a successful WPR strategy by China in Asia would have negative implications for the US position there. While the US can hardly complain about China being nice to its neighbours, it might still feel threatened by that process. As Turner argues, there are longstanding threat perceptions of China in the US that are easy to play to by constructing China's rise as a threat to the US's identity as the sole superpower.<sup>139</sup> Along this line, Johnston's observation of how flawed characterizations of China within the US media since 2010 might play adversely into US/China relations by creating self-fulfilling prophecies, is a case in point.<sup>140</sup> In principle, the US could pursue a highly accommodative strategy, tolerating CPR behaviour by China. In practice,

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<sup>138</sup> Barry Buzan, 'China in International Society'.

<sup>139</sup> Oliver Turner, "Threatening" China and US security: the international politics of identity', *Review of International Studies*, online first 2013.

<sup>140</sup> Johnston, Alastair Iain 'How New and How Assertive is China's New Assertiveness?'

the relationship between the two is sufficiently edgy to make this highly unlikely. While as Buzan and Cox have argued,<sup>141</sup> the US has been quite accommodative of China's peaceful rise, there is no evidence to suggest that it would acquiesce in an aggressive CPR by China, which would make the US look weak if it did not respond. Even if the US and China did follow such a path, the outcome would not be warm either in the region or at the global level.

One aim of a WPR strategy is to prevent such an outcome, and here too China has the opportunity to seize the moral high ground by offering CBMs to the US. CPR makes raising China's costs an easy game for the US to play. At the very least, a sustained and determined WPR strategy by China in Asia, and towards the US, would make it difficult for the US to raise China's costs by supporting containment strategies in Asia. Joint projects such as in space science would also contribute to the global level of WPR, although whether the US can overcome its suspicions sufficiently to allow this remains to be seen. If it cannot, then China should seek space cooperation, and build trust, with other powers until the US come around. Again, this will require patience, tolerance and a willingness to play the long game. Some part of the realist problem between the US and China is probably ineradicable, but assiduous pursuit of WPR by China would make sure that the chance of this becoming the dominant view within the US would be minimized. China's regional WPR would thus also underpin the creation of a favourable environment for its development at the global level.

A key point about all this is its low risk to China. If WPR works, the gains would be very large. But if it doesn't – i.e. if after many years others fail to respond to a sustained and coherent Chinese turn to WPR – then China is simply back where it is now, except stronger, and occupying the moral high ground.

### Hot Peaceful Rise

Given the difficulties of pursuing WPR, HPR is hardly a realistic option at this point. Many things would have to change before Asia could become a security community – and not just in China. That said, HPR is compatible with all of China's aims, though like WPR it would require a softer line on territorial integrity where that involves border disputes with others, and even more than WPR, a considerable relaxation in the CCP's control over China's civil society. While HPR might at this point seem utopian and unrealistic for China, it is nevertheless the case that quite a bit of Chinese foreign policy rhetoric is phrased in HPR terms. The 2011 statement on 'China's Peaceful Development' is almost a model statement of HPR.<sup>142</sup> Consider the following excerpts:

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<sup>141</sup> Barry Buzan and Michael Cox, 'China and the US', p. 117.

<sup>142</sup> Information Office of the State Council, 'China's Peaceful Development'.

‘China will not engage in arms race with any other country, and it does not pose a military threat to any other country. China follows the principle of not attacking others unless it is attacked, and it is committed to solving international disputes and hotspot issues with peaceful means.’ (Part 2)

‘We will continue to conduct democratic election, decision-making, governance and supervision in accordance with the law, uphold people's right to have access to information, to participate in governance, to express their views and to supervise the government, and we will expand orderly public participation in the political process. We will continue to treat all ethnic groups as equals and practice the system of regional autonomy of ethnic minorities, protect people's freedom of religious belief according to law, and fully respect and uphold basic human rights and other lawful rights and interests of citizens.’ (Part 2)

‘China.... is opposed to the practices of the big bullying the small and the strong oppressing the weak, and to hegemonism and power politics. China calls for settling disputes and conflicts through talks and consultation and by seeking common ground while putting aside differences.’ (Part 2)

‘China actively enhances friendly cooperation with its neighbors and works with them to promote a harmonious Asia. China calls on countries in the region to respect each other, increase mutual trust, seek common ground while putting aside differences, safeguard regional peace and stability, and settle disputes including those over territorial claims and maritime rights and interests through dialogue and friendly negotiation. Countries should increase trade and mutually beneficial cooperation, promote regional economic integration, improve the current regional and sub-regional cooperative mechanisms, be open-minded to other proposals for regional cooperation, and welcome countries outside the region to play a constructive role in promoting regional peace and development. China does not seek regional hegemony or sphere of influence, nor does it want to exclude any country from participating in regional cooperation.... It will remain a good neighbor, friend and partner of other Asian countries.’ (Part 3)

‘The international community should reject the zero-sum game which was a product of the old international relations, the dangerous cold and hot war mentality, and all those beaten tracks which repeatedly led mankind to confrontation and war. It should find new perspectives from the angle of the community of common destiny, sharing weal and woe and pursuing mutually beneficial cooperation, exploring new ways to enhance



exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations, identifying new dimensions in the common interests and values of mankind, and looking for new ways to handle multiple challenges through cooperation among countries and realize inclusive development. We want peace and not war, development and not stagnation; dialogue and not confrontation; understanding and not misunderstanding. This is the general trend of the world and the common aspiration of all people.’ (Part 4)

Such lofty aspirational statements might be dismissed as mere propaganda, harmless or possibly even helpful to WPR. But ironically, they are actually damaging to WPR. Even outside observers sympathetic to China cannot fail to notice the rather wide gap documented in previous pages between such aspirations and China’s actual domestic and foreign policy practices. Those less sympathetic will simply read them as cynical and hypocritical attempts at strategic deception, and take them as evidence to support robust balancing responses to China’s rise. If China’s practices cannot be made to live up to this rhetoric, then the rhetoric needs to be brought more into line with practice. China’s international propaganda under Mao was at least clear, honest and straightforward. It did not shrink from specifying a politics of struggle against capitalism and the West, and was pretty much in line with China’s behaviour. Today’s propaganda is neither honest, nor coherent with China’s behaviour. If China wants to pursue WPR, it needs to moderate its overblown rhetoric of HPR to reduce the contradictions and inconsistencies between what it says and what it does.

## **Conclusions**

The basic question at stake here is what kind of great power China wants to be: one that claims its place in international society mainly by power political, CPR means or mainly by consensual, WPR ones. As shown above, both strategies are broadly compatible with China’s main aims in its foreign and security policy, though they have very different implications for how it is done and what problems and contradictions arise. The choice is whether China want to use its rising power to look forward, and help create a more pluralist, decentred international society in the post-Western age, or look backward, seeking vengeance for the century of humiliation and to restore a Sino-centric system in East Asia. If China isn’t existentially threatened militarily it doesn’t need to be militarily assertive, and can gain status and legitimacy both from its increasing weight, and from being self-restrained in this way.

Grand strategies can be assessed by four standards: cost, risk, probability of success, and morality, although the last is tricky given the lack of accepted universal standards for judging it. On the basis of the arguments given here, and leaving out HPR as unrealistic for the time being, one might posit the following assessments for CPR and WPR.

- In terms of cost, CPR would be high in military expenditure resulting from threat perceptions and action-reaction dynamics; high in political costs of opposition to China; and possibly high in economic costs if fear of China became sufficient to affect trade and investment. The costs of WPR would be considerably less in all of these respects, but there would be significant domestic political costs associated with some U-turns on current policy.
- In terms of risk, CPR would be high in confrontations, alienating neighbours, and reinforcing the US position in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans. WPR would be low risk, because the US could not oppose it either regionally or globally, and the natural extension of China's power and influence would happen anyway. Even if others did not reciprocate China's WPR for a long time, though country would not be weakened or threatened by having taken this path.
- In terms of probability of success, CPR ranks high because its conditions are undemanding and present trends point to it. The question is not whether it can be done, but whether or not it is a good idea to take this path. By contrast, WPR is difficult to do, and would certainly take a long time to deliver fully on its potential. It would have been easier to begin it before the 2008 turn towards a harder foreign policy line. Time is perhaps now running out with Japan and parts of ASEAN where the downward security spiral with China is serious, and if pursued much further could delay the possibility of repairing relations for a generation or more. There is a real risk that the continued pursuit of current policy will foreclose the option of WPR.
- In terms of morality, CPR takes the moral low ground internationally, though the backward looking militant nationalists in China might construct it morally as justified payback for the century of humiliation. WPR gives China several options to take the moral high ground internationally, but might be difficult to sell domestically given the way present Chinese nationalism has been constructed around victimhood and anti-Japanese sentiment.

With the alternatives of CPR and WPR in mind, China needs to think very carefully about the self-fulfilling prophecy aspect of realism. If it does not do more to put itself into the shoes of others in anticipating responses to its own power and behaviour, then the consequence will be CPR. The present (and traditional) mix of soft and hard foreign policy rhetoric and behaviour will not work for WPR. There is plenty of evidence that Deng's view that the nature of the international system had changed towards a low risk of great power war, and open opportunities for co-development, remain both correct, and influential in China. Yet there is also plenty of evidence that Zhang's point about China thinking of itself as living in a realist, Hobbesian world also remains influential.<sup>143</sup> China cannot have a coherent grand strategy until its leaders commit to one or the other of these views. History will judge harshly a leadership whose rhetoric raised hopes of WPR, or even HPR, but whose

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<sup>143</sup> Zhang Yongjin, *China in International Society Since 1949*, p. 177.

performance delivered CPR. Peaceful rise/development is a unique idea for China's grand strategy. A leadership that delivered it as WPR could claim a truly historic accomplishment that would mark the end of the Western dominated era of warlike rise, and the move to a new model of international relations. It would have delivered on its own stated aspiration that: 'The international community.... should find new perspectives from the angle of the community of common destiny'.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Information Office of the State Council, 'China's Peaceful Development'.