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China's long march to national rejuvenation: toward a Neo-Imperial order in East Asia?

Friso M. S. Stevens 

ABSTRACT

The material disparity with the West, and the havoc wreaked in the period of Japanese imperial encroachment on Chinese territory and autonomy after the First Opium War, have shaped and guided China's collective memory and its shared desire of national rejuvenation to this day. In tracing the deeper historical roots of what Xi Jinping temporarily frames as a "Chinese dream" of "wealth and power," the article discerns key actors, events, and organizing principles in a long process toward restoring China's deemed rightful place in the regional system. Taking into account the region-specific socio-historical complex of China and East Asia, and further exploring the parameters of an International Relations theory with "Chinese characteristics," the article's comparative historical analysis details how China's leaders have chosen to mobilize the nation's "domestic resources" in their common pursuit of national rejuvenation. Providing greater insight into how and according to which interlinked domestic and foreign explanatory markers this is attained, the article argues that we are currently in the last phase of rejuvenation and advances implications for China's further trajectory.

Our struggles in the 170 years since the Opium War have created bright prospects for achieving the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation ... Reviewing the past, all Party members must bear in mind that backwardness left us vulnerable to attack, whereas only development makes us strong.¹

Xi Jinping
November 29, 2012

Introduction

Proclaiming the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong on October 1, 1949 concluded a long and painful period in China's modern history. By unifying the nation under the banner of communism, Mao and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP or Party) were finally able to end a century of internal division and civil war, and repeated national humiliation at the hands of new proximate powers. Evoking China's endogenous and exogenous perils, Mao spelled out the founding conditions for relations with the new Republic. He stated that "[his government was] willing to establish diplomatic relations with any foreign government that is willing to observe the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty."² This profound historical notion of restoration in the nation's *raison d'Etat*, however, is not limited to just one national figure and has changed considerably over time since the contestation of

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¹During a specially designed exhibition at the National Museum on Tiananmen Square, and joined by the other newly appointed Politburo Standing Committee members, Xi delivered a speech titled "Achieving the Rejuvenation is the Dream of the Chinese People." In: Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2014).

²This is the last sentence of Mao's proclamation of the People's Republic of China. See Wilson Center Digital Archive, "November 01, 1949: Proclamation of the Central People's Government of China," <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121557.pdf?v=d41d8cd98f00b204e9800998ecf8427e>.

China's regional hegemony during the late Qing. In fact, 70 years on, China's current-day paramount leader, Xi Jinping, echoes much of the same rhetoric used throughout China's 170 years struggle to "rejuvenate" (*fulxing*) the "Chinese Nation" (*zhonghua minzu*) in search of "wealth and power" (*fuqiang*).³ Mimicking Mao's conditions, for instance, Xi has championed a "new type of major power relations" (centered on equality, or multipolarity), "win-win cooperation" (also contemporarily called mutual benefit) and the enduring centrality of sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁴

This article argues that neither Mao's communist rhetoric nor the nationalist narrative that replaced it after the "crisis of faith" that followed the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre—⁵ of which Xi's "China Dream" is the exponent—have been anything new. Xi's propaganda vehicle rather has just been the latest attempt in a much longer process that predates even the People's Republic; a process that encompasses a profound, shared desire that has been consistent throughout time: "national rejuvenation" (*minzu fulxing*). The article paints the broad contours of this collective memory and shared desire, tracing how the rise and trajectory of contemporary China is informed by modern Chinese history. The aim of this study is straightforward. The article seeks to get an appreciation of how China's political system and unifying ideational narrative have evolved since the time of China's 1842 defeat in the First Opium War; China's starting point for modernity. Of particular interest is the way China's leaders chose to mobilize the nation's "domestic resources" in their common pursuit of forlorn "wealth and power." Grasping how and according to which markers national rejuvenation is attained will provide us with greater clarity as to where contemporary China under Xi is heading, and when these aspirations are fulfilled. Reemerging to great power status, China now finds itself in an entirely new regional and global system. How China decides to deal with the Westphalian "rules of the game" that were set in its absence—rules that were nonetheless accepted by Republicans and at least the first four generations of CCP leadership—can in part be construed based on how it has perceived and behaved toward regional and global actors and institutions during its long ascent.

National Rejuvenation and Chinese IR Theory

The current debate on China's national rejuvenation plays out against the backdrop of the resurgence of China within the international system. The underlying notion of whether China's relative rise can occur peacefully—⁶ what its view on regional and global order is, and what ideational sources of the past and present China-East Asian complex lend itself to the (re)construction of that order—is in turn intricately tied to the parallel scholarly quest underway to develop an International Relations (IR) theory with "Chinese characteristics."⁷ Looking at the state of the art on this theoretical quest, Wang Jiangli and Barry Buzan distinguish three avenues that have historically been pursued. The first strand of thinking consists of those scholars complementing the groundwork laid by John King Fairbank in his study of the tributary system. Built on the two millennia of hierarchical Sino-centrality in East Asia, their contribution lies in the marked difference they discerned with the state equality presupposed in the Western Westphalian system.⁸ From

³On the historical significance of the terms see e.g. Orville Schell and John Delury, *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Random House, 2014), 15.

⁴Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, 37.

⁵Wang Zheng, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly* 52 (2008): 788.

⁶See e.g., from pessimist to optimist, John J. Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3 (2010): 381-82; Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can China and America Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017); G. John Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of the West," *Foreign Affairs*, (January/February 2008), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2008-01-01/rise-china-and-future-west>; Barry Buzan, "China in International Society: Is 'Peaceful Rise' Possible?" *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 5-36.

⁷See e.g. Song Xinning, "Building International Relations Theory with Chinese Characteristics," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10, no. 26 (2001): 61-74.

⁸Wang Jiangli and Barry Buzan in "The English and Chinese Schools of International Relations: Comparisons and Lessons," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, no. 1 (2014): 35-36.

a comparative perspective, drawing on Western IR theory, a second school of thought has taken Chinese history and thought as its basis for inference, synthesizing and contrasting Western theoretical concepts. Yan Xuetong and the structural “Tsinghua approach” fall into this category.⁹ The third avenue seeks out historical sources able to guide contemporary Chinese foreign policy, such as “ancient Chinese thought, history, diplomacy, force, strategy and their evolution.” More normative-prescriptive, this strand includes English School adherents such as Peking University’s Zhang Xiaoming.¹⁰

Though to an extent all three courses underline valid imperatives, all in the end fall short of providing the full picture of how China managed to rise to the international position it holds now, and how that can be explained theoretically. Instead of a singular focus on the historical tributary system, as is often the case in contemporary scholarship because of the sheer length of the dynastic period and the protracted chaos and upheaval preceding and following it, the temporal scope informing the emerging “Chinese School of International Relations”¹¹ ought to also include the instrumental periods of “radical thinking and revolutions in the nineteenth and twentieth century, and reform and opening-up since 1978.”¹² Indeed while historians and region specialists are right to put China’s imperial hegemony at the center of any theorization, that should just be the starting point of a much more comprehensive inferential study of modern China. In line with the prescriptive element of the third route, Wang Jisi further points out that in the context of CCP rule, theory does not merely seek to explain phenomena. In fact, “all social science theories in the People’s Republic of China are expected by the leadership to contribute to the building of socialism.” A postulated theory within the Party’s bandwidth in other words, “is not much different from a doctrine, an ideology, or a set of propositions serving as a guiding principle for action.”¹³ Surely any temporally circumscribed exercise precluding the CCP era fails to take into account the profound influence CCP thought, as well as the impact of the Marxist-Leninist Party-state system has had on China’s attitude toward its systemic environment. Not uncommon in Chinese discourse, the same can be said with respect to an omission of the Republican period; the role the Republicans have played in China joining the Westphalian state system after the collapse of the dynastic *Tian xia* order ought to be considered a crucial inflexion point in any sound appraisal of China’s perspective on regional order.

Positivist in ontology but contrasting the fatalist logic of the Tsinghua Approach,¹⁴ this article seeks to generate a first push toward the broadening of the second structural avenue using an *Innenpolitik* perspective. While much attention has been paid to the shifting tectonic plates of the international and regional East Asian system over the last four decades, and leadership and elite-level explanations of changed Chinese foreign policy behavior have been prevalent,¹⁵ unexplored remains what resources have been mustered on the domestic side of the equation, and which ideational tenets have been brought to bear to do so. While ultimately the top leaders in different periods—that is, during the Confucian Empire, the era of Nationalist Republicanism, Centralized Maoism and Deng’s what I call Permissive State Capitalism—have had to interpret the systemic threats (e.g. the aspirations of the colonial powers and Japan, and later the US) and opportunities (e.g. the Kissinger-Nixon

⁹*Ibid.*, 37–38.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 38–39.

¹¹Ren Xiao, “Toward a Chinese School of International Relations” in *China and the New International Order*, ed. Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 293–309.

¹²Qin Yaqing, “Why is there no Chinese International Relations Theory?” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 3 (September 2007): 313ff.

¹³Wang Jisi, “International Relations Theory and the Study of Chinese Foreign Policy: A Chinese Perspective,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 481–83.

¹⁴Derived from Booth and Wheelers’ “three logics of insecurity.” See Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 10ff.

¹⁵See e.g. Nien-Chung Chang Liao, “The sources of China’s assertiveness: the system, domestic politics or leadership preferences,” *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 828–32; Willy Lam, “Modern Cult of Personality? Xi Jinping Aspires To Be The Equal of Mao and Deng,” *Jamestown Foundation*, China Brief 15, no. 5, March 6, 2015, <https://jamestown.org/program/a-modern-cult-of-personality-xi-jinping-aspires-to-be-the-equal-of-mao-and-deng/>.

intention to remake the Cold War order) to be able to implement and sustain the appropriate strategy toward strengthening the nation, in doing so they have been dependent on the societal resources available (think, for example, of the internal division and weakness in modern China until unification under Mao, and, conversely, Deng's reform and opening-up program).¹⁶

This leads us to the following research questions: To what extent has there been continuity and/or change in China's 170 years quest to rejuvenate China and regain its deemed rightful place in East Asia? How have respective historical leaders since the late Qing articulated and mobilized the Chinese people to that end? And third, theorizing what we know about China's historical trajectory since its defeat in the First Opium War, how can we extrapolate, forecast, what the future regional order could conceivably look like? The comparative historical approach to "state power"¹⁷ adopted in this article not only allows for the temporal positioning of current research on China's regional and global strategic intentions in an appropriate and meaningful way, it also places the broader academic debate on the rise of China within the historical patterns of the rise and fall of Empire. Going beyond a mere discussion of the tributary system,¹⁸ the article discerns key actors, events and organizing principles as well as their effectiveness in the long process of rejuvenating the nation; an endeavor that I understand as meaning the conjunct national effort toward restoring China's position in the regional system by increasing its relative comprehensive national strength (*zonghe guoli*).¹⁹ These aspects of the ideational and the material, first raised more than one-and-a-half century ago, allow us to observe roughly four periods from the late Qing era of regional predominance to the present situation where a rising China "tries to find its way"²⁰ in a Western, US-led liberal international and regional order. The article adds to the literature by way of its theorization of the domestic state structure and ideational forces behind China's long march "from wealth to power,"²¹ and how it is exactly, that the state's interlinked economic, technological, military and human "resources" have shaped China's foreign policy since the mid-19th century (see Table 1).²² Indeed whereas most realist scholarship centers on America's "manifest destiny" of global prominence,²³ and, broader still, the relative rise and fall of European powers within the framework of the Westphalian system we know today, this article tells the modern story of the Sinic civilization and regional order of the East.

The Sino-centric Order and its Collapse

The first period of Confucian Empire concerns the two millennia of consecutive dynasties where the traditional Confucian-inspired order was in place, and where all under heaven (*tian xia*) was in theory ruled by the Emperor. The Chinese identity, and sense of pride and superiority—what in the US is called "exceptionalism"—is grounded in this period of the "Civilization-state."²⁴ This heaven included the so-called "tributary states" in the East and Southeast, such as Korea, Vietnam, Burma, and, ambivalently, the Ryukyu Islands (now Okinawa). Relations with these

¹⁶See on the theory Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman, "Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy" in *Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3-4.

¹⁷Zakaria defines state power as the state's ability to extract national power in the service of decision-makers' desired policies. Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 38.

¹⁸See e.g. Suisheng Zhao, "Rethinking the Chinese World Order: the imperial cycle and the rise of China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 24, no. 96 (2015): 961-82; June Teufel Dreyer, "The 'Tianxia Trope': will China change the international system?" *Journal of Contemporary China* 24, no. 96 (2015): 1015-31.

¹⁹On the latter term see Xinhua News Agency, "Full Text of Jiang's Speech at CPC Anniversary Gathering," July 26, 2001, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/20010726/433646.htm>.

²⁰Paraphrasing Wang Jisi in "China's Search for a Grand Strategy: A Rising Great Power Finds its Way," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (March/April 2011): 68-79.

²¹Paraphrasing Fareed Zakaria's *From Wealth to Power*.

²²On decision-makers' perceived domestic costs and potential systemic rewards, see Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 52-53.

²³Something Zhang Feng also calls "exceptionalism" in the Chinese case. See "The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 2 (2011): 305-28.

²⁴Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World* (London: Penguin Group, 2009), 196-97.

Table 1. Structures of society and state by organizing principles.

Period	Name	Span	Governing system	Ideational doctrine	View on regional order	Step in process of rejuvenation
1	Confucian Empire	1842-1912	Decentralized, authoritarian and technocratic	Confucianism	Sino-centric hegemony	Ideas about a New China emerge among “self-strengtheners”
2	Nationalist Republicanism	1912-1949	Oligarchic and authoritarian in the center, with diffuse power centers in the periphery	Autarchic, corporatist aspiring with soft nationalism (Wang Jingwei’s model) vs state capitalism with hard militarist nationalism (Chiang’s model)	Equality in a Westphalian state system with other great powers	Modern state and governing system; international recognition
3	Centralized Maoism	1949-1978	Centralized and authoritarian	Centralized Maoism	From ideological challenger outside the order to joining the balance of power on the US side as well as the international diplomatic system (return to Westphalian notion of equality)	Unity and effective control over mainland China
4	Permissive State Capitalism	1978-October 2017	Decentralized, authoritarian and technocratic	State capitalism with soft nationalism from 1990s	From integrating into the US-led liberal order to rules challenger within it (from late 2000s)	Increased relative material power
5	A “New Era” of Centralized State Capitalism?	October 2017-2049?	Increasingly centralized authoritarian with politicized top appointments?	State capitalism with hard militarist nationalism?	Neo-Imperial Sino-centric hegemony?	Completed rejuvenation?

Table compiled by author based, in part, on the literature cited in the main text.

semi-independent nations primarily revolved around trade rights granted under the condition of explicitly recognizing Chinese regional hegemony in the form of ritual gifts and displaying subservience by performing the infamous *kou tou*.²⁵ Besides the obvious material element buttressing it, the Chinese notion of hegemony was thus symbolically upheld by the Confucian idea of hierarchical social order and sovereign justice.²⁶ What Western historians have termed “tributary” (*gong*) is derived from this conception and is best understood as the means to convey acceptance of the Imperial benevolence in terms of trade rights, diplomatic relations, and the tacit promise of military protection.²⁷ During the late Qing era, to which this segment on the tributary system (*chaogong tizhi*) is temporally limited for the purpose of clarity,²⁸ these states were thus within China’s sphere of influence. They were what we would now call “Finlandized,” in the sense that smaller entities accepted that while domestically they were functioning relatively independently, they were unable to be an actor in their own right when it came to relations with other nations. That is, as viewed from Beijing; the reality of this Sino-centric order was more

²⁵James L. Hevia, “Tribute, Asymmetry, and Imperial Formations: Rethinking Relations of Power in East Asia,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16, no. 1-2 (2009): 70.

²⁶See Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750* (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 6-10.

²⁷Zhang Feng, “Rethinking the ‘Tribute System’: Broadening the Conceptual Horizon of Historical East Asian Politics,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 2, no. 4 (2009): 573-74; Warren I. Cohen, *East Asia at the Center: Four Thousand Years of Engagement with the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 151.

²⁸This due to the many substantive variations of the system over time, as rightly noted by Zhang, citing John E. Wills; Zhang, *Ibid*.

complicated and depended on the strength of the Empire in different time periods. As Fairbank notes: “the Chinese world order was a unified concept only at the Chinese end and only on the normative level, as an ideal pattern.”²⁹ The tools at the Qing’s disposal ranged from control (militarily/administratively), attraction (the cultural/religious claims) and manipulation (trade and diplomatic relations) and discerned a cultural sphere (the Sinic zone) a non-Chinese sphere (the Inner Asian zone) and the outer zone (Russia and other foreigners from far away).³⁰ Both Beijing’s de facto control over the periphery and who was in it (i.e. whether an entity was within the administrative hierarchy or a tributary state), and the relations between states outside the direct reach of the Emperor were fluid and changeable over time. Moreover, while force was usually not the default mode of conduct in the East and Southeast—if their outward behavior did not challenge the primacy of the Sino-centric order and its accompanying cultural claims—it was in fact ruthlessly employed against the Zunghar Mongols in the north and northwest frontier regions in what are now Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet.³¹ Further north still, the third of these “three spheres of foreign affairs” was guided by diplomacy based on equality, aiming to manage the expanding Russian Empire.³² Nevertheless, as the research at hand is limited in scope to maritime East Asia, including Southeast Asia but excluding Russia and Central and South Asia, reservations advanced about the tributary system should not affect any broader inference from the Sino-centric order elaborated here.³³ More precisely, it is not that there was no systematic tributary system, as erroneously asserted by Perdue.³⁴ Rather, there was no “overall” tributary system:³⁵ the Sino-centric order dealt with different out-groups differently (outward expansion and consolidation from China proper north and northwestwards versus the nominal hierarchic subordination of the Sinic Eastern and Southeastern nations), and had distinct spheres where different policy tools were brought to bear and exercised as pragmatically as needed be (Russia as well as Japan were materially too strong for a tributary state approach, although in the latter case it was nonetheless claimed by Beijing and, for brief periods, unchallenged by Japan), using a Confucian-inspired Sino-centrality narrative to reinforce the legitimacy of the Emperor to do so.

This nuanced view of the tributary system is also reflected in the workings of the late Qing bureaucracy in the different regions of the Empire. The Qing’s governing system was centralized in that it was administrated by the scholar-bureaucrat class of Mandarins, who’s meritocratic selection, technocratic administration, and schooling in the Confucian teachings of hierarchy and order sustained Imperial rule from the center in Beijing to the outer circles of provinces, circuits, prefectures, and cities and counties.³⁶ In practice though, the “heaven was high, and the Emperor far away” (*tian gao huangdi yuan*), as the Chinese proverb goes. In the late Qing period, both the budget and the number of personnel the Mandarins could bring to their regional posting were limited.³⁷ As a consequence, the Mandarins—rotated and placed in a region other than where they came from—were principally charged with general oversight of the elemental functions of government and relied on local power structures for most of the actual administration of society. This dependency of the Empire on the local, informal level is

²⁹ John King Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations*, ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), 12-13.

³⁰ Fairbank, *Ibid.*

³¹ Peter C. Perdue, “The Tenacious Tributary System,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 24, no. 96 (2015): 1007ff. On its militarized culture, and the policy of expansion during the first part of Qing rule see Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Culture of War in China: Empire and the Military under the Qing Dynasty* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

³² See Westad, *Restless Empire*, at 9-10. See also Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 117-19.

³³ For a brief overview of this debate see Hevia, “Tribute, Asymmetry, and Imperial Formations,” 70-74.

³⁴ Perdue misquoting Westad on page 1003-1004 in “The Tenacious Tributary System.”

³⁵ Westad, *Restless Empire*, 9-10.

³⁶ See further Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution Through Reform* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 12-13.

³⁷ William T. Rowe, *China’s Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2009), 33.

once again adroitly characterized by Fairbank, who notes that “no dynasty could provide a better government than the gentry desired.”³⁸ It was this “small government” approach of the Empire, however successful in the centuries where it enjoyed an unusually insular environment that became the inevitable source of its demise—and China’s collective feeling of protracted humiliation. Confronted with a myriad of external and internal challenges from the mid nineteenth century, the rigid dogmatic system of Confucian Empire proved incapable of organizing a cogent response.³⁹ It was in particular the disparity in naval and weapons technology that proved decisive in the encounters that would follow China’s defeat in the First Opium War of 1839–1842.⁴⁰ In stark contrast with the competitive European state system, where industrialization had yielded enormous increases in productivity,⁴¹ China’s “self-strengtheners” were unable to muster the relative capabilities needed—in large part because of the half-hearted policies of the Qing court.⁴² Indeed causing the Qing Empire’s underbalancing⁴³ was both its antiquated strategic culture⁴⁴ and the ineffective domestic mobilization of its populous. Though China’s latent power was significant considering its vast population size, because of technological backwardness it could not harness the military forces needed.⁴⁵ Ideationally, this technological backwardness was the product of China’s Confucian culture that, in turn, informed its strategic culture. This confined the available policy options provided by the Qing court’s interpretation of the external threat, as well as restrict how the court could “sell” its preferred response to elite Qing constituencies.⁴⁶ Though the repeated losses against the “Western devils” (*yang guizi*) in the second half of the nineteenth century greatly undercut the Imperial narrative of a divine mandate over heaven, it was not until the Japanese started to claim ever-larger parts of the Empire after 1895, and the dynasty ceded sovereignty in the form of port concessions to the European powers, the US and Japan that Imperial rule started to breakdown.⁴⁷ The lack of adequate balancing from the Qing in turn spawned internal unrest and rebellions, in the end leading to the establishment of a new, Nationalist Republican state in 1912.

The Birth of a New China: How to Realize Sun’s *Sanmin Zhuyi*?

Founded by very diverse groupings nominally led by a fairly Westernized Sun Yat-Sen,⁴⁸ the Republican revolutionaries sought a banner under which to unite against the flailing, non-Han Manchu dynasty that proved inept in confronting the multitude of modern challenges and indeed modernity itself. A government in name rather than substance, the power brokers of the early Nationalist Republic consisted of military and

³⁸ John K. Fairbank, “Introduction: the old order,” in *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ch’ing 1800–1911*, ed. John K. Fairbank, vol. 1, 10th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995), 20–22. For the recurrence of decentralization and semi-independent centers of power see Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and its Imperial Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 23–24.

³⁹ Rowe, *China’s Last Empire*, 30.

⁴⁰ Martin van Creveld, *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 299–301 (eBook).

⁴¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1981), 189–91ff.

⁴² On the European state system, see the first chapters of the seminal work of Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994). On the monolithic Chinese Empire—which was, at least by the time of the late Qing, prone to stagnation—versus the competition-driven European states see chapter one of Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).

⁴³ On (under)balancing see Randall L. Schweller, “Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing,” *International Security* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2004), 166ff.

⁴⁴ Colin Dueck defines strategic culture as “the preconceived beliefs and assumptions ... that relate to the legitimate and efficient conduct of political-military affairs.” Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 14–15.

⁴⁵ For the relation between population size, wealth, technology, and military power see John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 60–67.

⁴⁶ See, in general, Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, 19.

⁴⁷ By the beginning of 1911 ten uprisings had occurred, among which the vast Boxer rebellion in 1900. The October 10 revolt of 1911 finally sealed the Qing court’s faith.

⁴⁸ The latter as judged by the author after examining his correspondence displayed in Sun-Yat-Sen’s Former Residence Museum, located in an upscale neighborhood (then and now) in the former French Concession of Shanghai, June 2017.

gentry factions that were merely united insofar as it concerned their own narrow interests; addressing the deeper causes of China's weakness by improving the social fabric of society was not their main concern.⁴⁹ Although not a "bourgeois revolution" as the Chinese communists later framed it, the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 and the subsequent fragile Republic were to a large extent supported and shaped by the intelligentsia and new commercial class of merchants, bankers and industrialists from the major coastal cities.⁵⁰ The long period of chaos, regional division and warlordism that followed China's "Second Revolution" in 1913 left a deep and lasting mark on what was to become the New China, forming another crucial piece in China's collective historical memory at present. It was not until the advent of the modestly stable "Nanjing" or "Golden" Decade in 1927 that the Republic of China started to resemble, at least outwardly, a nation-state. Ideationally, the republic was defined by the strife between two competing factions within the Kuomintang Party, each employing Sun's Three People's Principles (*sanmin zhuyi*) to justify their preferred course. On the one hand, there was Chiang Kai-shek, who had emerged as the military strongman after Sun died in 1925. According to Chiang, a sharp break with the leftist and communist elements within the loose Kuomintang coalition, and a confrontational, military approach with respect to the regional centers of power were the answer to reunite the country. Heading the civilian-political left-leaning wing of the Kuomintang was Wang Jingwei, who had been a close confidante of Sun and believed that territorial consolidation and unity could only be achieved by fundamentally strengthening the state first through the institution of one "centralized economic unit" (*jingji danwei*).⁵¹ Industrializing the still largely agricultural economy, Wang argued, was to be realized through autarchic corporatism in line with Sun Yat-sen Thought (Sun's "People's welfare" (*minsheng*) principle as he interpreted it), the promotion of individual equality and freedom (Sun's "Democracy" (*minquan*) principle), and civil control over the military.⁵² From 1931, Wang also sought greater accommodation with Japan, eschewing an (tacit) alliance with the Soviet Union, Great Britain or the US that Chiang was open to.⁵³ In the end, it was Chiang who proved decisive, tilting the Republic sharply toward hard authoritarian militarism and state capitalism near the end of the 1920s as the ruling urban elite felt increasingly under threat from an uneasy rural and working class.⁵⁴ Chiang tied the boundaries of a restored *zhonghua minzu* to both the material resources "[required] for national survival," and the ideational "limits of Chinese cultural bonds."⁵⁵ Without controlling the strategically located outer territories of the Chinese cultural sphere as it existed at the time of the First Opium War, he asserted, the country could never be secure and united as people. Chiang stipulated the "lost territories" or natural "fortresses" that had to be returned to the motherland for it to be restored.⁵⁶ In contrast with the early self-strengtheners, Chiang equated "Western theories" such as liberalism with China's state of weakness, as it had "caused [the Chinese people] to accept without question the unequal treaties and the aggression and exploitation of the [Western] imperialists."⁵⁷ Instead, Chiang sought to overcome what had come to be known as "national humiliation" by an appeal to a hierarchical Confucian core, and the rising sense of national identity and nationalism—Sun's *minzu* principle, that Chiang described as part of the "instinctive emotions of man."⁵⁸

Although the Republic was not destined to fail in the War of Resistance against Japan (1937–1945) and the subsequent resumption of the struggle with the communists (1945–1949), as espoused in the "Stilwell-White paradigm,"⁵⁹ the endemic corruption, incompetence and divisions that plagued

⁴⁹ Jonathan Fenby, *History of Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 119–21.

⁵⁰ Marie-Claire Bergère, "The Chinese Bourgeoisie: 1911–1937" in *The Cambridge History of China: Republican China 1912–1949*, ed. John K. Fairbank, vol. 1, 12th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 721–22, 729–31, 802.

⁵¹ Margherita Zanasi, *Saving the Nation: Economic Modernity in Republican China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 3–6.

⁵² Zanasi, *Ibid.*, 7; James Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism: How the Qing Frontier and its Indigenous Became Chinese* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 36.

⁵³ See Rana Mitter, *China's war with Japan 1937–1945: The struggle for survival* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), 60.

⁵⁴ Zanasi, *Saving the Nation*, 3–5; Bergère, "The Chinese Bourgeoisie," 802–03.

⁵⁵ Chiang Kai-shek, Philip J. Jaffe, *China's Destiny & Chinese Economic Theory* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1947), 34.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 34–36.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁵⁹ A contrast also advanced by Hans J. van de Ven in *War and Nationalism in China: 1925–1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 140, 150.

Chiang's military and bureaucracy were one of the main reasons why the Kuomintang "first pacify the country, then resist foreign enemies" (*xian annei hou rangwai*) policy fell short. While there was substantial progress in modernizing the Chinese economy, especially from 1927 (hence the term "Golden"), and the Kuomintang did change China's strategic culture by adopting a Western-style governing system and receiving Soviet (until Chiang's White Terror of 1927 and from 1937–1938 against Japan) and German (from 1927–1938) military training, it was, in the end, the ideational vacuum and Chiang's repressive policies that prevented a broader appeal among the population.⁶⁰ Rhetorically paying lip service to Sun and his participatory ideals, Chiang in effect continued the drive to centralize local power as prescribed in the New Government (*xinzheng*) program of the late Qing, just as Yuan Shikai and the Beiyang warlords had done before him.⁶¹ Yet in this stage of what Chiang called "political tutelage,"⁶² the one-man leadership of Chiang over the Nationalist Party would only really extend to four to six provinces in eastern central China—at most. Even after the relatively successful military campaigns of the Northern Expedition, diffuse power centers in peripheral China remained. By coopting rather than break the power of warlords and local interests,⁶³ Chiang was unable to adequately "balance" internally⁶⁴ and extract the economic resources necessary to truly strengthen the central Party-state apparatus. Most crucially, Chiang did not manage to forge the heavy industrial base needed to equip the elite fighting force he envisioned; nor did he have control over the Chinese territories needed to fiscally support such an effort. It was therefore the institutional weakness of the center during the Nanking Decade, functioning as the intervening variable between the multitude of external and internal challenges presented and the dependent policy choices available that yielded under-active policies in the Nationalist Republic era; there were simply still too many political hurdles to mobilization to take domestically before Chiang could even begin to consider taking on the Japanese and Western pressures of the regional system.⁶⁵

When Chinese popular nationalism and Japanese Imperial expansionism finally and inadvertently collided in 1937 at the Marco Polo Bridge outside of Beijing, the republic subsequently losing its economically vital eastern seaboard,⁶⁶ Chiang's China remained unable to confront Japan's military might. This resulted, among many Japanese crimes, in the today still powerfully felt "Rape of Nanjing." The Kuomintang under Chiang was modestly successful, however, in fulfilling Sun's "Nationalism" principle—unity and loyalty to a state that functions as equals in a state system with other great powers.⁶⁷ By 1947 the Republic had secured the abrogation of the unequal treaties that granted port concessions (with accompanying trade revenues) and extraterritorial jurisdiction to the great powers as well as the recognition of China as a great power by way of its seat on the Security Council of the newly established United Nations.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the actual sovereignty, or effective control over the new state's territory, and how expansive these (maritime) claims ought to be based on which Imperial period, remained elusive.⁶⁹

⁶⁰Lloyd E. Eastman, "Nationalist China during the Nanking Decade," in *The Cambridge History of China: Republican China 1912–1949*, ed. John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, vol. 2, 16th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 163–67.

⁶¹Julia C. Strauss, "The Evolution of Republican Government," *China Quarterly* 329 (1997): 331–33.

⁶²Chiang Kai-shek, Philip J. Jaffe, *China's Destiny*, 206.

⁶³Pines, *The Everlasting Empire*, 123.

⁶⁴Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 168; Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 245.

⁶⁵For the mobilization model, see Christensen, *Ibid.*, 11–14.

⁶⁶The Republic of China's national development program relied for revenues on tax and trade customs duties and manufacturing located in the eastern economic heartland. See Felix Boecking, *Trade, Tariffs and Nationalism in Republican China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 26–28.

⁶⁷Audrey Wells, *The Political Thought of Sun Yat-sen: Development and Impact* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 62–63. For the substance of Sun's principles, long left ambiguous to unify as many different groups as possible, see the detailed lectures he gave before he passed away in 1925 discussed in the same work.

⁶⁸Charlotte Ku, "Abolition of China's Unequal Treaties and the Search for Regional Stability in Asia: 1919–1943," *Chinese (Taiwan) Yearbook of International Law and Affairs* 67 (1994), 82–83.

⁶⁹See for a detailed study of maps of "national humiliation," or "lost territories," and how these expanded in scope and were employed for nationalistic purposes in the 1920s and 1930s—as they are now—see William A. Callahan, *China: The Pessoptimist Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 99–103ff.

From Centralized Maoism to Permissive State Capitalism

In the end, the Kuomintang failed to grasp where the key to uniting the country really lay: the countryside. In a nation that was still primarily an agricultural society,⁷⁰ Centralized Maoism combined the egalitarian rhetoric of communism (most importantly land reform) with anti-Japanese nationalism to successfully rally China's impoverished peasants. Enabled by the strategic space provided from 1937 by invading Japanese forces that focused on the urban centers, Mao's mass line strategy—and insurgency tactics—managed to consolidate a Communist power base prior to the resumption of the civil war in 1945.⁷¹ Hence, it can be argued that one of the main reasons why the Kuomintang failed to unify the country is the same as why they lost the civil war against the much weaker but cohesive and motivated Communist forces: the lack of a broad, credible narrative and an effective grassroots propaganda organization to disseminate it.⁷² When Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic on the first of October 1949, he signaled that the Chinese had finally “stood up.”⁷³ Yet as the years of foreign domination, internal strife and warlordism ended, the trials and tribulations of the Chinese people had only just begun. From the great catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the People's Republic under the paramount leadership of Mao is the dark page of history that still must not be spoken of. Surely it is this absence of collective reckoning and reflection, and the “mythical” post-Tiananmen Square Massacre deviation from the Party's inflicted horrors toward external “hostile forces” that in part explains current gridlocked positions in China's relations with Japan and the US.

Similar as a century earlier in the US, where the devastations brought by the civil war gave way to a national spirit culminating in the idea of a “manifest destiny” to lead, China too rediscovered its national purpose in the seeds of self-destruction.⁷⁴ It is in the wake of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, the country ravished after a decade of tyrannical anarchy by Mao's Red Guard legions that the period of Permissive State Capitalism begins. Indeed, the material and institutional weakness inside China, and the diplomatic isolation and hostile regional environment outside of China necessitated a radical change in China's foreign policy. From 1949 till the end of the 1950s, China had positioned itself firmly in the anti-Imperialist Soviet “camp” (following the “two camp” policy, or *liangge zhenying*), where it “leaned to one side” (*yi bian dao*) as it were—politically and militarily, but also economically and technologically.⁷⁵ When the so-called “Sino-Soviet split” finally and irreversibly materialized,⁷⁶ China moved to challenge both superpowers simultaneously during the 1960s, “fighting with two fists” (*liangge quantou daren*). With the introduction of Mao's “Three Worlds Theory” (*sange shijie de lilun*), proposing a “One United Front” (*yi tiao xian*) with the US aimed at deterring the looming threat of a Soviet invasion, China from 1972–1973 till 1982–1983 tried to recalibrate the balance of power in its favor, and used the US regional force structure to do so.⁷⁷ Moving away from its dangerous dual-adversary policy, Mao and Nixon's rapprochement in

⁷⁰Eastman notes the example of 1933, where four out of five Chinese people worked in the undeveloped agricultural sector producing 65 percent of net domestic product. Eastman, “Nationalist China during the Nanking Decade,” 151.

⁷¹Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 37-38; for the origins of Maoism see 40 and further.

⁷²For this CCP “Unity of purpose and unity of command” see Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 9-10.

⁷³See for the proclamation Wilson Center Digital Archive, “November 01, 1949: Proclamation of the Central People's Government of China.” For his September 21 speech “The Chinese People Have Stood Up!” see Mao Tse-tung, *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol. 5 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977).

⁷⁴On the American manifest destiny see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

⁷⁵For the substance and context of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance see Alfred D. Low, *The Sino-Soviet Dispute: An Analysis of the Polemics* (Associated University Presses, 1976), 59-60.

⁷⁶For a good overview of the different explanations for the split within the communist block see chapter one of Li Mingjiang, *Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet Split: Ideological Dilemma* (Abington: Routledge, 2012).

⁷⁷Joseph Yu-Shek Cheng and Franklin Wankun Zhang, “Chinese Foreign Relations Strategies Under Mao and Deng: A Systematic and Comparative Analysis,” *Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 14, no. 3 (1999): 95-99. See also David Scott, *China Stands Up: The PRC and the international system* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 21-22, 41, 74.

1972 paved the way for Deng to make the next great stride: a sweeping “Reform and Opening Up” (*gaige kaifang*) program at home, facilitated by diplomatic normalization abroad under the maxim of “Keeping a low profile” (*tao guang yang hui*).⁷⁸ Tacitly allied with the US against the Soviet Union—accepting American military hegemony in East Asia—China was brought back into the international fold, politically as well as economically. The US proved particularly instrumental in leading China into the international financial institutions for much-needed capital; US-ally Japan was itself a large investor.⁷⁹ Pursuing the Four Modernizations (*se ge xiandaihua*; agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defense) stipulated by Zhou Enlai and implemented under the paramount leadership of Deng, China’s relative status and prestige in the international system started to rise from the 1990s.⁸⁰ Hence, it was Deng’s agency in ideational change that allowed China’s enormous human potential to learn and practice “Western techniques”—the “Permissive” in Permissive State Capitalism. The personal freedoms returned to the Chinese people under Deng’s liberalizations is thus the intervening variable that ultimately brought China on the path where it would attain the internal and relative strength, or *fuqiang*, that it had so desperately sought for over 170 years. Not only was the altered leadership’s assessment of the structural environment reflected in their new policies, remarkably, Deng and his two successors, Jiang and Hu, managed to implement these new liberal-economic ideas through the bureaucratic and functional lines of the Marxist-Leninist Party-state system, thereby transforming the political system itself.⁸¹ To accommodate China’s ascent, the structure of society has been so radically altered that Vogel calls it “the most basic changes since the Chinese Empire took shape during the Han dynasty over two millennia ago.”⁸² China’s post-Mao politico-economic success story of state-led capitalism came to be known as the “Beijing Consensus”⁸³ or “China Model,”⁸⁴ the governing system that underpins it as “Fragmented”⁸⁵ or “Decentralized”⁸⁶ Authoritarianism. As collective decision-making became the unwritten norm for the center in Beijing post-Deng, the Party recognized that in the new economic system it envisaged, effective, growth-oriented decision-making and decentralization of governing power were to go hand in hand.⁸⁷ The fragmented bureaucracy and decision-making system made consensus building essential, and the policy process “protracted, disjointed, and incremental,” both horizontally and vertically.⁸⁸ Provinces and major municipalities became key government actors with the power to “bargain” over national policy implementation with Beijing.⁸⁹ Organized similarly from center to county as in Imperial times, Beijing has limited control through top-level appointments and the

⁷⁸The need of the latter falls neatly into Buzan’s interaction capacity of shared norms and organization. Barry Buzan, “Beyond Neorealism: Interaction Capacity,” in *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism*, eds. Barry Buzan, Charles Jones and Richard Little (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 68–69.

⁷⁹John W. Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People’s Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1993), 20–21.

⁸⁰For the political explanations behind the relative power shift in historic perspective see chapter three of Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World: And the Rise of the Rest* (New York: Penguin, 2011); Ferguson, *Civilization*, chap. 1. On the economic data see Angus Maddison, *Contours of the World Economy, 1–2030 AD: Essays in Macro-Economic History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁸¹See, in general, Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 290–91. Of course, there are also examples of new institutional thinking and (delayed) collapse, as was the case in the post-1985 reforms in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. See William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), chap. 9.

⁸²Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2011), 693.

⁸³See principally Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus* (London: The Foreign Policy Center, 2004). See also Reza Hasmath, “White Cat, Black Cat or Good Cat: The Beijing Consensus as an Alternative Philosophy for Policy Deliberation? The Case of China,” Barnett Papers in Social Research, *Oxford University*.

⁸⁴See (controversially) Daniel A. Bell, *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). For a critical view of Bell’s conception see Andrew J. Nathan, “Beijing Bull: The Bogus China Model,” *National Interest*, October 22, 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/beijing-bull-the-bogus-china-model-14107>.

⁸⁵Kenneth G. Lieberthal and Michael Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁸⁶Pierre F. Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party’s Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁸⁷Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China*, 37ff.

⁸⁸Lieberthal and Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China*, 24.

⁸⁹Tony Saich, *Governance and Politics of China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 158–59ff.

allocation of part of the local budget (less than a quarter in 2013) at a time when its moral authority has waned.⁹⁰ Finally, the ambiguous nature of the system's rules and hierarchical relations, and allocation of resources, nurtures "corruption and rent-seeking behavior both within the bureaucracies and between officials and the population,"⁹¹ something that had reached its zenith during the Hu administration.

Conclusion

As Table 1 on the organizing principles of society and state highlights, each of the periods can be understood as a constitutive step in the long march toward rejuvenating the nation. It is a trajectory where different combinations and levels of governing system and ideational doctrine have been tried while the end goal has always been the same: restoring China's perceived rightful place in the regional system. Further, the periods of domestic self-strengthening elaborated have conditioned China's differing views on regional order. During the humiliations at the hands of the European powers, the US and Japan during the late Qing, China failed to come to terms with the changed reality of material inferiority and clung to the Confucian notions and deduced sovereign right to rule that had served it well for millennia. From this insistence on Sino-centrality, Republicans of all persuasions nominally united in the early 20th century under a novel form of organizing the *zhonghua minzu*: a modern nation-state. Significantly that state had received great power recognition by 1947 based on the equality of the Westphalian state system. Still, as the underlying weakness of Chinese society was not addressed, and the factionalism within and outside the center in Beijing and later Nanjing persisted, unity of the land—a governing precondition since time immemorial (the "great unity," or *da yitong*)—remained elusive. Large part of the explanation of this lack of unity is the ideational factor: the early Nationalist Republican era alignment between the new urban economic elite and the gentry and military factions was unable to create the broader appeal necessary to break the power of the peripheral interests and sufficiently mobilize China's domestic resources. Chiang's hard-handed authoritarian-nationalist approach could not change that fact. While also authoritarian, Mao's proletarian revolution succeeded where previous efforts had failed, the crux lying in the grassroots mobilization of the countryside. From a highly (disastrous) centralized Maoist conception of communism, and a revolutionary approach to foreign policy and a position outside the state system (until 1971 the Republic of China in Taiwan was recognized in the UN as the sovereign representative of China), China in the 1970s had moved to join the balance of power on the US side as well as the international system diplomatically.⁹² Subsequently, Deng, after Nixon's "opening of China,"⁹³ was able to integrate China into the international system politically and economically. Under a collective and decentralized governing system combined with a state-led capitalist model, China, aided by a benign, US-led external environment, started its ascent. This success formula where China gained relative material power comprises the era of Permissive State Capitalism (see period 4 of Table 1). Importantly, there is an unmistakable chronographic line discernable in which there are clear linkages between the internal and the external realm: China needed a Republican state form and modern governing system (and perhaps its failure), and (cynically) the radical but unifying doctrine of Maoist thought and accompanying grassroots movement, *as well as* Deng's path to material wealth and power to be able to assert itself in the regional and international system. In other words, lifting China's

⁹⁰Saich, *Ibid.*, 154; Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 12–13. On the moral credence of the Party's propaganda in contemporary China see David Shambaugh, "The Coming Chinese Crackup," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coming-chinese-crack-up-1425659198> According to Shambaugh, the "Emperor" has "lost its clothes."

⁹¹Kenneth G. Lieberthal and David M. Lampton, *Bureaucracy, Politics and Decision Making in Post-Mao China*, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 24.

⁹²On how China's approaches to multilateral diplomacy evolved see further Samuel S. Kim, "International Organizational Behavior," in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 401–34; Joel Wutnow, Xin Li and Lingling Qi, "Diverse Multilateralism: Four Strategies in China's Multilateral Diplomacy," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 17, no. 3 (2012): 269–90.

⁹³Of course Mao had already been contemplating such a policy shift prior to Kissinger's visit to Beijing in 1971. See Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 203–12.

status in the regional order has only been possible by way of this long and painful domestic process of self-strengthening. This leads us back to the overarching conundrum posed in the introduction and literature review. Rephrased as to incorporate the yields of our analysis above and the periodic framework of Table 1, that is the following: is China satisfied with its current status in the East Asian regional order—challenging certain rules within a US-led system it by and large abides by (period 4)—or are we, under Xi, witnessing a transition toward a fifth period of national rejuvenation? The answer to this question on continuity versus change, and the viability of the ordering principles it includes, has its obvious implications for China’s extrapolated trajectory.

Based on the comparative historical analysis above, I advance that under the paramount leadership of China’s “Imperial President,”⁹⁴ Xi, the cycle of Empire has to a degree come full circle. In this reading of political developments over the last decade, China has arrived at the final stage of the Middle Kingdom’s march toward rejuvenation (see period 5 of Table 1). It is important to note, however, that Table 1 is more fluid than it suggests. For example, Mao Zedong was first and foremost a nationalist seeking to restore China’s unity and power (anti-Japanese nationalism was as an important rallying tool as the promised land reform), and was well versed in the philosophic classics of dynastic times.⁹⁵ By the same token, the transition from Permissive State Capitalism toward an assumed fifth period of final ascendance is still ongoing, with some of the organizing principles of period 4 maintained in period 5. Viewing these transitional principles in light of China’s historic journey, several analogies stand out. First, whereas since 1978 China’s governing system, like that of Imperial China’s, has been de facto decentralized, authoritarian and technocratic (in its meritocratic⁹⁶ *nomenclature*⁹⁷ selection system), the central governing apparatus under Xi has been all but usurped by the central Party organs⁹⁸ and, since the 19th Party Congress, Xi loyalists.⁹⁹ While under Jiang and Hu there was more room for personal freedom and civil society to develop (what I call “permissive”), expressions of liberal tendencies have been thoroughly clamped-down on since Xi took the helm.¹⁰⁰ Though decidedly less technocratic and more authoritarian, Xi’s Personalist centralization of power toward Beijing’s *Zhongnanhai*, principally by way of his anti-corruption-cum-purge campaign,¹⁰¹ has not (yet) altered the decentralized nature of the authoritarian system itself. In fact, this inclination toward accumulating personal power in the center mirrors

⁹⁴Elizabeth C. Economy, “China’s Imperial President. Xi Jinping Tightens His Grip,” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 6 (November/December 2014): 80.

⁹⁵That is of course not to say that he did not fully believe in the doctrine and his adapted, Chinese version known as Maoism. In fact, he differed with the substance of the first of Sun Yat-sen’s Three Principles—nationalism—in that he went far beyond what Sun envisioned was required from society to restore the Chinese “race” (principally the Han as opposed to the out-group of the ruling Manchus) within the Chinese nation. See John W. Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People’s Republic of China*, 20-21.

⁹⁶For a government-friendly view on China’s meritocracy see Yao Yang, “The Disinterested Government. An Interpretation of China’s Economic Success in the Reform Era,” *UNI-WIDER*, (Research Paper 2009.33), May 2009, <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/RP2009-33.pdf>.

⁹⁷Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 12-13; Saich, *Governance and Politics of China*, 154.

⁹⁸Indeed putting the Party front and center is construed as neatly tied to the path forward: rejuvenation. For the theoretical elaboration of the renewed centralization drive post-19th Party Congress see e.g. Xi Jinping, “Consistently promote the new great project of Party building” [*Tuijin dang de jianshe xin de weida gongcheng yao yiyiguanzhi*], *Qiushi*, October 2, 2019, http://qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2019-10/02/c_1125068596.htm.

⁹⁹The new Standing Committee members flanking Xi in October 2017 are widely regarded as “Xi’s men,” the culmination of 5 years of consolidating his now seemingly unchallenged control over the central Party apparatus. See further Joseph Fewsmith, “The 19th Party Congress: Ringing in Xi Jinping’s New Age,” *Hoover Institution*, China Leadership Monitor 55, January 2018, <https://www.hoover.org/research/19th-party-congress-ringing-xi-jinpings-new-age>; Chun Han Wong and Lingling Wei, “With Grip on Power Assured, China’s Xi Elevates Lieutenants,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 18, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/all-president-xis-men-chinas-new-government-braces-for-trump-1521365403>.

¹⁰⁰See ChinaFile, “Document 9: A ChinaFile Translation,” November 8, 2013, <http://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation#start>; Editorial Board, “People’s Daily Editorial Board: Scientific guide to consolidate and develop mainstream public opinion” [*Renmin ribao bian wei hui: Gonggu zhuangda zhuliu sixiang yulun de kexue zhinan*], *Renmin Ribao*, August 30, 2013, <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n/2013/0830/c1003-22745794.html>.

¹⁰¹See further Victor Shih, “Efforts at exterminating factionalism under Xi Jinping: Will Xi Jinping dominate Chinese politics after the 19th Party Congress?” in *China’s Core Executive: Leadership styles, structures, and processes under Xi Jinping*, ed. Sebastian Heilmann and Matthias Stepan, MERICS Papers on China, June 1, 2016, https://www.merics.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/MPOC_ChinasCoreExecutive.pdf.

similar (unsuccessful) attempts by Yuan Shikai and the Beiyang warlords, Chiang and indeed Mao. Granting that Xi's centralization drive may be a signal of more to come (depending in part on the extent to which Xi wields influence after his second term), if anything, China's modern history has shown that a large and diverse country such as China can only be economically run in a viable way when initiative is left to the fragmented, regional level. Similarly, and in marked contrast to the (wishful) predictions of some,¹⁰² China's market-oriented but at heart state-led economic system has to, by its very essence, remain the name of the Party's game in at least the foreseeable future. Second, ideationally, the system is buttressed by a nominal reliance on Centralized Maoism that is increasingly supplanted by an appeal to Confucian notions of "traditional Chinese culture."¹⁰³ Whereas his predecessors largely stuck with traditional Dengian "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" "grammar" to peg their pragmatic policies on, Xi has gone back much further in time. Without any irony as to what is left of that traditional culture after the first three decades of CCP rule, Xi often invokes China's grand civilizational achievements and contributions to the world during its "5000 years of continuous history;"¹⁰⁴ a history that for most of the last two millennia has known Chinese regional preeminence. More than anything, though, the Party's Marxist-Leninist ideology has been married with a modern form of exclusionary ethnic Han-nationalism. The architect of the Tibetan crack-down, for instance, Chen Quanguo, is since 2016 in charge of Xinjiang, executing out-group policies such as the vast neo-Maoist "re-education" camps.¹⁰⁵ This ethnic aspect can be traced back to both the late Qing's ruthless deployment in the north and northwest of the military control tool, as well as the ethnic-based rhetoric of the early Republican voices (e.g. the Chinese [i.e. Han] "race" of Sun and Chiang). This return to Chiang's "instinctive emotions," reinventing Mao-era anti-Japanese and anti-American propaganda (and conveniently glossing over the Party's self-inflicted wounds) as the nation's principal unifying tool has proven to be a potent but at times unwieldy mobilization force.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, China's 2009–2010 *fang/shou* turn toward "hard authoritarianism" has also had a distinct foreign policy component.¹⁰⁷ Touting China's newfound status as a "global leader," Xi declared that China had finally realized its desired "composite national strength and international influence."¹⁰⁸ Moving toward a period in which capabilities developed are no longer hidden, and time is no longer bided, to paraphrase the alternative, gloomier translation of Deng's full 24-character foreign policy doctrine (*tao guang yang hui, yousuo zuowei*), China has adopted a new maxim: "striving for achievement" (*fen fa youwei*).¹⁰⁹ Facilitated by its ever-growing hard power,¹¹⁰ the Party's growing reliance on ethnic Han nationalism has under the Personalist rule by Xi been conjoined with a muscular, militarized foreign policy resembling Chiang's doctrine. Nowhere is this

¹⁰²This relates to the implementation of the liberalizing reforms of the 2013 Third Plenum, which would ostensibly commence once Xi had consolidated power. See further David Zweig, "Xi Jinping has consolidated power, but China is still waiting for the promised waves of reform," *South China Morning Post*, July 20, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2138140/xi-jinping-has-consolidated-power-china-still-waiting>.

¹⁰³Absent the legitimizing dogma of communism, the CCP leadership has advanced the promotion of traditional Chinese culture as an integral part of its seven-pronged rejuvenation strategy. See on this Tony Saich, "What Does General Secretary Xi Jinping Dream About?" Ash Center at the Harvard Kennedy School, 5-7, http://www.iberchina.org/files/2017/what_does_xi_jinping_dream_about-Saich.pdf.

¹⁰⁴See e.g. China Daily, "Full text of Xi's address to the media," November 16, 2012, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012cpc/2012-11/16/content_15934514.htm.

¹⁰⁵Now widely exposed, leaked internal government documents reveal direct links to the top Party leadership. Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley, "'Absolutely No Mercy': Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims," *New York Times*, November 16, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/16/world/asia/china-xinjiang-documents.html>.

¹⁰⁶See e.g. Tania Branigan, "Japan's Beijing Embassy Besieged by Chinese Crowd in Islands Dispute," *The Guardian*, September 16, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/16/japan-embassy-beseiged-chinese-crowd>.

¹⁰⁷See David Shambaugh, *China's Future* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 120ff.

¹⁰⁸Xi Jinping, "Full text of Xi Jinping's report at the 19th CPC National Congress," *China Daily*, November 4, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content_34115212.htm.

¹⁰⁹See Yan Xuetong, dissecting speeches from General Secretary and President Xi Jinping, State Councilor Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in "From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, no. 2 (2014): 153-84.

¹¹⁰See e.g. SIPRI, "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>; CSIS, "ChinaPower Project—Military," <https://chinapower.csis.org/category/military/>.

bellicose overconfidence on display more imposing than during China's ramped up air and naval exercises since Xi took power.¹¹¹ In the "shows of force" enforcing expanded claims,¹¹² and the ever-grander military inspections by the "supreme military commander," Xi operationalizes the PLA's obligation of "absolute loyalty to the Party"¹¹³ (Xi) by having the troops yell "chairman" (*zhu xi*) instead of the traditional "leader" (*shou zhang*).¹¹⁴ As regional neighbors have become progressively uneasy about China's rise, welcoming a bigger US footprint in the region, this policy has made China's systemic environment profoundly less favorable for its continued ascent. All in all, it can be plausibly asserted that China has returned to the governing system of Imperial times while in the ideational realm also borrowing from the subsequent periods: Centralized Maoism/Marxism-Leninism for a continuous line of Party legitimacy (establishing the People's republic through which it rid China of internal strife and external threats) and an increasing emphasis on Confucian traditional culture and Republican era hard nationalism to complement the economic pillar of legitimacy as China moves away from the Dengian social contract of plentiful toward a "New Normal."¹¹⁵ Taking the long view, there is thus much more continuity than the apparent departure from Deng's *gaige kaifang*—*tao guang yang hui* consensus seems to imply.

Implications

Now, third, and finally, what does all this point to when it comes to China's view on regional order, and when is this ostensible last period of national rejuvenation complete? If a watershed moment has to be identified with regard to the start of this last period, it is without doubt Xi's "New Era" great power speech at the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, a speech in which he referred to China as a great or strong power 26 times.¹¹⁶ Rhetorically, this can be considered the affirmation of what in the Western literature came to be known as China's post-2009–2010 increased "assertiveness."¹¹⁷ The other end of this fifth period—when national rejuvenation is attained—is presumably the second "centennial goal" stipulated in Xi's China Dream; it holds that the hundredth anniversary of the People's Republic of China in 2049 should coincide with China having become a "modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious."¹¹⁸ Despite the fact that there is no uniformly agreed upon threshold of when this abstractly formulated goal, or stage of development or influence, is reached, it is, looking at the shared desire expressed throughout China's 170 years national quest, arguably reached when China has placed itself among the region's leading nations (a relative position attained during the last decade of period 4 under the condition of Westphalian equality), or indeed if it has become *the* leading nation (i.e. under Sino-centric hegemony in what could be called a Neo-Imperial order). As outlined in the conclusion, China's foreign policy behavior increasingly supports the latter

¹¹¹Minnie Chan, "Increased military drills suggest mainland China is preparing to strike against Taiwan, experts say," *South China Morning Post*, December 18, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2124829/increased-military-drills-suggest-china-preparing>.

¹¹²See e.g. Ridzwan Rahmat, "China dispatches vessels, fighter jets to South China Sea after 'Provocative operations'" *IHS Jane's*, July 3, 2017, <http://www.janes.com/article/71964/china-dispatches-vessels-fighter-jets-to-south-china-sea-after-provocative-operations>.

¹¹³For the slogan at the 19th Party Congress see Huang Pangyue, "PLA soldiers, military experts heed Xi's call to uphold Party leadership at 19th CPC Congress," *PLA Daily*, October 25, 2017, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-10/25/content_7799105.htm; for the slogan during the military parade commemorating the 90th anniversary of the PLA see Charlie Campbell, "Xi Jinping Says China's Sleek, Modern Military Will Never Allow Threats to Its Sovereignty," *Time*, August 1, 2017, <http://time.com/4881924/xi-jinping-china-pla-sovereignty/>.

¹¹⁴See Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "The Irresistible Rise of the 'Xi Family Army'" *Jamestown Foundation*, China Brief 17, no. 13, October 20, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/irresistible-rise-xi-family-army/>.

¹¹⁵See China Daily, "New normal in economic development," October 5, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-10/05/content_32869258_2.htm.

¹¹⁶See Chris Buckley and Keith Bradsher, "Xi Jinping's Marathon Speech: Five Takeaways," *New York Times*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-party-congress.html>.

¹¹⁷See Figures 1-3 in Alastair Iain Johnston, "How New and Assertive is China's New Assertiveness?" *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 10-12. Substantively, Johnston maintains the opposite view.

¹¹⁸Xinhua News Agency, "CPC Q&A: What are China's two centennial goals and why do they matter?" October 17, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/17/c_136686770.htm.

interpretation of the second centennial goal. In fact, what is clear from China's detailed trajectory is that 1) the aim of Chinese leaders have throughout modern history been consistent: bringing China back to its forlorn position of "wealth and power"; and 2) how they have chosen to give form to that aim has always depended on how they perceived China's relative position in the system, and their ability to extract and mobilize China's domestic resources—mostly the ideational convictions of the Chinese people. Surely the shift toward Xi's muscular, militarized foreign policy has been enabled by the material investments in the fourth Modernization (defense) that started under Jiang after the Gulf War. This Modernization has, in turn, depended on the progress made with the second (industry) and third (science and technology) Modernizations, areas that have been, paradoxically, greatly assisted by US and Japanese capital and knowhow—hence the current US-initiated and high tech-oriented trade war with China directed at trying to retain American hegemony. Furthermore, not only is "[wealth] needed to underpin military power, [military] power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth." In the "New Era," China has arrived at the second part of Kennedy's adagium,¹¹⁹ shifting from military catch-up and emulation to technological innovation and competition.¹²⁰ And of course, once relative economic and military power in a regional or global system is gained (nearing or surpassing other, proximate great powers), nations can and generally do try to shape their environment in their own image. Certainly China's realist leaders, with an apt appreciation of China's modern history, have thought that way.¹²¹

Also Xi's foreign policy rhetoric, captured in his nationalist "China Dream" propaganda vehicle, roughly follows the latter, Sino-centric explanation. Designed to ideationally unite the Chinese people around the Party's flag, the nationalism that has been nurtured since the 1990s is increasingly played up in the service of China's expansive territorial aims.¹²² Hence, when top officials like Xi stress the importance of "territorial sovereignty"¹²³ for relations with China, they mean Chinese sovereignty including Taiwan (considered a breakaway province and prevented from being united with the mainland ever since the US "neutralized" the Taiwan Strait in 1950),¹²⁴ Hong Kong (only recovered in 1997 and still meddled in by "hostile foreign forces")¹²⁵ and, more recently, the disputed islands in the East and South China Seas (the latter Sea is now ostensibly also a "core interest").¹²⁶ It is definitely hard to conceive an arrival at the abstract mythical state implied in the

¹¹⁹Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, xvi.

¹²⁰Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3 (July–September 2006): 467.

¹²¹See e.g. Xi's quote mention on the first page of this article.

¹²²See e.g. Suisheng Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: The Strident Turn," *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 82 (2013): 535–53; Christopher R. Hughes, "Reclassifying Chinese Nationalism: the geopolitit turn," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 71 (2011): 601–20.

¹²³Xi Jinping quoted in John Ruwitch, "China's Xi issued veiled warning to Asia over military alliances," *Reuters*, May 21, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-xi/chinas-xi-issues-veiled-warning-to-asia-over-military-alliances-idUSBREA4K02V20140521a>.

¹²⁴The Chinese leadership, by way of a Zhou Enlai statement and subsequent propaganda messaging, signaled that the US once again immersing itself in the conflict removed Chinese prospects of taking Taiwan from the Kuomintang. See on this Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 62–64. On reunification of Taiwan—by force if necessary—in the context of Xi's China Dream see Chris Buckley and Chris Horton, "Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan that Unification is the Goal and Force is an Option," *New York Times*, January 1, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/01/world/asia/xi-jinping-taiwan-china.html?action=click&module=News&pgtype=Homepage>.

¹²⁵During Xi's tenure, there has been a stark rise in (semi) official newspaper articles and commentaries blaming "hostile foreign forces" for certain events, such as was the case during the 2014 Hong Kong student protests, and over the stock market plunge in 2015. See e.g. Elizabeth C. Economy, "China's Stock Market Crash Scapegoat: 'Hostile Foreign Forces,'" *National Interest*, July 9, 2015, <http://www.nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/chinas-stock-market-crash-scapegoat-hostile-foreign-forces%E2%80%9D-13293>.

¹²⁶A "core" interest meaning that China will go to war to secure it. In the case of Taiwan, this means preserving the "One China" status quo. See on the alleged statement made by the highest-ranked foreign affairs bureaucrat State Councilor Dai Bingguo to senior US officials Jeffrey Bader and James Steinberg during the 2010 US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue Edward Wong, "Chinese Military Seeks to Extend Its Naval Power," *New York Times*, April 23, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/24/world/asia/24navy.html>; Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Interview With Greg Sheridan of The Australian," U.S. Department of State, November 8, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/11/150671.htm>. See further also Edward Wong, "Security Law Suggests a Broadening of China's 'Core Interests'" *New York Times*, July 2, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/03/world/asia/security-law-suggests-a-broadening-of-chinas-core-interests.html?mtref=www.google.nl>.

contemporary notion of national rejuvenation under Xi without “realizing China’s complete reunification” with these lost territories.¹²⁷

Nevertheless, together with Xinjiang and Tibet these territorial dictates form the outer limits of what China considers part of sovereign Chinese land and sea—i.e. what is or should be within the administrative hierarchy of Beijing. What is more, in the transition phase from period 4 to 5 that we are currently in we can already see China’s statecraft resembling Imperial categorization and treatment—divisions corresponding with countries’ power relative to that of China’s. With respect to core interests in the ethnic-cultural sphere (China’s “cultural bonds”), direct military/administrative control tools are employed with almost no room, also domestically, for reservations (think in this regard of China’s Coastguard and fishing militia, ultimately backed up by China’s ever-expanding naval fleet, and, on land, the Party and police state apparatus). In the rest of the Sinic zone, we are now in an advanced stage of what Fairbank called “manipulation.” Once again trade rights, now under the banner of what Xi calls the Belt and Road “initiative,” are granted under the condition of recognizing Chinese regional suzerainty; mostly by not challenging China pursuing its narrow self-interest. Though there has been a backlash in for instance Malaysia, China’s Neo-Imperial “Finlandization” has been reasonably successful in Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines under Duterte, and, to a lesser extent, Burma and Thailand. China’s third sphere of foreign affairs is guided by diplomacy based on equality. Really only the US qualifies for this approach; middle powers not yet bound to Beijing, such as South Korea, are generally dealt with head-on when they cross Beijing’s line (e.g. China’s wrath in 2017 after South Korea announced it would deploy the US THAAD anti-missile shield).¹²⁸

Last, some notes on the external visibility of the Neo-Imperial strategy in period 5. Until China has surpassed in particular US military power—which will take decades to come—China will seek to regain centrality (*zhong*) in East Asia mostly gradually by way of asymmetric *wei* (encircling) tactics, as opposed to the Western (and especially American) direct overt way. Regardless of its now sizable domestic consumer base, China will also need to remain coupled with the international economic and trade regime to sustain its growth numbers in the years ahead. This, together with the prospect of regional liberal powers such as the US and Japan continuing to balance China’s worst impulses, makes it likely that China will for some time to come continue to instrumentally acquiesce, pay lip service to the rules of the modern diplomatic and state system. Examples of this practice already being in place include how state-led China flourishes within the WTO trade system (including its dispute resolution mechanism), the obligations China has under the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea and its artificial islands building in and the militarization of the South China Sea, and its regional geo-economic “debt-trap” aid diplomacy of the Belt and Road Initiative, rivaling Western-led institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF.

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¹²⁷For mythical abstract narratives serving cartelized interest groups within government see Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 31–32. For Xi’s quote see Philip Wen and Ben Blanchard, “Xi warns Taiwan will face ‘punishment of history’ for separatism,” *Reuters*, March 20, 2018, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-china-parliament-taiwan/xi-warns-taiwan-will-face-punishment-of-history-for-separatism-idUKKBN1GW07S>.

¹²⁸David Josef Volodzko, “China wins its war against South Korea’s US THAAD missile shield—without firing a shot,” *South China Morning Post*, November 18, 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2120452/china-wins-its-war-against-south-koreas-us-thaad-missile>.

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