

# Asia in World Politics: Past, Present, and Future

edited by

Marcin Socha, Michał Zaręba



Contemporary Asian Studies Series



WYDAWNICTWO  
UNIwersytetu  
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**Marcin Socha**

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## **Introduction**

Quick growth of Chinese economy heralded a shift in the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific. In recent years China's growing assertiveness, manifested by growing military presence in South China Sea, has been perceived as a major security challenge by most of the countries in the region. This situation is not simply a result of the recent changes in economic and political situation in the country, but rather a manifestation of a long history of building economic and political ties in the region and materialization of Chinese ambitions. It seems that China is finally able to materialize its long-time political ambitions in the region.

Other security challenges like the nuclear program of North Korea and changing political situation in Myanmar attested to the increasing uncertainty of security situation in Asia which affects the global geopolitical landscape. Change of power in the United States, and Election of Donald Trump as American president in November 2016 was a signal of another shift in the regional security situation. New president following the slogan "America First" launched a process of renegotiating existing security treaties with Asian allies and presented a more aggressive stance on China which very soon turned into a serious trade conflict. This monograph illustrates different aspects of these complex power shifts and their influence on the current geo-political situation in the region. The research results presented herein by authors from several universities were initially discussed during the 7th LEAM conference which was held at the Faculty of International and Political Studies of the University of Lodz, on 7–8 June 2018. The book is divided into three thematic blocks.

In the first part Alessandro Albana analyzes the growing maritime policy of China. He concludes that China pursues a twofold maritime strategy depending on the proximity to the Chinese coast and the ability to perform



effective military operations. Marcin Przychodniak examines documents and statements on bilateral relations between China and the United States. He argues that misunderstandings between the two countries result from electoral politics in the U.S. and following the ideology of build-up and rejuvenation in China. On the part devoted to changes in contemporary Chinese politics, Adrian Brona explains the processes of selecting cadres in the Communist Party of China. The chapter by Gabriel Hasík proves, that apart from international and security concerns, Chinese government must also respond to a series of developmental challenges. Fast economic growth in China resulted in growing income inequality and a greater gap between rural and urban areas.

Second part of the book shows that growing position of Beijing is not only a result of recent economic growth and geopolitical changes, but also a consequence of a historical experiences and carefully cultivated international contacts. Alicja Bachulska shows that experiences of “the century of humiliation” are used by the CCP to fuel nationalism and legitimize Chinese expansionism in the international arena. Yumei Chi examines the history of Franco-Chinese diplomacy and an attempt to utilize those historical ties in promoting current international investment platforms like the Belt and Road Initiative. Mark Hoskin using Western primary sources, provides an interesting overview of a long history of Chinese activities across the South China Sea. Sitthiphon Kruarattikan turns to a more recent history of international relations by showing the instrumental use of Cuba in Chinese policy towards the Soviet Union.

Third thematic bloc is devoted to the ongoing security shifts in Asia Pacific. David Jervis identifies the reasons behind the unsuccessful policy regarding the North Korean nuclear program. He examines the strategies used by the different U.S. administrations to approach Pyongyang in the context of Johnson’s idea of the seven “sins” of American foreign policy. Andrzej Demczuk analyses hypothetical solutions to the North Korean nuclear program under the presidency of Donald Trump. Karol Żakowski examines Japan’s policy towards North Korea under the Second Abe Administration, which is being affected by the conciliatory approach of the United States. Agnieszka Batko is looking at Japan-South Korea relations and suggesting that the neo-functional theory of regional integration can be applied outside of the European integration context. Michał Lubina examines the history of U.S. relations with Myanmar, which has an important influence on current political changes and crises in the country.

# **Domestic and foreign policy changes in China**



**Alessandro Albana**

University of Venice

## **Beijing turns to the seas. Combining assertive postures with cooperation**

### **Abstract**

*China's effort to build itself up into a maritime superpower has drawn scholars' attention. Questions arise whether the Chinese maritime turn can be considered in terms of potential destabilization of the maritime border in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean region, or rather, as a contributor to maintaining such an order. Those who believe that China's maritime rise represents a destabilizing force, point at Beijing's assertive posture in the East and South China seas. Other scholars argue, that Chinese navy (PLAN) has taken part in humanitarian assistance, disaster relief (HA/DR) and anti-piracy missions in the Indo-Pacific region, contributing to the international maritime cooperation. State-of-the-art analyses have focused either on China's assertiveness, chiefly in regional seas, or on Beijing's difficulties to catching up with a blue-water navy status in a global scenario. Rather than assuming China's maritime projection as a uniform pattern, this study emphasizes that Beijing pursues a twofold strategy. On regional waters, where its navy is capable of exercising effective military might, China operates assertively and does not seek multilateral cooperation. On the high seas, where PLAN's forays suffer from weaker preparedness and training, Beijing has joined the international community in maintaining the world order. China pursued naval diplomacy efforts, as demonstrated by its participation in anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden since 2008 and its contribution to numerous HA/DR initiatives. China's regional assertiveness and its global cooperative posture reinforce Beijing's maritime projection.*

**Keywords:** China, South China Sea, East China Sea, seapower

## 1. Introduction

China's commitment to developing a modern naval apparatus is relatively new. In the wake of Deng Xiaoping's unveiling of economic reforms in the late 1970s, Chinese authorities came to recognize that acquiring some maritime projection is highly beneficial for sustaining economic development. Nonetheless, naval modernization served to acquire military capabilities, which proved essential in safeguarding what the People's Republic of China (PRC) considers its maritime sovereignty. Hence, China gained control of the Paracel (1974) and Spratly islands (1988) in the South China Sea (SCS) after the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) obtained key military victories in naval conflicts with Southern Vietnamese and Vietnamese forces, respectively. In 1995, China occupied Mischief reef in the Spratly archipelago, further expanding its strategic footprint in the SCS (Chellaney 2016). Concurrently, China's naval modernization has gained swift and impressive momentum, improving the PLAN's military and training capabilities along with its maritime projection.

Against this backdrop, Beijing's turn to the seas has triggered widespread concerns over its potential for bringing detrimental consequences for the stability of the maritime order. Such is the case of East Asia, a regional scenario where China is involved in maritime disputes with countries ranging from Japan in the North-East to Malaysia in the South-East. By some accounts China's naval rise is considered the sole potential source of concern *vis-à-vis* the US unrivaled role as a global maritime superpower after the collapse of the USSR (Scholik 2016). Along with augmenting the PLAN's force projection, China's naval capabilities have served military cooperation and diplomatic purposes. Since 2008, the PLAN has taken part in several anti-piracy missions and confidence-building measures (CBMs) along with foreign navies, displaying a remarkable willingness to contribute to the stability of the global maritime domain. Such contributions, while certainly serving China's own interests, make Beijing's naval rise a complex phenomenon, as both assertive and cooperative stances are endorsed by China's strategy. Interestingly, China displays an assertive posture in the regional domain, chiefly in the SCS, whereas the PLAN contributes to cooperative and diplomatic frameworks in the global maritime domain.

## 2. A classical theoretical framework

Alfred Thayer Mahan, frequently referred to as “the father of seapower,” is often associated with warmongering naval strategies. He has stressed obsessively ‘command of the sea’ as the cornerstone of naval projection. Several analysts consider his approach as that of an offensive realist, focusing on the importance of acquiring the greatest military might in order to build up a powerful navy and establish an unrivaled command of the sea. From such a perspective, Mahan’s attention to the use of seapower for peaceful purposes has been frequently overlooked. In fact, Mahan considers seapower as a projection for winning naval wars, as much as developing commerce in the times of peace (Mahan 2015). In this sense, Mahan views seapower not merely as a “naval” question. On the contrary, the “naval” component is but one within the broader “maritime” dimension, including ‘national policy, national security and national obligation’ (Mahan 1911, p. 512). Tellingly, “national obligations” are to be considered as national responsibilities regarding the international system. By including them among the components of seapower, Mahan suggests that maritime strategies are likely to focus on national duties towards the global maritime domain. In addition, Mahan underlines that naval forces cannot pursue military prowess alone, as military might should have “strongly represented interests” to safeguard (Mahan 2015, pp. 60–61). In other words, Mahan urges national authorities to build up a “legitimate navy,” not merely a powerful force (*ibid.*).

The question of seapower as a diplomatic and political tool has been further elaborated by Sir Julian Corbett, a key figure in early 1900s theoretical studies on naval strategy. Compared to Mahan’s prescriptions, Corbett’s understanding of seapower is narrower, as the latter is considered as a tool to support diplomatic purposes. As he considered naval strategy part of a broader military strategy focused on the landmass, Corbett describes naval wars as limited conflicts, implying their suitability as diplomatic leverages to be employed in order to obtain (or prevent the rival from obtaining) political “victories.” According to this view, seapower is highly functional as it supports diplomatic efforts in military conflicts (Corbett 1918; Till 2009). Therefore, Corbett’s framing of seapower is relevant as naval strategy is not merely a component of the overall military strategy aimed at winning wars; rather, naval projection is to be considered a military tool for pursuing diplomatic goals.

More recently, a key contribution to the theoretical studies on naval diplomacy has been introduced by Geoffrey Till. Acknowledging its capacity to influence other actors' behavior through maritime actions, Till (2009) describes seapower not merely in terms of military projection, framing it into a comprehensive dimension in which a naval force's reputation plays a key role. Against this backdrop, navies are deemed navies crucial for implementing foreign policy, rather than representing a military apparatus simply serving diplomatic purposes (*ibid.*). England's naval hegemony during the *Pax Britannica* (*circa* 1815–1914) is a case in point, as London's maritime superiority was accepted and prized by other countries in the international system, thus portraying England as a benign hegemon (Hattendorf 2015). Therefore, according to such theoretical perspectives, military activities are to be considered potential tools of soft power, not least because they might convey prestige as a consequence of force projection and improved military capabilities (Nye 2004, 2011). In other words, notwithstanding their significance as a means for power projection notwithstanding military operations can be intended as initiatives bringing about both hard and soft power gains. That is particularly relevant with respect to naval forces, as they might be employed for fighting rival navies as well as for international assistance, rescue missions and safeguarding the overall maritime stability (Yoshihara 2010; Nye 2011).

Till's contribution is crucial as it frames navies into two different types, whose discrepancies lay chiefly in a different interpretation of seapower within a globalized maritime order (Webb 2011). So-called "modern navies" operate under realist assumptions as they view the international order as a competitive system. Against this backdrop, modern naval forces focus on the defense of national waters, a goal they pursue by resorting to traditional naval tactics, such as maintaining a nuclear deterrent at sea and fleet-to-fleet engagement postures. On the other hand, "post-modern navies" contribute to the stability of the maritime order, as they are driven by the belief that such a stability is highly beneficial for national interests as well. Post-modern forces uphold the protection of the maritime order as it is essential for prosperous international commerce. That goal is pursued by resorting to multilateral frameworks and navy-to-navy cooperation. Post-modern strategies assume that national navies worldwide face common threats such as piracy, terrorism and international crime; therefore, a common effort is required for the support of the maritime stability. As to military doctrine, post-modern navies focus on preventing conflict and supporting diplomatic and consensus-oriented

efforts to settle disputes (*ibid.*; Till 2009). Whereas the two types are not to be considered mutually exclusive, such a classification serves to identify different sets of values, strategic goals and military doctrines upholding different naval postures and doctrinal settings.

### 3. China's military cooperation at sea

China's participation in naval cooperation frameworks is a relatively new phenomenon. In December 2008, a PLAN task force was deployed for the first time to the Gulf of Aden as a part of multilateral anti-piracy mission. China's first anti-piracy foray took place during Hu Jintao's (2002–2012), a presidency which proved crucial for China's naval development and the construction of a "maritime great power." This strategy did not overlook the need of contributing to maritime military cooperation (Tobin 2018). In addition, the 2008 escort mission in the Gulf of Aden marked the first time Chinese naval forces were used overseas to safeguard both national and international interests (Hui & Cao 2016). The mission is particularly relevant as it was not merely aimed at supporting China's strategic interests, such as safeguarding vital sea lanes of communication (SLOCs), but represented an opportunity for showcasing Beijing's goodwill and promoting its maritime status as a responsible and cooperative power (Yoshihara 2010).

Chinese official publications have stressed the importance of cooperation as a key means for upholding national strategic objectives. In 2015, the National Defense White Paper (NDWP) called for the adoption of a distinct maritime orientation in China's strategy, setting aside the traditional continental flavor of China's strategic culture (State Council Information Office of the PRC 2015). In this regard, the NDWP called upon the PLAN to contribute to the so-called "open sea protection," a vague but relevant task as it implies the commitment to operating in the "open sea" domain to "protect" maritime stability (*ibid.*). In addition, the unveiling of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 has made maritime cooperation even more urgent. As the BRI's Maritime Silk Road (MSR) is expected to stretch across troubled waters (i.e. the SCS) and distant seas where China's naval projection is yet to obtain full consolidation (i.e. the Indian Ocean), China cannot proceed without reaching a consensus on cooperation and the safeguarding of maritime order, lest the failure of the MSR. Not surprisingly, China has urged the implementation of frameworks of



bilateral and multilateral cooperation in order to ensure a successful development of the MSR, with the so-called “win-win cooperation” as both a leading principle and a common goal (National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of Commerce of the PRC 2015; National Development and Reform Commission of the PRC & State Oceanic Administration 2017; Tobin 2018).

As of 2017, PLAN has conducted 26 escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and more than 160 port calls, displaying a surge in military diplomacy initiatives after Xi Jinping took office in 2013 (China Power Team 2017a). As a corollary, the 27th and 28th escort task forces have visited strategic locations in Ghana, Morocco and South Africa (Legarda 2018). Between January and June 2018, China’s navy took part in 12 joint drills focused on humanitarian rescue and passage exercise (*ibid.*). Against this backdrop, China’s naval forces are more frequently involved in non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs), as the evacuations of Chinese citizens from war-torn Libya (2011) and Yemen (2015) have demonstrated (Cole 2016). In 2010 the PLAN undertook “Mission Harmony-2010,” a medical care initiative providing free medical assistance and training to Bangladesh, Djibouti, Kenya, the Seychelles and Tanzania. The mission is conducted by the “Peace Ark,” a specialized hospital vessel (Heng 2017). Moreover, the anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden has proved beneficial for improving China-Japan naval cooperation, a sensitive issue as both countries are involved in maritime disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in the East China Sea. In May 2010, for instance, PLAN’s task force Commander Zhang Wendan boarded a Japanese vessel to exchange information on anti-piracy methods. The move reciprocated Japanese Captain Minami Takanobu’s boarding on a Chinese vessel a few weeks earlier (*ibid.*).

While displaying a growing readiness to support naval cooperation frameworks – and a peaceful and stable maritime environment – China’s contribution to humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) missions also provides evidence of the PLAN’s growing military capabilities (*ibid.*; Tobin 2018). Supporting the management of a peaceful maritime domain, Beijing is concurrently serving a larger range of strategic goals. In fact, naval cooperation initiatives provide the PLAN with the opportunity to improve its operational skills, intelligence capabilities and technological know-how. Nonetheless, navy-to-navy exchanges and communication mechanisms contribute to strengthening ties between China’s naval forces, on the one hand, and weaker navies on the other. While the PLAN would eventually gain little in terms of hard power, China’s maritime

strategy could improve its projection *vis-à-vis* its strategic rivals. Pakistan is a case in point, as the Sino-Pakistani naval cooperation is a source of concern for India, a longstanding rival from Beijing's perspective (Cooper 2018). Finally, maritime cooperation could help Chinese strategists display their willingness to deploy naval forces for peaceful purposes, portraying China as a responsible and peaceful maritime power.

In conclusion, whereas China's participation in maritime cooperative frameworks has been on the rise for a decade, with diplomatic activities more than doubling since 2003, critical questions are yet to be answered (China Power Team 2017a). Particularly, Beijing's stance on the SCS enmeshment proved to be a constraining factor for China's international reputation. Chinese authorities have repeatedly stated that maritime disputes in the SCS are a question of bilateral negotiations, refusing to discuss them through multilateral frameworks (Yahuda 2012). More broadly, China's assertiveness in the SCS (discussed in section 3) could bring about relevant setbacks to Beijing's international reliability as a responsible maritime actor and its commitment within cooperative platforms. In July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) condemned China's extensive claims in the SCS as legally void, but China did not abide by the ruling and claimed the PCA did not have the legitimacy over what Chinese authorities consider an issue of national sovereignty (Almond 2018; Hayton 2018). In this scenario, since 2002 Beijing has taken part in negotiations for a Code of Conduct (COC) in the SCS; though that represents a remarkable demonstration of goodwill, China's move is to be considered as a symbolic gesture rather than a substantial move towards a multilateral settlement of the SCS enmeshment (Yoshihara & Holmes 2010; Yahuda 2012). Particularly, China has refused to convey the COC a legally binding status and to extend its application to maritime disputes, acknowledging its usefulness as a tool for preventing conflicts and promoting good practices rather than a legal platform for dispute resolution. However Beijing may now point at its participation in the negotiation rounds as a showcase of its reliability (Till 2009; McVadon 2011; Townshend & Medcalf 2016; Thayer 2018).

China's assertive stance in the SCS holds a key influence on its naval clout in the broader maritime domain. For instance, in May 2018 the US disinvented China from the RIMPAC naval exercise in the Pacific Ocean, the world's biggest joint naval drill, a decision US authorities motivated with the incompatibility between RIMPAC's principles and China's "destabilizing behavior" in the SCS (Gallo 2018). China has taken part

in RIMPAC since 2014, enjoying the opportunity to train its naval forces within a prestigious multilateral naval framework. Against this backdrop, whereas Beijing and Washington are committed to managing potential maritime frictions in a peaceful manner, as China's 2015 NDWP has called for the improvement of CBM mechanisms to boost bilateral maritime cooperation, the SCS issue appears increasingly detrimental for China's global image as a responsible naval power (Townshend & Medcalf 2016; Zha & Sutter 2017). More generally, the US views China's assertiveness in the SCS as a destabilizing force for American interest in East Asia. Within the US administration, some strategists already consider the Chinese control over the SCS as a *fait accompli*. According to former US Indo-Pacific Command's Commander, Adm. Philip Davidson, China has already acquired enough military capabilities and strategic projection for 'controlling the South China Sea in all scenarios short of war with the US' (Ni 2018). In other words, the US is growing increasingly worried that China's consolidated footprint in the SCS could be challenged only at the cost of resorting to open war (Chellaney 2018).

Eventually, China's increasing momentum in maritime cooperation is still far from providing the PLAN with the potential to catching up with the US proficiency in naval diplomacy. In 2016, the Chinese navy conducted 124 military exercises and 22 port calls, roughly matching the US Navy Seventh Fleet alone (China Power Team 2017a). In addition, while China's naval diplomacy looks pale compared to the US', PLAN's military vulnerabilities could prove critical should a conflict occur while its forces are involved in diplomatic initiatives on distant seas. This is particularly significant in the context of the Indian Ocean, where China's reach is yet to obtain strategic consolidation (Cooper 2018).

#### 4. China's assertiveness in the SCS

Before examining how China is projecting its naval power in the SCS, this section will briefly address Beijing's maritime assertiveness in the SCS. Also, it will try to answer why the SCS has been chosen as a benchmark of China's assertiveness on the maritime domain. The reason for such a choice lays in the specific characteristics of the SCS and the key interests China pursues therein. Whereas Beijing has resorted to provocative actions in other regional seas – namely the East China Sea – it is in the SCS that China has displayed its resolve most prominently. Importantly,

in 2010 Chinese officials referred to the SCS as a key national interest for the first time. Dai Bingguo, then State Councilor of the PRC, has reportedly branded the SCS a national “core interest” during a meeting with the US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton (Chen & Wang 2011; Nie 2016). From the Chinese perspective, gaining undisputable projection over the SCS is key for fulfilling some of its most important strategic requirements. In fact, the SCS displays a range of maritime disputes in which Beijing is involved along with Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam and, to a lesser extent, Brunei Darussalam. Beijing claims 80 to 90% of the SCS waters, creating overlapping maritime claims with South-east Asian nations. China resorted to historical justifications to uphold its stance, whose geographic extent is yet to be precisely defined (Cole 2016). Against this backdrop, China has not abided by the PCA ruling which deemed its claims as illegitimate, as Beijing considers the SCS an issue of national sovereignty, a Chinese “blue territory” (Chubb 2016).

The strategic significance of the SCS stems also from its location at the center of energy and commercial lifelines in East Asia (Ju 2015). The SCS is crucial for international commerce: as of 2016, goods worth some 3,4 trillion USD were transported through its waters, a figure particularly interesting as China’s maritime trade amount to roughly 40% of the SCS total trade volume (China Power Team 2017b). In this scenario, the SCS displays two key concerns for Beijing’s energy security. On the one hand, it represents a critical passage for energy imports, while on the other its seabed is believed to host huge deposits of oil and gas (Zha & Sutter 2017). Estimates presented by different countries vary from China’s 125 billion barrels of oil and 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, to US’ 11 to 22 billion barrels of oil and 90 trillion cubic feet (US Energy Information Administration 2013; Cole 2016). Furthermore, the presence of plenty fisheries in the SCS represents an additional source of interest for Beijing, as fish products are increasingly important for Chinese economy. In addition maritime disputes in the SCS have gained further significance as they have contributed to igniting Chinese nationalism.

China’s conduct in the SCS has been widely debated. Notably, after Xi Jinping came to power in 2013, Beijing’s projection in the SCS has become important in protecting what China considers its own pertinent waters. From the Chinese perspective, its naval presence in the SCS is a defensive strategy aimed at safeguarding maritime sovereignty within the so-called “nine-dash line,” a perimeter Beijing refers to as the boundary of its national waters. Whereas debating the historical origins of China’s claims in

the SCS lays beyond the purpose of this study, it is worth noting that Beijing grounds its claims in centuries-old naval expeditions and maritime activities pursued over the SCS by Chinese nationals. As to the nine-dash line, it was allegedly introduced for the first time by Chiang Kai-shek in 1947, while its first appearance in a PRC official publication dates back to 1951 (Garofano 2008). Eventually, the adoption of the national law on territorial sea and the contiguous zone in 1992 vindicated China's view of its exclusive sovereignty over the SCS and the disputed land features in both the SCS and the East China Sea (*ibid.*; Tobin 2018). China's claims have been hitherto reiterated; the NDWP, issued in 2015, which while calling for deeper engagement in military cooperation, did not substantially modify China's focus on safeguarding territorial rights and maritime sovereignty (State Council Information Office of the PRC 2015).

China has resorted to assertive tactics aiming to expand its naval reach in the SCS. Such a strategy has created remarkable military inroads, and China's control over the SCS has been widely acknowledged as a *fait accompli*. US authorities, for instance, appeared to see China as consolidating its power projection in the SCS up to the point that the US itself could not resort to any option short of an open conflict to confront Beijing's strategic reach. As to countries involved in maritime disputes, their capability to challenge China's projection is considered negligible (McVadon 2011; US Office of the Secretary of Defense 2017; Ni 2018). In order to strengthen its control, China has been building new islands in the Spratlys and, to a lesser extent, in the Paracel archipelago. According to some statistics, since 2014 Beijing has built 3,200 acres of new land in what has been deemed the artificial creation of "state sovereignty at sea" (Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative n.d.; Chubb 2017). The creation of artificial land features has been accomplished by heavy dredging of the seabed sand, which some reports have deemed responsible of an environmental disaster (Mahanta 2015).

After creating artificial islands and constructing new land features in the SCS, China has proceeded to the militarization of territories under its control (Casarini 2018). Airstrips have been constructed in the Spratly islands, and anti-ship missile systems have been installed in Fiery Cross, Mischief and Subi reef. Additionally, military personnel has been deployed to Woody island, where the H6-K strategic bomber landed for the first time in May 2018, providing further momentum for China's militarization of the area (Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative 2018; Ghiasy, Su & Saalman 2018; Panda 2018). Moreover China is equipping its naval

forces with large numbers of submarines and anti-ship cruise missiles, potential military tools in a regional conflict scenario in the SCS. In order to chase away foreign vessels, China has frequently deployed its coast guard units and the so-called “maritime militia,” a paramilitary force consisting of fishing and civilian vessels, to harass foreign boats operating in the SCS. While working as a military force backup, the coast guard and the maritime militia have contributed to preventing potential clashes from escalating into open conflict, as their offensive capabilities look pale compared to the PLAN’s (Townshend & Medcalf 2016; US Office of the Secretary of Defense 2017). Finally, the Sino-Russian joint naval drill in 2016, frequent training exercises of China’s sole operational aircraft carrier (the Liaoning), and the growing military capabilities of the PLAN South Sea Fleet (in charge of patrolling and safeguarding the SCS), have served Beijing’s purpose of showcasing its force in the SCS, as well as deterring disturbing actions from regional opponents and third parties.

In conclusion, China’s posture in the SCS has been remarkably influenced by Beijing’s proneness to contribute to maritime stability in the broader maritime domain. As naval assertiveness in the SCS has brought about some setbacks to China’s ambition to improve its global reputation as a responsible rising maritime power, the PLAN’s contribution to international cooperation has had positive implications for Beijing’s stance in the SCS. In fact, by participating in maritime cooperation frameworks, China has promoted its image as a trustworthy power in the East Asian seas (Yoshihara & Holmes 2010). Therefore, China has partially changed its assertiveness in the regional domain as it is growing aware that, up to a certain extent, engaging regional opponents in territorial disputes could have proved more beneficial than resorting to a staunch confrontational stance. As a result, the PLAN has pursued a number of cooperation initiatives with Southeast Asian countries, and its visits to ASEAN nations’ ports have concurrently grown more frequent (McVadon 2011). China seems to be recalibrating its assertiveness in the SCS as a beneficial factor for its interests in the region. A number of reasons may explain the process firstly, along with economic cooperation, it could persuade regional disputants to accept – or, at least, not to openly oppose – China’s maritime claims in the area; secondly, it supports China’s naval prestige in the regional context; thirdly, it maintains a stable maritime domain where the PLAN has already overpowered its neighbors; lastly, it prevents such neighbors to seek vocal US diplomatic support in the SCS (ibid.; Townshend & Medcalf 2016). In this context China is gaining support in



both South and Southeast Asia, providing evidence of the beneficial effects that naval cooperation is bringing about to Beijing's projection in the SCS (Till 2009).

## 5. Conclusion

China's maritime projection presents both assertive postures and a remarkable proneness to contribute to maritime stability. Naval assertiveness has been apparent in the SCS, where China feels reasonably confident about its capability to project military might and exerting control. Nonetheless, China is pursuing military and security diplomacy initiatives and contributes to upholding the order and stability of the broader maritime domain. Their relevant differences notwithstanding, the regional scenario – namely, the SCS – and the global domains exert significant mutual influence: whereas international maritime cooperation is proving beneficial for Beijing's attempt to gain diplomatic support in the SCS, its assertive posture *vis-à-vis* other claimants in the regional seas has brought about detrimental effects to China's image as a peaceful maritime power.

In China's strategy, naval assertiveness and maritime cooperation are not mutually exclusive, and their interplay serves multifold purposes. China's naval development has enabled the PLAN to exert military power. In this context, maritime diplomacy and cooperation have served to improve China's reputation as a reliable rising power committed to supporting stability and order at sea. In addition, participating in cooperative missions has pushed the PLAN to distant seas and contributed to improving its military training, navigational skills and know-how. In a nutshell, China's maritime cooperation has resulted in hard power gains as well as the promotion of the PLAN's reputation. Eventually, maritime cooperation is a convenient choice in those maritime domains where China has not achieved significant momentum and didn't consolidate strategic reach; military diplomacy engagements and cooperative missions have been chiefly pursued on distant seas, as the anti-piracy activities in the Gulf of Aden showcase. Consequently, China seems to turn to cooperation when it felt it to be the only "viable alternative" to its military shortcomings especially in the open seas (Hui & Cao 2016, p. 346).

Current trends in China's naval strategy display a growing assertiveness in the SCS, as well as eminent contributions to safeguarding stability in the open seas and tackling international crime, piracy and other

sources of potential maritime disruption. Both components have been on the rise since Xi Jinping became China's top leader; as the 2015 NDWP prescribes, China's maritime strategy is to switch from "offshore waters defense" to a combination of "offshore waters defense" and "open sea protection." Therefore China's naval forces are called upon to safeguard Beijing's maritime sovereignty over its national "blue territory" and to support the stability of the open seas. On these foundations, China's maritime projection will likely continue to display assertive postures in the SCS while contributing to multilateral security frameworks in the global maritime domain.

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# Changing trajectory of China–U.S. relations

## Background of current disputes

### Abstract

*The purpose of the article is to analyze basic documents and statements on bilateral relations by both U.S. and China's authorities. Main objective is to present a background for the U.S. – China relations based on analysis of these documents as well as political statements and experts opinions. Current misunderstandings between U.S. and China are mainly based on internal reasoning in order to secure the support of base electorate (Donald Trump) or keep alive the ideology of build-up and rejuvenation of a Chinese nation (Xi Jinping). Based on these assumptions the short-term perspective is rather negative with self-winding perspectives because of Trump's determination and Chinese leadership growing feeling of necessity of a tougher response. The long-term perspective cannot exclude the possibility of reaching a compromise due to the transactional nature of Trump's policies and China's determination to keep the economy reforms standing which is impossible without U.S. involvement.*

**Keywords:** U.S., China, relations, economy, politics, trade, investment, Asia, rivalry, power

## 1. Introduction

“For decades, U.S. policy was rooted in the belief that support for China's rise and for its integration into the post-war international order would liberalize China” (Trump 2017, p. 25). That general, statement on up to date American policies towards China was one of the opening lines in the U.S. National Security Strategy published in December 2017 under

D. Trump's administration. The whole administration's attitude towards China is based on the opposition to meaning of the sentence quoted above. For D. Trump and his administration China is currently a "main rival" and point of reference of major U.S. foreign policy objectives which are not oriented towards integration and cooperation but rather containment and delimitation.

The purpose of this article is to analyze basic policy foundations of current relations between U.S. and China. It is rather not to describe the current state of these relations, events happening and decisions being made but analyze what is the policy making base for decision makers from both sides. Special emphasis will be put on analysis of main U.S. foreign policy documents published within last 5 years, especially comparison between the agendas of president B. Obama and president D. Trump. What is the motivation behind current change, reorientation of Trump's policy and what are the links between the foreign policy aspects and internal affairs in United States? Whether there is/was a difference of opinion on China between administrations or is it just a difference of foreign policy instruments and methods used? How this will influence the international affairs environment?

Main document analyzed here is the National Security Strategy published under both administrations: president Obama in 2015 and president Trump in 2017. Both provide reader with a broad overview of certain goals of U.S. policy towards China also in connection to relations with other East and South East Asian states. The article also reviews vice president's M. Pence speech delivered at Hudson Institute in October 2018, as well as the U.S. – China Congressional Report published in November 2018.

Suitable analysis in the article requires also an evaluation of Chinese policy towards U.S., the way it changed since the beginning of Trump's term in office and developed afterwards. Analysis is mainly based on chairman Xi Jinping speeches, his foreign policy statements as well as other officials declarations on relations with U.S. Analysis also includes ideas and views on U.S. – China relations delivered by important Chinese experts on international relations e.g. prof. Wang Jisi (Beijing University) and prof. Yan Xuetong (Tsinghua University).

## 2. U.S. policy framework

The National Security Strategy published in 2015 under the B. Obama's administration was a clear reflection of Obama's "pivot to Asia."<sup>1</sup> The document not only described policy towards China but also put it into the context of relations with East and South East Asian states. As one can read there: "In particular China's rise, significantly impact the future of major power relations" (Obama 2015, p. 4). Obama's policy presented in the document was not confrontational – with a direct passage in the strategy saying: "we reject the inevitability of confrontation" (ibid., p. 24). The main accent was put not on containing China but rather strengthening cooperation. U.S. suggested there a dual-approach policy. On one hand it welcomed the rise of a stable, peaceful and prosperous China and expresses a belief that relations should – in the first place – be constructive. Obama's administration identified certain topics as platforms of possible cooperation: climate policy, economic growth and the denuclearization of Korean Peninsula. On the other hand U.S. underlined the possibility of conflict but – due to the political expectations of keeping the dialogue with China open (and ability to preserve communication and exert influence) – still left some space for cooperation, with hopes for future, possible modification in China's policy. Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)<sup>2</sup> was clearly identified in the document as one of the important U.S. economic instruments of cooperation with regional states and – in the same time – confirmation of U.S. commitment to the region as a counterbalance to China's economical superiority in South East Asia. The strongest message (but still not without passages on cooperation) which was included in the strategy mentioned the situation on South China Sea. U.S. strongly underlined the capability to ensure the free flow of commerce and deter those who might contemplate aggression – a clear reference to China but without directly mentioning its name. Cybersecurity aspect was also mentioned in NSS but rather softly with two, three sentences and cautious wording which avoided direct accusations towards China. U.S. repeated and confirmed the previous commitments to safeguard its national

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1 "Pivot to Asia" – a term to describe a change in U.S. foreign policy under Obama administration. It characterizes more efforts and policy initiatives towards the Asia-Pacific region with special emphasis on East and South East Asian countries.

2 Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) – a trade agreement between United States, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam signed on 4 February 2016 but not ratified by US and as a result not activated.

interests and need to “take necessary actions to protect (...) businesses and defend (...) networks (...) whether by private actors or the Chinese government” (ibid.).

Donald Trump won the U.S. presidential election in November 2016. In January 2017 was sworn in and became the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. The new president’s term was no different from his campaign announcements in relation to China policy. It started with “an earthquake” and then situation got even worse (from China’s perspective). The campaign announcements made by the candidate himself and his trusted advisors did not let observers (China authorities included) any doubts on his policy goals and attitude towards China (Stracqualursi 2017). Even though the substance of these concerns was not entirely different than previous administrations but the candidate and then the president addressed these issues with temper and radical formulas of solutions. Still, in the transition period the president – elect already caused controversies with China because of an exchange of congratulatory calls with Tsai Ing-Wen, Taiwanese president (Philips, Smith, and Woolf 2016). Afterwards the relations were soothed especially during the bilateral high level visits (chairman Xi Jinping to U.S. in April 2017 and president D. Trump to China in November 2017) but still the uncertainty of a future of U.S. – China relations remained, especially on Chinese side.

The policy direction and orientation of U.S. in relations with China was included in the National Security Strategy, published in 2017. It provided the public and administration with a clear understanding, profile and determinants of practical implementation of current US policy towards China. The ongoing trade disputes (rather inaccurately called “trade war”) and predominance of negative aspects in the relations are clear examples of implementation of these policies. Trump’s administration in these documents leaves no doubt on its negative evaluation of relations with China and notifies the existence of problematic issues with also a change of methods in how to solve the problems. The aspect of cooperation is still included in the NSS (mostly due to the transactional and business nature of Trump’s policies) but administration and president himself describe relations with China rather from the perspective of inevitable confrontation. The diagnosis in the documents follows the design of generally observed need to actively contain China in all the possible global aspects in order to keep U.S.’s status as the only world’s superpower. It is reflected by dominant unilateral approach in the strategy. U.S. seeks no allies or major partners in dealing with China’s rise. But it would be too far to say



that this is a reflection of an isolationist policy – U.S. attitude is rather self-centered with shortsighted vision of its interests with transatlantic cooperation or EU partnership's as not able to strengthen the capabilities of achieving American interests. It is not a hostile attitude but a very low evaluation of EU's and other partners political power.

Policy decisions and messages which are constantly publicly distributed by Trump's administration (in the context of tariffs towards EU, policy reorientation towards Israel and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East, rejection to ratify the TPP, rejection to join the Paris climate agreement) as well as statements included in the NSS reflect the U.S. becoming a main reference to itself which – in the beginning – was symbolically represented in the Trump's campaign slogan "America first." It is also one of the similarities between U.S. and China where the policy towards United States is also a separate issue unique decision making process, with separate importance ("first among equals") methods and instruments used.

National Security Strategy (published in 2017) presents its main conclusions in the very beginning describing China as "growing military, political, economic competitor around the world attempting to erode American security and prosperity" (Trump 2017, p. 2). People's Republic of China is presented (together with Russia, North Korea, Iran and jihadist terrorist groups) as revisionist power. Afterwards, the NSS describes different aspects of China's involvement in revision of current international order, which – the order – is based on U.S. superiority and security guarantees (in Europe, Middle East, and also South-East Asia). The negative involvement also involves China "expanding its unfair practices and investing in key industries, sensitive technologies and infrastructure" (ibid., p. 1). In the strategy we can find declarations of U.S. presenting its counteroffers to the countries from the Asia-Pacific as a way to contain China and grow trade and investment dynamics between U.S. and Asian partners.

Strategies published by both administrations share similarities and provide examples of differences between Obama's and Trump's administrations. Looking from the perspective of problem diagnosis, evaluation of China's main policy points and identification of controversial and problematic issues by Obama administration is unsurprisingly similar to Donald Trump. The long time list of IPR theft, cybersecurity violations, reciprocity problems, market openness problems, devaluation of Chinese currency, hegemonic policy in East Asia were and still are main controversies between China and U.S. But methods, instruments implemented and attitude (important especially from the perspective of modern media



environment) presented by Trump's administration are different. Indefinitely, under president's Trump there is a continuation of an attitude of confrontation but with major reduction or even cancelation of cooperation aspects (despite rhetoric statements in the context of current trade and political disputes which mainly are part of negotiation process). With China's changing status on international arena and its growing foreign policy assertiveness the inability raises to achieve compromise on cooperation (especially on trade and investment) especially with diminishing possibilities (in comparison to Obama's policy) and common grounds (e.g. on climate agreement, Iran and Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). Trump's objective also sound uncertain, mixed and keep changing from economic requests to political demands (such as policy change on South China Sea). U.S. is no longer keeping its usual catalogue of grievances towards China but – as presented in the vice president M. Pence's speech at Hudson Institute – also expending them on political matters such as China's interference in the elections, undermining American political system and influencing American society through Chinese students, Chinese companies and Chinese cultural institutions (Hudson Institute 2018).

### 3. China's policy framework

As appeared above China was not sure about the effect of new president's policy on China-U.S. relations. The cooperation trend visible in the Obama's policy, as well as the successes in the foreign policy sectors (Iran and JCPOA) and economy (cybersecurity agreement) were positive from the perspective of Chinese authorities. The status quo of existing disputes but on-going negotiations with very little substantial effects served Chinese interests especially in terms of economy: growing trade imbalance on U.S. side (with special opportunities concerning IT products e.g. microchips); and investment opportunities in high-tech sectors. It was also highly visible in the global politics with South China Sea as an example where U.S. failed to deliver a substantial answer to China's raising status and practically gaining full control over the area. The election of D. Trump created an uncertain perspective for China but definitely with an expectation of coming problems which justified calling that "a certain election outcome with an uncertain direction" and putting Donald Trump's becoming president as the "Black Swan" effect together with Brexit (Xu 2017, pp. 277–290). According to some Chinese experts Donald Trump and Brexit were the two most

prominent problems facing China and the entire world in 2016. Here is also an important quotation by one of the renowned Chinese scholars which gives a clear understanding of confusion between Chinese power apparatus and scholars on current U.S. policy: “Some U.S. watchers in China, myself included, find the country we have studied for years increasingly unrecognizable and unpredictable. We should do our own self-reflection to examine what went wrong. Political polarization, power struggles, scandals, a lack of confidence in national establishments, tweets doubling as policy announcements, the frequent replacement of top officials in charge of foreign affairs, vacancies in important government positions – similar problems existed before, but their intensity and scope have been particularly stunning since the 2016 U.S. presidential election” (Wang 2018).

So with president Trump in office and his unclear policies in the beginning and radical turn afterwards the evaluation of current relations seemed to underline the double-sided approach: on one hand relations with U.S. are special and essential for China’s growth and economy reforms, on the other China – due to its ideological stance and political interests – should respond to Trump’s actions with tough responses and challenge U.S. on international arena. Anyhow, the general attitude was that with D. Trump China-U.S. relations entered a new era and “(...) were still in a complicated situation in which the competition and cooperation coexisted (...)” (Cui 2018, p. 370). The thinking is still mixed between providing a strong response on the basis of national identity, strategic rivalry and national proud but in the same time keeping the possibilities of cooperation open, as crucial from the perspective of China’s economy, future reforms and competition on technological revolution.

China was surprised with Trump’s policies and his sometimes chaotic but radical and unpredictable style of doing politics. Such a decision making style stood against Chinese political culture, structured and hierarchic style with informal but very respected communication and dispute settling mechanisms and procedures. The challenge Trump’s presidency provided was somehow managed by nominating people with American experience to governmental and state postings at the National People’s Congress in March 2018.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese leadership viewed it as a possible solution of increasing understanding and communication which it believed was the main problem in defining Trump’s policy and reaching

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3 Such as vice president Wang Qishan, vice premier Liu He and state councilor (and Politburo member) Yang Jiechi (on behalf of CPC in charge of foreign policy coordination).

compromises in the bilateral negotiations. But the reality of U.S.'s policy towards China in the coming months of 2018 proved the personal changes in the Chinese leadership unsuccessful. Afterwards the relations reached their worst level since many years resulting in current trade disputes and raising narrative and comparisons even to the "cold war period" with China being casted in the role of "Soviet Union."

Even though chairman Xi Jinping and Chinese authorities are interested in restoring positive relations (the status quo like during Obama's presidency) in the same time they are stuck in their own narrative. It is a combination of politics of memory and nationalism with major slogan of "rejuvenation of a Chinese nation." In that sense the official propaganda and party message is about an end to the domination of the West. As Justyna Szczudlik wrote quoting famous and officially promoted Chinese slogans: "East is going up, West is going down" and "South is going up, North is going down. Such statements underscore the feeling within China's circles of power that the world's political and economic center of gravity is shifting from the Euro-Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific region" (Szczudlik 2018, p. 2). So is U.S. losing its superior position and ability to force political and economic decisions on others.

In the foreign policy context the new attitude influencing U.S.-China disputes was originally constructed by Chinese scholar prof. Yan Xuetong and described as "striving for achievement." The reference for that policy was mainly China's relations with the U.S. where the former should not pose a challenge to the latter and avoid "zero-sum games." The approach was meant to secure Chinese interests in the process of the country's aspirations for a "national rejuvenation" and possible (in the eyes of Chinese scholars, an unavoidable) clash with American global dominance (Przychodniak 2017, pp. 5–18). The SFA policy was even more influenced and strengthened by the ongoing centralization of power which hardened China's stance on many difficult issues facing the international community. It meant China's taking a radical change in its foreign policy which hardly helped the cooperation with U.S. and ability to reach compromise in the negotiations under Trump's expectations. It seemed like the SFA strategy already proofed its failure in overcoming the eventual "problems" it should help overcoming, such as problems with the U.S.

During the 13<sup>th</sup> NPC Congress chairman Xi openly expressed China's targets in the international arena, but without directly mentioning United States. He said: "China endeavors to uphold international fairness and justice. China advocates that all issues in the world should be settled

through consultation among people around the world, and will not impose its will on others. China will continue to actively participate in the evolution and construction of the global governance system" (Xi 2018). These words were just a shortened version of his statements delivered at 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress when he was also elected for the second term as CPC chairman. Xi committed to "all-round efforts in the pursuit of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, thus advancing China's diplomatic agenda in a comprehensive, multilevel, multifaceted way and creating a favorable external environment for China's development" (Xi 2017).

Here Xi also elaborated on his main foreign policy slogan: a community of shared mankind, which "can be realized only in a peaceful international environment and under a stable international order. We must keep in mind both our internal and international imperatives, stay on the path of peaceful development (...). We will uphold justice while pursuing shared interests, and will foster new thinking on common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security" (ibid.). Xi indirectly addresses the possibility of conflict with U.S. with diplomatic but strong statement: "China will never pursue development at the expense of others' interests, but nor will China ever give up its legitimate rights and interests. No one should expect us to swallow anything that undermines our interests" (ibid.). Such a statement is deeply rooted in the belief of many years of humiliation which now due to the raising Chinese capabilities is over. But this also means that no power is able to dictate China's its way of development, political system or economical solutions. It was especially underlined by vice president Wang Qishan at Innovation Economic Forum in Singapore where he said: "Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. History, reality and the future are closely linked. Understanding China's history and culture is the only way to understand the path, theory, system and cultural support China has chosen. The great achievements of China's reform and opening up in the past 40 years cannot be separated from the hard struggle of nearly 70 years since the founding of New China" (Xinhua 2018).

Both speeches being the most important determinants of China's policy provide with a feeling of a certain attitude of China's dissatisfaction of current US-led international order and its purpose to offer a better way than the Western one. The "instruments" Western countries (which mainly means U.S.) use are dollar-hegemony and "so-called" universal values. China use Trump's victory in the elections as another example of faults of Western democracy (*xiwang zhendang*) together with migration,

terrorism etc. U.S. has neither monopoly on economic leadership nor on security – NATO is expanding security of its members while in the same time reducing security of the others countries in the international arena. China openly suggest a different model – a Chinese protected umbrella where through wide participation all the interested parties are receiving an increase of security. China is in the same time rhetorically taking over the foreign policy slogans and ideas used by U.S. under Obama but abandoned by Trump's administration (unilateralism vs. multilateralism, globalization versus protectionism). And while all the three important aspects of transatlantic relations are currently gone or endangered due to Trump's policies and expectations (trade/security/shared values) China is promoting its models and foreign policy making. The idea of rivalry between "world of order" and "world of disorder" are some of the ideas considered and promoted by the leadership. Here, China sets itself the major representative of the world of order with specific political opportunities, economic offers for the world (BRI) and adjustable set of values. U.S. is believed to still be a part of the world of order competing with China on attracting the countries placed in the "world of disorder" (Wang 2018).

#### **4. Influence on Asia**

The change of methods in the policy towards China and raise of unilateralism in U.S. foreign policy increased the awareness and anxieties of United States regional partners – especially in South-East Asia. Facing the possibility of economic disadvantages (cancellation of TPP) and decrease of security guarantees (DPRK issue with Trump's indefinite policy towards North Korea and security umbrella over South Korea and Japan) most of these countries developed a certain cautious attitudes towards the change in U.S. policy and China's assertive behavior in the region. Countries of the Pacific (with special emphasis on Japan) decided to follow with the new TPP (excluding U.S.).

Due to the failure of U.S. expectations of possible agreement with China (which were still present during and after the bilateral visits of Xi Jinping and D. Trump) and raise of negative trade and political decisions of U.S. administration. United States is sending its signals of reviving some regional initiatives constructed as a form of growing U.S. presence in the region and containing China. But initiatives like Quad Revival or offers and commitments for countries in the Indo-Pacific are still not

enough to convince partners on the U.S. honest needs to construct its regional policy on the multilateral basis (Nicholas & Watts 2018; Wong 2018). This uncertainty of U.S. business attitude towards China and possibility of an agreement between Trump and Xi is still present in the policies of South East Asian partners. This is mostly typical to South Korea and Japan which are technically tied by the security agreements and trying to influence Trump's policy on both directions: China and DPRK. But as South Korea is speeding up the reconciliation process with its Northern counter partner, Japan is also strengthening communication with China (prime minister Abe visit to China) the motives are clear.

## 5. Conclusions and perspectives

China – U.S. relations got worse right from the very beginning after the U.S. presidential elections in 2016. The spiral which started with difficult beginning went through reasonable relationship (symbolized by Trump's visit to China and Xi Jinping's visit to Washington) and is now stuck in the rhetorical and even open rivalry and confrontation (trade disputes and restrictions towards Chinese investment and companies in U.S.).

Obama's policy was all about cooperation in its narrative but over the years he and his administration managed to achieve some progress on confrontational and problematic issues. These were mostly: trade issues (disputes under WTO and the development of TPP), introduced climate change as previously non-existing factor of cooperation (China's declaration on reducing emissions), reaching a cybersecurity agreement, regularly performing Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) in the South China Sea and raising U.S. political relations with ASEAN countries through series of important political visits on bilateral basis or attendance to regional summits.

As to current administration it shared the observations on China's interference in U.S. interests which its predecessors had but until now it failed to deliver any substantial results. The change of China's policy happened mostly due to internal political reasons: keeping the Donald's Trump campaign promises, pleasing the Republican electorate and diverting attention from Trump's relations with Russia. The series of policy decisions (trade tariffs, restriction on Chinese students, scholars, investment restrictions; ZTE and Huawei limitations) delivered strong message of dissatisfaction to Chinese but until now failed to reach any concessions

in the most burning issues. So as Obama failed to deliver but was able to keep the dialogue and negotiations going, Trump also failed to accomplish any progress but made the possibility of compromise with China much harder and probably impossible in the short term perspective.

China by no means still remains conflicted over the attitude towards U.S.: between the needs to reform (mostly economical) which is impossible without American companies, its technological solutions and developed market. Until now China has expansively used these opportunities and this is the reason why – despite all the one-sided decisions Trump has made – is still ready to come back to the table to restore the status quo. But the political rhetoric used by Xi Jinping and other leaders makes it impossible to achieve a compromise and step back in order to fulfill certain U.S. demands. Strategic rivalry with U.S. which – indirectly – remains a crucial factor in China's foreign policy and build-up of a new Chinese nation ideology also serves as a conflicting point in settling issues with United States. Optimistic point is here that since for China stabilizing the relations is the key from both economic and strategic perspective the possibility of reducing the tensions is still possible.

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## Selecting cadres: former members of the CCYL in the 19<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of CPC

### **Abstract**

*This chapter examines the role of Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) as breeding ground for crucial political leaders in China. Author shows the share of former affiliates of Central Committees CCYL in the 19th Central Committee of Communist Party of China (CC CPC) and compares with data from previous CCs. Analysis points out an insignificant correlation between engagement in CCYL and promotion into the CPC structures which shows the importance of the official youth organization of the CPC in the process of selecting the most powerful cadres of the party is overrated.*

**Keywords:** *China, Communist Party of China, Chinese Communist Youth League*

### **1. Introduction**

Since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, two out of six Communist Party of China's (CPC) chairmen/general secretaries were previously the first secretary of Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL). Since 2002, former first secretary of the CCYL was either chairman of People's Republic of China (PRC) or prime minister. It may lead to the conclusion that the CCYL emerged as a powerful institution in post-Mao China. It is often considered as a power base of two factions in the CPC. The first was operating during Hu Yaobang term as chairman (1980–1981) and general secretary (1981–1987) of the CPC. At that time he was promoting many politicians with whom he worked as the first secretary of the CCYL in 1952–1966. The second formed under Hu Jintao, who served as general secretary of the CPC from 2002 to 2012. Hu Jintao, who also was the first

secretary of the CCYL (1984–1985), acted similarly to his predecessor and gave many high positions to his associates. However, unexpectedly swift consolidation of power by Xi Jinping since 2012 have put into question strength of so-called CCYL faction (*tuanpai*).

Within the field of China studies, the CCYL was often reduced to the role of the power base of the *tuanpai*. Although there are a few issues with the factional analysis (Jing 2000, p. 44; Fewsmith 2001, p. 37; Bo 2007, p. 139), it is probably the most appropriate tool to describe and explain processes which occur in party politics in China. However, it is focusing mostly on personal relations between various actors within the CPC. For instance, some scholars define *tuanpai* as politicians, who worked in the CCYL during Hu Jintao years, at least at province level or above and are not related in any way to other factions (Li & White 2003, p. 590). It leaves out an assessment of the CCYL as an organisation which one of the functions is to prepare future leaders of China. The main aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the CCYL as a breeding ground for top Chinese politicians regardless of their factional allegiance. Putting it from the perspective of a career politician in China: is it worth to advance through ranks in the CCYL in order to join the political elite? Throughout this paper, the term “political elite” will refer to members of the CPC Central Committee (CC). This study was divided into two parts. Firstly, it will show the share of former affiliates of Central Committees of the CCYL in the 19<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of CPC. The sample of former members of the CCYL's CC was chosen, because of their long-term commitment to the work in the CCYL. The results will show a correlation between long-term engagement in work of the official youth organisation of the CPC and prospects of promotion into the party's Central Committee. Secondly, the data for the 19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC will be compared with similar data from previous Central Committees. The outcome of the comparison will address the question of changing the importance of the CCYL in the process of selecting the party's most influential cadres. It is hoped that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the actual importance of the league within the Chinese political system.

## 2. Methodology and data

One of the functions of the CCYL is producing successors at all levels of political leadership. In this regard, it is the “reserve army” for the CPC (Li 2006, p. 76; Zeng 2018, p. 183; Wang 2006, p. 104). The CCYL

is a mass organisation, with as many as 90 million members. Numerous Chinese politicians at the beginning of the career signed up to the league. For instance, Xi Jinping became a member of CCYL during cultural revolution (Lam 2015, p. 41). However, he has never played a major role in the organisation. Tracking the career path of every former member of the league is impossible. Different methods have been proposed to reduce the scope of an analysed cohort of the CCYL. For Kou (2014, p. 144), “CCYL affiliate” means civilian cadres who had occupied a CCYL post ranking at the deputy-bureau level or above as their full-time job after 1978 and have advanced to the vice-ministerial rank or higher before retirement, which gave around 300 politicians at the moment of conducting the study. Payette (2016, p. 324), uses the term “*tuanpai*” to refer to those who occupied: league provincial secretary position, a secretary of the CC of CCYL position, first secretary of the Central Secretariat of the CCYL position. These three are respectively prefecture, sub-provincial and provincial-level positions.

In this study I propose to distinguish between former members of the CCYL, considered without factional affiliation, and *tuanpai*, i.e. members of the Hu Jintao’s faction. Throughout this paper, the term “former members of CCYL” is used to refer to former members of the CCYL’s Central Committee, the elite of the organisation. They constitute the sample in this quantitative study. There are three advantages to this approach. Firstly, it is a broad group, but manageable regarding obtaining data. Secondly, the sample does not indicate any factional alignment. Thirdly, those who obtained a seat in the CCYL’s Central Committee were committed to long-term engagement in the work of the league.

The primary assumption of this study was that people who became members of the CCYL’s Central Committee are well positioned to advance to the same post at the party later in their career. It is based on the fact that the CCYL is a youth organisation of CPC. It has similar Leninist structure, which includes National Congress, Central Committee, the Secretariat and various departments, which are akin to party’s departments. If a young politician is skilful enough to advance to the top of approximately 90-million CCYL, then he or she can achieve similar outcomes in the party. Therefore name lists of CCYL’s Central Committees were compared with a membership of the 19<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of CPC. In the second part of the analysis, the results of the first stage were compared with similar data from previous CCs of CPC. Data were collected from publicly available name lists of members of committees published on the Internet by either CCYL, CPC or state media (Chinese Communist Youth League n.d.; People’s Daily n.d.).

From 1978 until 2018 nine National Congresses of the CCYL were held. The 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress was in 1978, the 11<sup>th</sup> in 1982, the 12<sup>th</sup> in 1988 and then every five years subsequent ones, up to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2018. Because of the league's characteristic as a youth organisation, it is hard to require members of its CC advance straight to the party's Central Committee. The only member of the CCYL who traditionally is also a member of the CPC's CC is the first secretary. Due to insufficient data regarding the average age of CCYL's CC members, it is difficult to predict how much time will pass between their sitting in CCYL CC and ascension to CPC CC. However, a rough estimate may be concluded based on the average age of members of CCYL secretariat, which is the highest governing body of the CCYL. For most of the CCYL's secretariats, its ranged from 38 years (in 1982) to 40,1 years (1993). The only noticeable exceptions are CCYL's secretaries selected in 2013 and 2018, with an average age of 43,14 years and 46 years respectively. In the party, the average age of the members of core leadership groups (Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee) in 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> CC was above 60 years (Li 2016, p. 96). Based on this data we can conclude that for most of CCYL's CC members it would take up to 20 years to ascend into the CPC's CC, which has a bit lower average age than core leadership groups. Therefore, the study will focus on members of the CCYL's CC selected between 1978 and 2008 who were promoted to CPC's CC between 1997 and 2017. This time frame provides two advantages. Firstly, since all former CCYL's members in the study were at the top positions in the league in post-Mao China, it will provide knowledge about the role of the organisation run by people who do not have a part in conflict with Japan and Civil War (1946–1949). Secondly, comparing the results for five CPC's CC will show the change in the impact of CCYL on elite creation.

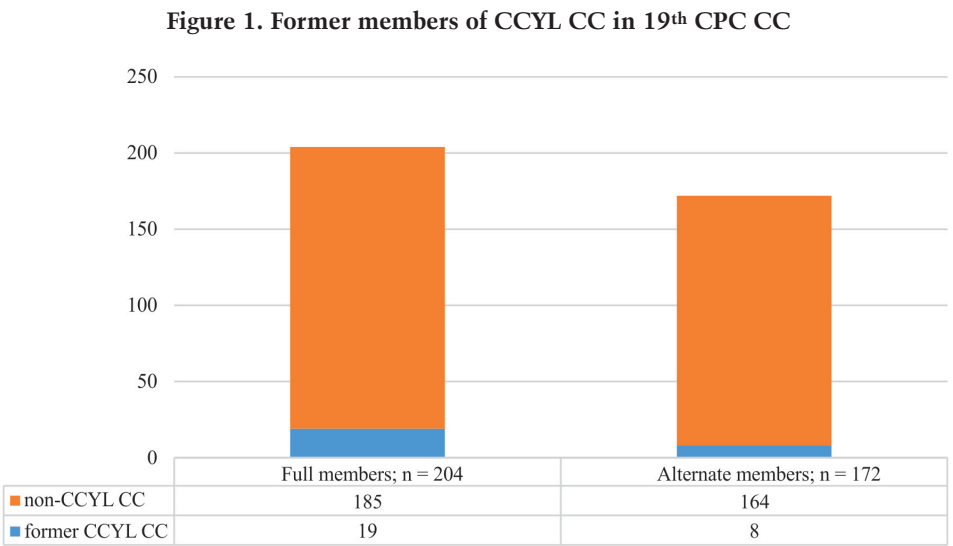
From the 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CCYL held in 1978 to the 16<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2008, there were 2057 both full and alternate members of the CCYL's CC. A minority of cadres served in more than one Central Committee. After exclusion of multiple terms assigned to one person, the data was checked for the possibility of more than one person with the same name. The result was 1850 unique members of the CCYL's CC selected between 1978 and 2008. Those names were compared with a membership of 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> CPC's CC. The outcome of every comparison was checked for the possibility of different people in the CPC and the CCYL having the same name. This stage was performed by scrutiny of cadres biographies available on various official websites. If the same name

appeared in both the CCYL's CC and the CPC's CC, then the biography of the CPC's CC member was checked for indication of work in the CCYL's CC. For instance the position of province secretary or in the central organs. Only validated matches were included in the results.

### 3. Former CCYL's CC members in 19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC

The 19<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of Communist Party of China was elected in 2017. It consists of 204 full members and 172 alternate members. It is the first CPC's CC, which representatives were chosen during the Xi Jinping's term as general secretary of CPC. Due to the centralisation of power during his rule (Lampton 2015, p. 775; Wang & Zeng 2016, p. 470; Lee 2017, p. 326), we can safely assume he had a dominant influence on the composition of the committee.

There are 27 former members of the CCYL's CC in the 19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC. Among them, 19 are full members, and eight serve as alternate members. It is 9.3% and 4.7% of both groups respectively. Figure 1. Presents the data.



Source: own study.

The full members of 19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC with the experience in CCYL CC are: Bayanqolu, Bagatur, Ji Bingxuan, Liu Qibao, Sun Jinlong, Li Ke-qiang, Shen Yueyue, Song Xiuyan, Zhang Jun, Zhang Qingli, Lu Hao, Chen Xi, Zhou Qiang, Hu Chunhua, Losang Gyaltsen, Li Zhanshu,

Huang Shuxian, Han Changfu and Lou Yangsheng. The alternate members are Li Qun, Duan Chunhua, He Junke, Gao Guangbin, Zhao Yide, Ge Huijun, Ulan (Wulan) and Pan Yue.

There are three issues, which are worth noting. Firstly, only a small percentage of the 19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC served on the CCYL's CC. The overwhelming majority were advancing their career through other means than the league. It may be astounding, especially when we consider the size of the CCYL, its similarity to the CPC and a notion of "reserve army." This data indicates the limited role of CCYL in elite creation in China.

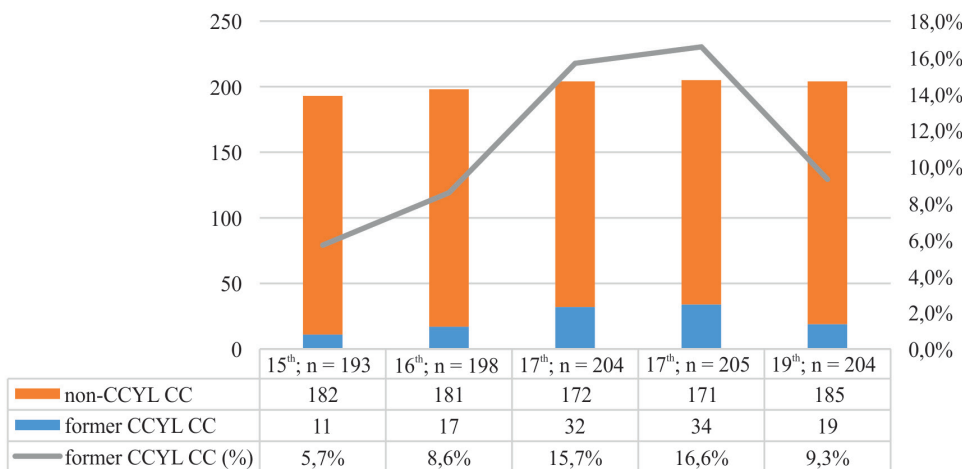
Secondly, among those who have gained experience in the CCYL's CC, five was the first secretary: Li Keqiang (1993–1998), Zhou Qiang (1998–2006), Hu Chunhua (2006–2008), Lu Hao (2008–2013) and He Junke (since 2017). The only first secretary since 1993 who is not currently in CPC's Central Committee is Qin Yizhi (2013–2017). In 2017 he was transferred from the league to position of deputy director of the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ). It was a ministerial-level institution. However, traditionally former first secretaries were given governorship over province as a first post-league office. Additionally, in 2018 AQSIQ was merged with two other agencies into the State Administration for Market Regulation, which further diminished Qin status. Apart from former first secretaries, among those 27 cadres, other four was working in the CCYL's Central Secretariat, which is a highly exclusive group of 6–8 members. They are Bayanqolu, Ji Bingxuan, Liu Qibao and Sun Jinlong. Liu Qibao got into the secretariat at the same time as Li Keqiang, while the rest served when the later was the first secretary. Only 2/3 of the 27 was regular members of the CCYL's CC. It implies that only the top few members of the league have guaranteed promotion into CPC CC.

Thirdly, while the CCYL is mostly believed to be a powerhouse of the league faction (*tuanpai*), among that politicians, we can see people affiliated with different groups within CPC. Most notably Li Zhanshu, who is the right-hand man of Xi Jinping. His other confidant among former CCYL's CC members is Chen Xi, who became in 2017 director of CPC's Organization Department. It may lead to the conclusion that long-term engagement in the work of CCYL does not automatically result in affiliation with *tuanpai*.

## 4. Former CCYL's CC members in other CPC's CC

Surprisingly small percentage of former CCYL CC members in 19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC encourage to compare this results with a similar study of previous CPC CCs. As noted above, the data from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC were collected. The 15<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC was chosen in 1997, eight years after Jiang Zemin became general secretary. Election of the 16<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC marked the end of his tenure. The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC was under the considerable influence of Hu Jintao. Figure 2. shows an overview of a share of former CCYL's CC members among full members of 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC. From the chart, it can be seen that by far the highest share of former CCYL's CC members was in the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC. Although there was a growing representation of former members of the CCYL between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee, a real breakthrough came five years later, when their share almost doubled. Interestingly, the 9.3% result of the 19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC is worse than the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC, but it is still better in comparison with Jiang Zemin's time.

Figure 2. Former CCYL CC members in 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC (full members)

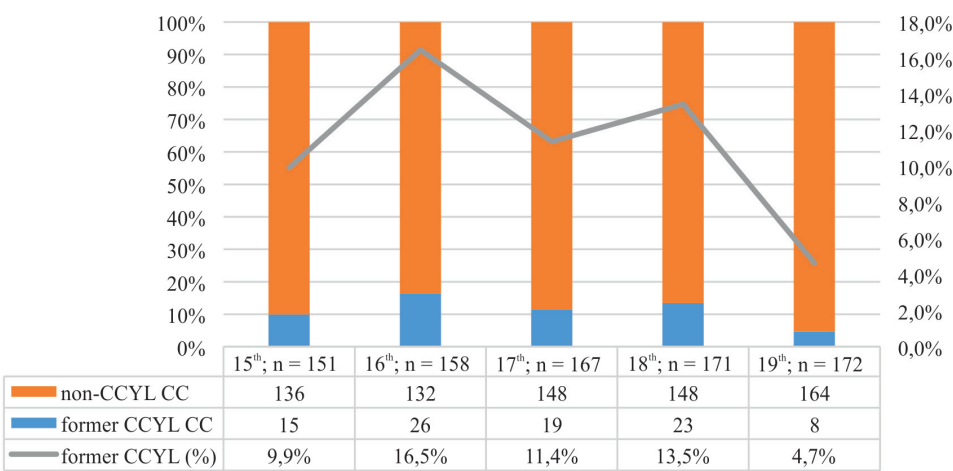


Source: own study.



There was a different situation regarding alternate members. This data is present on figure 3. What is interesting about the numbers in this chart is that share of former CCYL's CC members in the 17<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC decreased in comparison to the 16<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC. Furthermore, even though the number has risen in the 18<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC, their share was still below the level of the 16<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC. What also stands out in the chart is a significant drop in the 19<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC. In comparison with the previous CC, the share of former CCYL's cadres as alternate members was far smaller.

Figure 3. Former CCYL's CC members in 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> CPC'S CC (alternate members)



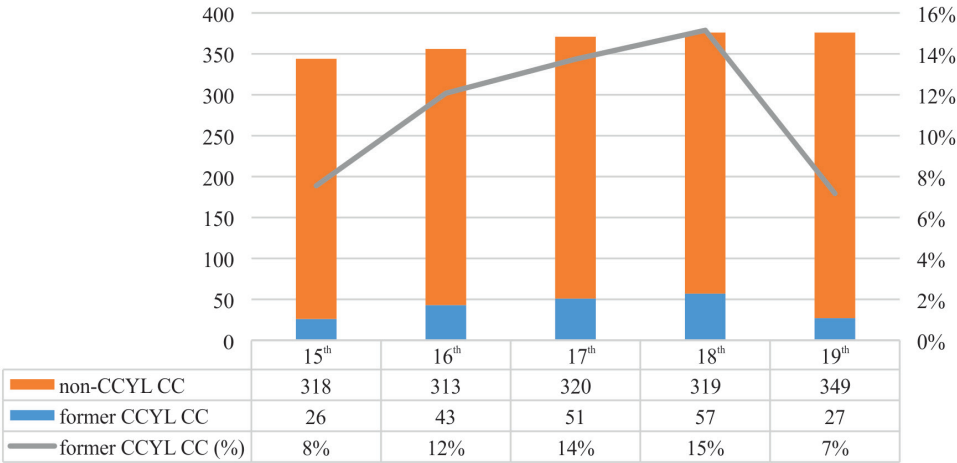
Source: own study.

Figure 4. combines data from two previous charts. It clearly shows steady grow in quantity of former CCYL's CC members in CPC's CC from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> CC. Nonetheless, during Xi Jinping's tenure as a general secretary, there was a sharp decline, which brought the percentage of former CCYL's cadres below the level of 15<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC.

There are two striking observations emerging from the data comparison. Firstly, an increasing proportion of former CCYL's members during Hu Jintao's time as general secretary. It may be somewhat counterintuitive, but it is not indicating that the league role in fostering future top cadres became more prominent comparing with the era of Jiang Zemin. It is merely the result of its former first secretary promoting those whom he knows and trust. This process started even before Hu became general secretary of the party. The CCYL was the most important source of his

support, along with graduates from Qinghua University and trainees from Central Party School (Zheng 2002, p. 77). He was active in supporting his former colleagues from the CCYL into secondary or subordinate offices in provinces and the government (Wang 2006, p. 106; Lam 2006, p. 19; Zheng 2010, p. 93). Later they were promoted into a leadership position, which has led to CPC's CC. The rise of *tuanpai* is especially evident regarding alternate members – their percentage during Hu's time dropped in comparison with the 16<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC because former CCYL's affiliates were becoming full members instantly, without tenure as alternate members. That is the reason why there were more former CCYL's cadres among full members than alternate members of CPC's CC in Hu's era.

**Figure 4. Former CCYL's CC members in 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> CPC's CC (full + alternate members)**



Source: own study.

Secondly, a sudden drop in 19<sup>th</sup> CPC's CC may indicate a further decrease in the role of the CCYL in the future. It is also more evident from the data for alternate members. While during Jiang's tenure there were almost twice as much former CCYL's affiliates among alternate members than full members, in the Xi's era the proportion swung around. There are only several cadres who can obtain promotion from alternate to full member. It is also hard to imagine that Xi Jinping all of a sudden will change his management of human resources within the party.

Nonetheless, the tenure of former CCYL's CC member, Chen Xi, as a head of CPC's Organization Department will be an exciting time

to observe if he will alter the trend. After all, many of the promotion of former CCYL's CC members into the CPC's CC happened when Li Yuanchao, other former CCYL's CC affiliate, held the same office. Nevertheless, even if the proportion of former CCYL's CC members will increase in the 20<sup>th</sup> CC of CPC, a lot of that promotion may happen because of close relations with Chen Xi. Therefore, it might not be an indication of the stronger role of the CCYL in training of future leaders of China.

### 5. The limited role of CCYL in elite creation

Above results show the percentage of former CCYL's CC members within the CPC's CC. One person can serve a few terms, so it does not provide information regarding the quantity of them.

In the period between 1997 and 2017 former members of 10<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> CC of the CCYL were elected 204 times into CPC's CC. However, closer scrutiny of data shows that the majority of them were chosen for more than one term. Three politicians served in all five analysed CPC CC. They are Song Xiuyan, Li Keqiang and Shen Yueyue. On the other extreme, just under a third (31 people) served just one term. Figure 5. provides the summary statistics for a number of people with multiple terms.

Figure 5. Members of 10<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> CCYL's CC in 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> CPC's CC by a number of terms

	One term	Two terms	Three terms	Four terms	Five terms
Number of people	31	32	18	10	3

Source: own study.

Careful inspection of the table shows that only 94 people elected into the CCYL's CC between 1978 and 2008 were promoted into the CPC's CC between 1997 and 2017. As stated before, there were 2057 members of the CCYL's CC during the analysed period, out of whom 1850 were unique members, who served one or more tenures in the committee. What is striking about those figures is that only 5% members of 10<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> CC of the CCYL eventually got into the CPC's CC. Overall, these results indicate the limited role of the CCYL as a breeding ground of Chinese political elites.

## 6. Conclusions

We can draw three conclusions based on the results of the study. Firstly, contrary to the expectations, this study did not find a significant correlation between long-term engagement in the work of the Central Committee of the CCYL and promotion into CPC's CC. Only 5% of the people who spend enough time in the CCYL to become elite of this organisation later achieved the same status in the party. Though, around 1/3 of them served three or more terms in CPC's CC. It is quite unusual due to the high turnover rate in this body – more than 60% in 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> CPC's CC (Li 2016, p. 79).

Secondly, the rise of prominence of former CCYL's members during the tenure of Hu Jintao was probably not based on the stronger role of the league in elite training since 1978. Factional politics can explain it. The ascent to power of *tuanpai* depended on two factors: former first secretary of the CCYL being in a position to determine promotion into important offices and substantial aspect of personal relations in Chinese politics. To the lesser extent, it was also an effect of Li Yuanchao, a former member of the CCYL Central Secretariat, being director of party's Organization Department between 2007 and 2012. The data from 19<sup>th</sup> CPC's CC suggest it was a temporary situation. The role of the CCYL decreased, even though Li Keqiang, another former first secretary of the league, is prime minister of State Council and hold a second-rank spot in the Standing Committee. He does not have such an influence over the advancement of senior cadres.

Nevertheless, some researchers argue that besides personal connections, also the age of former CCYL cadres is a factor in their promotion (Kou & Tsai 2014, p.162). They advance their career quicker in the beginning, which gives them more time to seek a promotion at the higher echelons of the power. It can also explain to some extent why so many former CCYL's cadres served multiple terms in CPC's CC – they obtained a seat in a relatively young age, which is giving an opportunity to serve for a longer time.

Thirdly, institutionally, CCYL is not a “breeding ground” for Chinese political elites. The organisation's influence in that matter is minimal. Its role depends on attitude of CPC's general secretary toward the organization, which is an institutional weakness. This conclusion may be contrary to some popular beliefs. Nonetheless, it does not mean CCYL

is not important. Its role is merely not tied exclusively to elite creation. Further research should be undertaken to investigate the role of the league in preparing cadres of lower rank, especially in the provinces.

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# Income inequality in today's China

## Abstract

*This chapter is focused on the problem of income inequalities in contemporary China which is one of the biggest developmental challenges for this country. First this part of the analysis includes general overview on studied problem putting emphasis on instrument for measuring income inequalities, and general drivers of this phenomenon. Second part is centered on the nature of this problem in China since the late 1970s, when country has faced a period of rapid economic development. Chapter also points out attempts taken by the Chinese government to reduce income inequalities.*

**Keywords:** *China, income inequalities, Gini coefficient, Lorenz curve*

## 1. Introduction

Income inequality is today generally seen as a part of every democratic society operating in a market economy. Some economists see its causes in the different abilities of individuals. Others consider this phenomenon to be a consequence of discrimination against certain groups of the population. Debraj Ray defines general economic inequality as a basic disparity that allows individuals to make a material choice (Ray 1998, p. 218), while another individuals denies the choice. This inequality is closely intertwined with the concepts of length of life, personal abilities, political freedoms and others. The concept of income inequality represents the degree of disproportion in the distribution of national income among households in a particular economy (Todaro 2012, p. 219). Household income is defined by the OECD as a household disposable income for a certain year



after deducting income tax and social contributions. It consists of income, self-employment, and income from capital and government transfers.

The question remains the ideal rate of income inequality, which is influenced by various factors and to which the economic community is not in agreement. For example, Nobel Prize-winning economist Robert Lucas considers the tendency to address the issue of distribution of current production as bad (Lucas 2004). Effects arising from such work are considered to be virtually nil, compared to the potential for increased production, which it considers unlimited. The opposite view is the economists Anthony Atkinson or Thomas Piketty. Atkinson, for nearly half a century has promoted the issue of inequality as the basis of his approach to economics, which he considered to be social and moral science (Atkinson 2015, p. 7).

When examining inequality, it is possible to follow different indicators. In addition to income, economists focus on household consumption or wealth distribution. Revenue can be difficult to measure, and especially in poor countries, household consumption is a better indicator. Domestic households consume most of their own production rather than make a profit of it. Consumption is also a more stable indicator because it does not fluctuate as much as income (*ibid.*). However, the most commonly used and better identifiable indicator in most countries is income, and therefore the most commonly used to measure the socio-economic differentiation of the country's population.

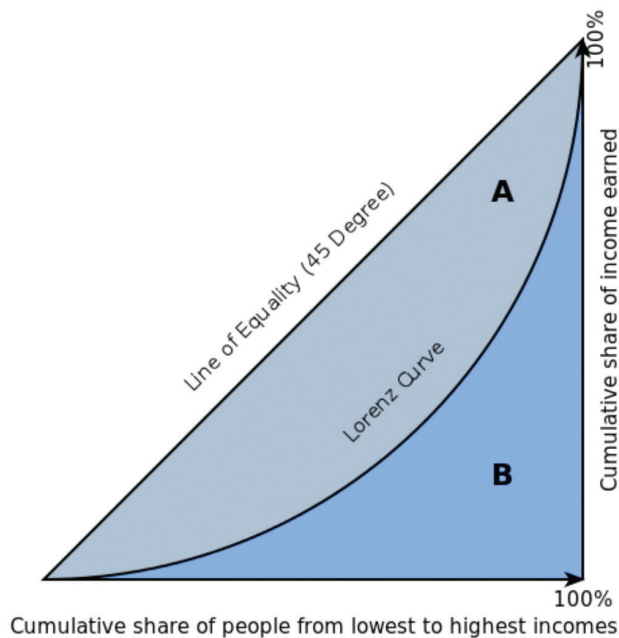
## 2. Income inequalities in general

Among the tools used to measure income inequality, I will only mention those most commonly used and relevant to the rest of the work. A common instrument for measuring income inequality is the Gini coefficient, named after Italian Corrado Gini, who first formulated it in 1912. The Gini coefficient represents on a scale from 0 to 1 the inequality of income distribution within a particular unit, 0 being an absolutely equal distribution; 1 absolutely unequal distribution. In countries with high income inequality, the Gini coefficient ranges between 0.50 and 0.70, while in countries with a relatively low income inequality level, it is between 0.20 and 0.35 (Todaro 2012, pp. 220–221).

The Gini coefficient is based on the Lorenz curve, which is a deviation from total income equality. The corresponding curve shows the actual relationship between the percentage of the population and the proportion

of total national income that a given percentage of the population receives over a certain period of time. The more the Lorenz curve is bent, and the more it moves away from the line of equality, the higher the inequality in the distribution of income in a given country (ibid.). We calculate the Gini coefficient as a percentage of the content of the area that forms the diagonal of the total income equality with the Lorenz curve and the entire area A lying below the line of equality.

**Figure 1. Lorenz curve**



Source: Macdonald 2017.

Inequality is an integral part of our society and there are many positive and negative reasons for its existence. At the level of a particular individual, it may be due to different skills, psychological properties and physical abilities. People also face different choices between work and leisure or willingness to risk and certainty. However, inequality is increasingly seen as a general social problem that has a negative impact on the development of the economy. The causes of these inequalities are a complex phenomenon and reflect economic and social changes.

Technological development is one of the biggest drivers of income inequality in OECD countries. Evidence from the big emerging markets

are showing the trend of increasing income inequality between highly qualified workers and low-skilled workers, although they are experiencing a large increase in highly educated people to reduce inequality (IMF 2015). Another reason for income inequality is the increasing globalization and the liberalization of trade and financial flows. Trade has been and still is the driving force behind economic growth in many countries. Its main benefits are competitive environment and increased efficiency. However, increasing international trade and large financial flows between countries, partly made possible by the development of information technology, are often referred to as one of the catalysts of income inequality. In developed countries, in the context of liberalization, the demand for unskilled labor is declining, and companies can offer high salaries to skilled workers who are in short supply on the labor market due to offshoring and job savings. The positive effect of growing international trade could be to reduce income inequality in developing countries by shifting production and increasing the demand for a large number of less skilled labor. Deregulation and globalization in the area of finance can create an environment for effective international allocation of capital and risk sharing across borders. On the other hand, the increase in portfolio and foreign direct investment, in China in particular in the 1990s, has proved to be a factor increasing income inequality in developed and emerging economies. One possible explanation is the concentration of foreign capital in technologically advanced industries such as telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, electronics and generally the hi-tech industry, pushing the demand and wages of skilled workers up. Another cause from the global point of view can be changes in the labor market. These changes mainly concern higher labor market flexibility that allows human resources to move into more efficient and, above all, more profitable firms. Greater flexibility also creates an unstable environment for workers. Income inequality in this case can be hampered by the strong position of unions and various chambers or unions associating the same professions. If the negotiating position of these institutions is weak and their influence low, there is an increase in income inequality (Perkins, Radelet & Lindauer 2001, p. 177).

Income inequality varies across countries, and the country's history and political experience are undeniable in its forming. A clear example is South Africa, which is a country with one of the world's highest income inequality. According to the World Bank, the Gini coefficient in South Africa was 0.63 in 2014. The causes of local inequality can be classified as demographic, or politically motivated. Between 1948 and 1991, the apartheid

government deprived all blacks and other non-white South Africans, property rights to land, on the basis of race and ethnicity, access to quality education and residence in larger urban areas. Today, this historical heritage is reflected in the high income inequality of South Africa (*ibid.*).

Other causes of income inequality may stem from geographical differences in the country. As a result, there are differences between urban and rural areas. Economic differences between cities and the country have always existed across history. The process of massive urbanization has begun to deepen these differences. In China, the number of cities and their population has grown considerably since 1978. Gradual liberalization and globalization have primarily been reflected in the transformation and development of urban areas, while the rural status has remained almost unchanged. The majority of government expenditures and investments in most developing countries have long been moving towards urban areas, particularly in the relatively rich modern manufacturing and commercial sectors. Generally speaking, the most poor are unevenly located in rural areas. For example, about two-thirds of the poor earn their living from their own agricultural production or as very low-income farmers (Todaro 2012, p. 250).

Differences between urban and rural areas are a reflection of so-called spatial inequality and may be a major contributor to overall inequality in many developing countries. The difference between cities and the country most strongly reflects the inequality of opportunities, especially in access to health care, education and jobs. In many developing countries, for example, there is a much higher proportion of secondary and tertiary educated people in cities. This also applies to China, which is still struggling with gender inequality in access to higher education than basic education. In urban areas, this inequality has been greatly reduced since 1980. In rural areas, girls in high school and older age are still facing major obstacles in enrolling in school (Zhang 2012, pp. 23–25).

Access to healthcare is dependent on where you live. The rate of child mortality in Asia remains much higher in rural regions than in cities. Progress has been made in reducing 80% mortality among children under five years in East Asia between 1990 and 2015, and similar success has been achieved in the Latin American and Caribbean countries (You, Hug & Ejdemyr 2015, p. 3). The inequality of opportunities itself affects income inequality. Especially in China and India, inequality of opportunity strongly translates into income inequality, which is reflected in faster growth of income in cities than in rural areas (Keeley 2015, p. 38).

Direct policy factors with an impact on income inequality include government transfers and the way wealth is redistributed to the state. Governmentalities are mainly related to inequality of opportunities. By investing in education, social programs or the healthcare sector, the state can mitigate inequality. In developing countries, however, redistribution systems are mostly underdeveloped (*ibid.*). Governments in developed countries historically mitigated inequality primarily through progressive taxation and social transfers (IMF 2015).

### 3. Inequalities in China

Since the late 1970s, China has experienced a period of rapid economic development. GDP growth accompanied by increased disposable income and living standards did not go away without significant changes in income inequality. A number of studies show that the rate of income inequality is linked to economic growth. Before starting the process of modernizing the economy, China's external economic policy could be described as isolationist. The government severely restricted trade, foreign investment, and inflow of knowhow, so the potential of the Chinese economy remained largely untapped. It could be said that Mao Zedong's socialist economic policy has hampered the development of the economy while trying to achieve self-sufficiency. Only economic reforms that began in 1978 by Deng Xiaoping enabled the development of the Chinese economy.

Party leadership underwent economic reforms in the late 1970s when neighboring countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Taiwan were in a period of significant economic growth, while the Chinese economy failed. China's leadership has become increasingly aware of the need to transform the existing economic model. In addition to the increasing economic inefficiency compared to the achievements of some of the surrounding countries, continued poverty and technological backwardness contributed to this. In 1978, the Fourth Modernization Program was adopted at the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Functional Period of the Central Communist Party Leadership. This program first appeared in January 1963, when it was presented by Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in Shanghai. The Zhou's program has already included reforms of four key areas – agriculture, industry, science and technology and defense (Horalek 2013, pp. 10–24).

An open door policy has been essential for the development of the Chinese economy. In 1980, four cities on the southeast coast were designated as “Special Economic Zones” (SEZ). These zones were legally exempted from regional subordination and created a special economic, social and legal environment to attract foreign investors. The main benefits for foreign investors were low costs, minimal legal regulation of production, state incentives and significant tax relief (*ibid.*). The cities that first received SEZ status were Shenzhen, Shantou, and Zhuhai in Guangdong Province and Xiamen in Fujian province. SEZ has become the engine of the Chinese economy in the spirit of Deng Xiaoping’s idea of “letting some people and regions get rich first.” Guangdong Province itself became known as the “one step ahead of reform in China” region. Especially cities from so-called the Perth River Delta area, headed by Shenzhen, showed an annual rate of GDP growth of around 40% in the 1980s (Cartiere 2013, pp. 86–87). The geographic proximity of Hong Kong and Macau has allowed the region to establish an export-oriented economic system, thus becoming the region with the largest share of exports and the main entry door for world trade and investment in China (National development and reform commission 2008, p. 2). In addition to the Chinese gateway for foreign investors, SEZs have become some form of incubators where market economy mechanisms are being tested, but in many cases also democratization laws, which, after successful testing, can spread further to other provinces (Horalek 2013, pp. 16–17).

The degree of openness of the economy is usually measured as the share of export and import in GDP. In case China’s openness has increased considerably since 1978. The share of Chinese exports and imports in GDP grew from 8% to 35% between 1979 and 1993 (Sun & Dutta 1997, p. 843). Many studies show that the boom in exports has contributed significantly to China’s economic growth over the last 35 years. Between 1978 and 2008, total Chinese exports showed a year-on-year increase of 18.1%. This boom has had a direct positive impact on economic growth, especially in the eastern and southeastern provinces of China. The main reason for this is SEZ, which has been established as one of the instruments of regional development and open door policy (Zhang & Felmingham 2002, p. 175).

Currently the most important social security system in China is the guarantee of a minimum standard of living known as *dibao*. According to Chinese statistics, in 2014, the system helped nearly 19 million citizens and 52 million rural citizens. Like most government policies, the *dibao*

system is divided into two parts: urban and rural. The dibao program was launched in Shanghai in 1993 and subsequently developed into an official social security system for urban residents. Its aim was to ensure a minimum standard of living for workers who had been made redundant as a result of economic reforms. The introduction of the system at the age group was a longer process. The pilot project of the dibao program for the countryside was launched in 1992 in Shanxi province, and in 2007 the government issued provisions on the widespread extension of the dibao system to the Chinese countryside. The state aid allocation is decided on a family basis. If the family income is lower than the appropriate minimum standard of living, the family is eligible to receive support. The dibao program is based on financial support, besides receiving other beneficiaries such as free health insurance, housing support and support for compulsory schooling for children under the age of 18. The function of the dibao system is, among other things, to reduce income inequalities, maintain social stability and promote balanced development (Chen & Yang 2016, pp. 18–19).

While the rate of absolute poverty was reduced during the reform period, the rate of income inequality grew at the same time as the economy grew. Since the start of economic reforms by 1995, China has experienced one of the largest increases in income inequality compared to other world regions for which data are available. Major changes in the degree of inequality are usually associated with profound structural changes in asset distribution and returns. Even the transforming countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, however, did not see such a significant increase in inequality as could be observed in this period in China. While the Gini coefficient reached 0.282 in 1981, it grew to 0.388 in 1995 (Yang 2012, pp. 306–310). In 2015, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBSC), the Gini coefficient was 0.462.

Although the Gini coefficient, reflecting the level of inequality in China, varies depending on the selected data sources or the statistical measurement methodology, it can be inferred from the existing studies that the Chinese income inequality has increased markedly since 1978 (Zhou & Song 2016, pp. 186–208). In 1981, China was still a relatively egalitarian country with a similar income distribution as Finland, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania. The course of Chinese economic reforms can be divided into different stages of time characterized by different effects on the level of inequality. Between 1981 and 1984, real average income grew by 12.6% per year. The increase in revenues was characterized by its



relatively even distribution. The relatively even distribution of income over this period is evidenced by the development of the Gini coefficient, which increased only slightly from 0.288 to 0.297 (WB 1997, pp. 9–10).

By contrast, the period between 1984 and 1989 is characterized by a sharp increase in income inequality. At the end of 1988, the Chinese leadership planned to abolish the dual pricing system and switch to a pricing system based on market principles. Reports of planned price deregulation have sparked population fears of rising inflation. For this reason, people have begun to massively collect money from savings accounts. Banks responded by issuing more banknotes into circulation, which led to a rise in money supply and inflation. There has been a rise in consumer prices, especially consumer products such as food. The Gini coefficient between these flights recorded a leap from 0.297 to 0.349. In this period, total personal income stagnated with an annual increase of less than 1%. The average income of the top 10% of the richest grew by 2.8% per year, while the average income of 10% of the poorest people fell by 4.5% per year (*ibid.*). These changes partly reflect the growing disparities between rural and urban areas (Chai 2011, pp. 164–165). High inflation and rising consumer prices coupled with low or even negative earnings growth led to public political protests that were violently suppressed at Beijing's Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

Between 1990 and 1995, revenue growth was recovering. Revenues increased by 7.1% per year, with a significant increase in inequality in their distribution. During this period, the Gini coefficient increased from 0.339 to 0.388. In spite of the increase in income inequality, the benefits of income growth and low-income groups also felt beneficial. Income of the bottom decile grew by an average of 1.7% a year. The highest increase was recorded between 1994 and 1995 when the average wage of the bottom 10% increased by 9.7% and the average wage of the top 10% by 12.1% (WB 1997, pp.9–10).

China's overall income inequality is largely due to income disparities between urban and rural areas, or coastal and inland provinces. The Theil index's decomposition analysis has shown that the difference in income between urban and rural areas is increasingly significant in China's overall income inequality. Specifically, this difference contributed 37%, 41% and 46% to total inequalities in 1988, 1995 and 2002 (Shi 2016).

Throughout the reform period, it has had a significant impact on the development of the inequality of implementation of concrete reform actions and policies. The reason for the relatively even distribution of



income between rural and urban areas in the first half of the 1980s was to support the agricultural sector. It included the introduction of the so-called Household Responsibility System. This system consisted of some de-collectivization and the introduction of partial private ownership. Agricultural land was made available to families, while ownership continued to be cooperative. The result was an increase in agricultural production and a growing income of farmers. In the first half of the 1980s, the reforms did not even touch the urban areas. Due to the above-mentioned reforms in rural areas, the Gini coefficient values have been below their minimum in this period. The lowest figure in 1984 was also recorded in the urban / rural revenue ratio, which was around 1.8 (Luo & Zhu 2006, p. 3).

Since the mid-1980s, the focus of economic reforms has shifted from rural to urban areas, and openness has become a key development strategy. The main focus of the reform efforts has been to become SEZ-based cities on the southeastern coast, which, thanks to the exclusive benefits of their geographical location and friendly environment for foreign investors, have benefited from this openness. The government's strategy has led to the massive development of these pro-export-oriented areas. To illustrate between 1999 and 2005, the Chinese central government invested in coastal areas more than in the rest of China (Wroblowský & Yin 2016, pp. 59–64). In less than two decades, China has also become the largest recipient of foreign direct investment among developing countries in a virtually closed economy since the end of the 1970s (Fan, Kanabur & Zhang 2011, p. 51). The ratio of urban to rural revenue grew by nearly 50% from the late 1980s to 2004, from 2.2 times to 3.2 times (Luo & Zhu 2006, p. 1). Currently, according to the NSBC, it is around 2.7 times. The divergent focus of reforms and their impacts on inequalities between urban and rural areas or coasts and inland provinces play a major role in changes in overall income inequality.

It is clear from the above that changes in income of rural households played a significant role in the development of total income inequality and were inversely proportional to changes in total income inequality. At the end of the 1990s, concerns about the backwardness of rural incomes were boosted by their slow growth. In 2002, Hu Jintao's fourth-generation representative was replaced by Jiang Zemin's Communist Party. Hu Jintao assumed the leadership of a country struggling, among other things, with large internal economic inequalities stemming from previous economic reforms that centered on economic growth. In the leadership of the Communist Party, there was still a concession that economic reforms should

continue. Changes in leadership, however, followed an increased emphasis on the sectors and sections of the population that had been delayed in previous reforms. The changes were mainly rural, and a new development policy was under the auspices of "building a new socialist countryside." Within this framework, agricultural taxes and fees were abolished, subsidies for agricultural production and public investment in rural infrastructure began to be provided, the *dibao* minimum guaranteed living standard for rural areas was extended. The new co-operative health system has also been developed and extended access to 9-year free education (Li & Sicular 2014, pp. 1–41). Prior to joining the new rural development policy, a significant regressive tax burden was characteristic for rural areas, while urban areas benefited considerably from the public finance system in the form of various aids and investments (Khan & Riskin 2001). Following the introduction of reforms in the rural sector, the average tax rate dropped to 2.8% in 2002 from 5.3% in 1995 and after the abolition of agricultural taxes, the tax burden on farmers fell to 0.3%. Nonetheless, taxes have retained a regressive character (Li & Sicular 2014, p. 23).

Since the turn of the millennium, government policy has also focused on the lagging Western provinces. In 1999, the Central Government led by Jiang Zemin initiated the Western Development Program, which was further developed since 2000 under Hu Jintao's rule. The program focuses on the 12 Western Provinces of China and its stated goal is to reduce the gap between prosperous coastal provinces and the lagging rest of the country. The plan includes investments in infrastructure, favorable conditions for foreign investment, environmental protection and support for education, health care and social services. Its emphasis is mainly on investing in large infrastructure projects. In line with this plan, the government has increased fiscal spending and investment in Western regions. The Western Development Program is a multifaceted set of policy agendas and instruments that do not create a single agenda, but rather seek to bring together many different interests and needs. This allows various interpretations, especially at the local and provincial level. Since it is a long-term program, which is estimated to be in the order of fifty years, it is difficult to evaluate its results so far (Horalek 2013, p. 108).

The program has so far been successful in Sichuan Province. Prior to its inception, Chongqing was separated from Sichuan and promoted to a separate province with the status of the cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin. Chongqing has helped to develop the above-mentioned construction of the Three Southeast Dam. The planned goal was to make cities accessible

along the Chang Jiang River. The biggest success of the program is the creation of the Megaregion of Chengdu-Chongqing, which is the center of a densely populated basin with 110 million inhabitants. The people of Sichuan had to migrate in the past for work in the provincial districts where they have been discriminated against. For their distinctive accent they were perceived as members of lower social classes and less hardworking workers. Due to the growing prosperity of their own region, they do not have to migrate for work now. The government has created the Chengdu Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone, which attracts foreign investors and leads to the successful development of technical colleges in the city (*ibid.*, pp. 112–113).

After 2000, western regions kept pace with the rest of China, with their GDP at 17% of total Chinese GDP. Since 2007, their GDP growth has accelerated and reached 19% in 2011. However, according to recent developments, this was not a long-term trend, but rather a short-term effect caused by the global financial crisis and government financial incentives to major projects (Li & Sicular 2014, p. 32). Growth in poorer provinces was also driven by commodity price increases, which account for a higher share of their GDP than the national average. However, commodity prices declined again by 2016 (*The Economist* 2018).

China's progressive efforts under the Western Development Program came into conflict with the traditions and socio-cultural system of the Tibetans. More than two million Tibetans, about one-third, are Tibetan shepherds. Of many, however, shepherds only produce their markings, not the way of livelihood. In 2003, the Chinese government launched a program of resettlement of Chinese shepherds into newly built villages and towns. The pretext for resettlement is the protection of the environment. The official reason for this is the excessive loading of herds and the danger of erosion and desertification. The reason for this is a severe twist when we realize that Tibetan shepherds have lived a nomadic way of life for thousands of years.

According to Chinese Prime Minister Hu Jintao, "development is an essential solution to Tibetan problems." According to Tibetan exile organizations, there is a real reason to relinquish the great mineral wealth lying within the Tibetan Plateau; gold, copper, iron, lead, zinc. Tibet could serve as an inexhaustible mineral store to reduce the Chinese dependence on their imports. Mining on abandoned pastures would result in a much higher environmental burden than the effects of the pastoral life of the original Tibetan nomads (Horalek 2013, pp. 114–115). The problem of

resettlement is, above all, its involuntariness. Although local residents receive substantial financial support for building homes from central and local governments, they do not have enough money to afford new housing. At the moment when they give up their livestock, the shepherds lose their only economic resource and with it their independence. Most shepherds are uneducated, often illiterate, and it is very difficult for them to find a new job. From the very development of Tibet, its indigenous peoples can benefit only very little.

Another significant influence on the nature of income inequalities is internal migration. The economic reforms that began in the 1980s are accompanied by an increase in labor demand in urban areas, leading to an unprecedented influx of migrants from rural areas to cities. Estimates of these migrant workers vary. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the number was 132 million in 2006, equivalent to 26% of the rural labor force and less than 47% of the total labor force of the cities (Li & Sicular 2014, pp. 1–41). In 2013, the number of migrants was close to 200 million (Weng 2008, pp. 3–4). The Chinese government regulates internal migration through the household registration system (“hukou”). The main discriminatory feature of the system is the registration of the rural population and the prohibition or disadvantage of their migration to cities. Migrant workers, due to the hukou system, face institutional discrimination. It is difficult for them to get better jobs and often work for low wages in an insecure environment, without contracts and any social security or work benefits. In the course of the 1990s, barriers to the movement of migrants within China have increased, but two major limitations remain. The first is the political and social rights of migrants. Migrants cannot take part in political life in a new place of residence, which weakens their relationship to this place, and their demands or criticism can be ignored. At the same time, they are excluded from various social programs, such as unemployment support, support for low-income groups, etc. The second constraint concerns the education of migrant children. Children are subject to higher education fees and excessive numbers of required documents at new registration points. In case they apply for a college, they represent a problem for the set quota of the number of students, and those interested in studying must return to their home provinces.

In recent years, the Chinese government has been trying to help disadvantaged rural workers through various steps, such as guaranteed minimum wages, the promotion of employment contracts with employers, or vocational training programs (ILO 2018). After 20 years, the real wage

growth of less skilled workers, including rural workers in cities, grew by 15% in 2011 (Shi 2016, p. 87). According to some studies, migration of rural workers into cities contributes to the growth of rural incomes and helps to reduce income inequality. Without migrant workers in cities, income in rural areas would grow more slowly and income inequality between cities and the country would be greater. Migrant workers are sending part of their income back to rural areas, helping them to increase employment in the countryside, thereby reducing inequality (Li & Sicular 2014, p. 27).

Since the 1990s, urban income inequality has grown sharply. The impact on growth was mainly due to accelerated reforms of state-owned enterprises. The privatization of the majority of state-owned small and medium-sized companies began, which in 1997 followed a profound restructuring of large state-owned enterprises. Restructuring under the pressure of growing competition has led to higher wages for qualified or skilled workers and collective redundancies for others. This meant the end of full employment in the form of iron rice bowls and slow average wage growth. With the deepening of economic reforms, the rise in education, housing and health care prices, which were previously provided free of charge or significantly subsidized by the state, began to grow. Between 1996 and 1998, it is even possible to observe an increase in urban poverty (Luo & Zhu 2006, p. 3). Growth in urban revenues was restored after 2000 (Li & Sicular 2014, p. 17).

A fundamental change in revenue composition was housing deregulation. By mid-1990s, state dwellings in cities were provided for rent at very low prices or completely free of charge, while in rural areas people had to live mostly without the help of the state. This has contributed to greater disparities between cities and the countryside, taking into account that wages in cities were higher than wages in rural areas. The purchase of privately owned apartments and the growth in rents of state-owned flats led to rising differences in rental prices. The focus of this work is income inequality, not property inequalities. However, with housing privatization, another substantial component of the income of urban residents was created; rental income (*ibid.*). Deregulation itself has led to a substantial increase in inequality in urban areas. The richest 10% of the city's population of deregulation benefited most when they managed to get 60% of the privately-owned urban real estate by 1995 (Khan & Riskin 2016, p. 245). Generally speaking, disparities between urban and rural areas contribute to the fact that incomes other than income from employment accounted for 40% of all urban revenues in 2007, but only 15% of all rural incomes (Li & Sicular 2014, p. 11).

## 4. Conclusions

As mentioned above, the growing source of income inequality is the growing gap between rural and urban areas. A study by the OECD (2007) and Li & Sicular (2014, p. 11) suggest that the share of income differences between rural and urban areas in total income inequality has been overestimated in the past. As a reason, they point to the non-consideration of some factors that can influence real income gaps and narrow the gap between the two areas. These factors include the different living costs between cities and rural areas and migrant rural workers in urban areas. Both factors decrease the difference, while the difference between the income from real estate and other assets slightly increases the difference. Measuring the impact of these factors on income inequality is complex. However, even taking partial account of these factors, the gap between rural and urban areas remains considerable.

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# **Historical ambitions of China and current international landscape**





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# **Politics of memory for a New Era? Mainland Chinese historical memory, nationalism, and their impact on Chinese international behaviour**

## **Abstract**

*Overall, the subject has remained relatively understudied. In this context, this paper presents a broader picture of the importance of the topic as such. It does not attempt to present a complete picture of the role of historical memory in Chinese foreign policy. Instead, it identifies the main points of reference that should be treated as the invitation for further research. It also highlights certain new developments that might suggest what to expect in the future.*

*However, from the perspective of international politics, scientists have been somehow reluctant to study the impact of historical memory on states' behaviour. In the academic world of IR, dominated by realism, immeasurable factors like identity or culture, have been considered largely insignificant in shaping international politics. If one defines power as one state's ability to control a given sphere either militarily or economically, intangible factors somehow "naturally" get sidelined. Nevertheless, given the worldwide resurgence of nationalism as a political force shaping international relations and the impossibility of explaining it with purely realist means, some observers have turned towards a re-examination of alternative or subsidiary explanations of factors influencing states' international behaviour.*

*Northeast Asia accounts for one of the most well-developed regions with the world's three largest economic powers. However, as former South Korean President Park Geun-hye described, it also constitutes a "paradox." On one hand, states are able to successfully cooperate on the economic basis. On the other hand, there are a number of obstacles, involving primarily unresolved historical*

*issues and security concerns, that impede further regional collaboration. The aim of the article is to analyse the process of regional integration in Northeast Asia, with particular focus on Japan – Republic of Korea relations, through the lenses of neo-functionalism. The essay seeks to determine whether this approach could lead to increasing transnational ties in the region and ultimately improve international relations on bilateral and multilateral basis. Neo-functional theory of regional integration has been mostly applied to research on the European integration process. Consequently, there have been few attempts of testing its assumptions in other regions. Nevertheless, there seems to be substantial evidence to perceive neo-functionalism as a promising theoretical approach beyond Europe. Since neo-functionalists place supranational, transnational and sub-national actors at the centre of the analysis, the article, apart from the economic dimension, will elaborate on the potential of existing international structure, namely the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat.*

**Keywords:** *China, historical memory, nationalism*

## **1. Introduction – Importance of historical memory and politics of memory in the context of international relations**

Historical memory has been an understudied area of research in international relations (IR). When it comes to sociology and cultural studies, the issue has been widely studied both globally and locally. However, from the perspective of international politics, scientists have been somehow reluctant to study the impact of historical memory on states' behaviour. In the academic world of IR, dominated by realism, immeasurable factors like identity or culture, have been considered largely insignificant in shaping international politics. If one defines power as one state's ability to control a given sphere either militarily or economically, intangible factors somehow "naturally" get sidelined. Nevertheless, given the worldwide resurgence of nationalism as a political force shaping international relations and the impossibility of explaining it with purely realist means, some observers have turned towards a re-examination of alternative or subsidiary explanations of factors influencing states' international behaviour. Although Francis Fukuyama's infamous "end of history" was declared a long time ago, in practice historically-rooted thinking has been on the rise among many intellectuals and policymakers throughout the world.

Nationalist movements often legitimise their claims by stressing their alleged historical roots and legacies. Nevertheless, their visions of history are often revisionist and narrow. Sometimes those narratives serve purely political goals, thus becoming instrumental *per se*, especially when it comes to top-down visions of history and social memory sanctioned by the state. Simultaneously, history re-writing has become the core of contemporary politics of memory. A resurgence of political thinking rooted in subjective re-definition of history by those in power has been on the rise throughout the world and has not been confined to any specific culture or geographic area. The question of Polish-German ties, Sino-Japanese reconciliation, former Western colonial powers' relations with countries in the global South, or Russian influence in Eastern Europe are just a few examples of contemporary international issues that cannot be analysed without understanding the respective visions of history assumed by every actor involved. While different regional versions of politics of history are rooted in their respective local realities, to a large extent they all have one thing in common: they assume some hegemonic vision of the past that is supposed to serve the needs of the present. However, political elites and intellectuals (the latter to a limited extent) are responsible for defining these very needs. This way, contemporary politics of history have come to represent fragmentary and highly subjective visions of the past that might have very little to do with the historical events and the dynamics that shaped them.

## **2. Understanding the role of historical memory in politics and IR – Theoretical framework**

When it comes to the role of politics of memory and history in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and its international relations, there have been some attempts at understanding its role in the changing political environment of both the Maoist and the post-Maoist era. Works by authors such as Wang Zheng (2012), Yinan He (2009) or Rana Mitter (2013) have dealt with the issue of historical memory in different contexts, e.g. when it comes to the issue of Sino-Japanese reconciliation, Chinese nationalism, and anti-Western sentiments ("popular nationalism"). Wang Zheng's book *Never Forget National Humiliation* (2012) is probably the most systematic attempt to analyse the issue of Chinese historical memory of trauma in the very context of IR. Overall, the subject has remained

relatively understudied. In this context, this paper presents a broader picture of the importance of the topic as such. It does not attempt to present a complete picture of the role of historical memory in Chinese foreign policy. Instead, it identifies the main points of reference that should be treated as the invitation for further research. It also highlights certain new developments that might suggest what to expect in the future.

Firstly, one has to establish the theoretical framework to analyse the role of historical memory in IR. Following this paper's theoretical approach, the author assumes that history is based on facts and their interpretations (Jin 2006, p. 32). Although some claim that facts are never purely objective (since their real choice is arbitrary and based on one's individual bias and perspective), establishing some common ground for choosing certain events as points of reference for further interpretation must nevertheless be agreed upon first. For example, some scholars (e.g. Robert Frank) have claimed that World War II (WWII) started already in 1937 (the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and the beginning of the Japanese occupation of China). This statement shows an individual perspective rooted in the regional understanding of specific historical processes and their importance. If one assumes that the main point of reference is the role of Japan in the Pacific War, Hitler's invasion on Poland in September 1939 can be sidelined. It does not exclude the viability of the "Western part" of WWII, but it highlights different dynamics that have come to represent China's historical experience and its main turning points. This way, "historical facts" may exist alongside each other, seemingly contradictory in their nature, yet simultaneously highlighting different perspectives of the same events that had formed a more extensive process of shaping global history.

Then, there is the question of interpretations as such. There are many ways of conceptualising this process of turning allegedly objective facts into subjective interpretations. For example, in his book on the Boxer Rebellion, Paul Cohen (1997) specifies three ways of understanding history, namely history as facts, experiences, and perceptions. Historians, who write about historical events, establish facts; experiences are lived by people, while perceptions tend to be used by various actors in an effective way as myths (Jin 2006, pp. 32–33). The latter approach mostly serves the present needs of a given community or state. History and myth have a dynamic relationship. Theoretically, the former looks for a nuanced account of the past, while the latter looks for an imagined "essence" of it (*ibid.*, p. 33). According to the instrumental approach to understanding historical memory, various political forces competing for distribution of

power usually create their own myths in order to legitimise their claims. These myths become powerful only if they have the capacity of persuading people. In other words, they are real because people believe them to be true. Those in power have the means of modifying the public perception of history, but if the official narratives do not have a widespread basis, their influence on the general public tends to be limited.

Finally, there is the issue of politics of memory and its formation. If history is about facts and their interpretations, politics of history are mostly about interpretations of the past by certain social groups, predominately those in power. The way the political elites remember the past and create their narratives is highly preconditioned. Firstly, it is preconditioned by individuals' personal stories, experiences, and livelihoods. It is influenced by their cultural backgrounds, political preferences, and the impact of the social milieu in which they live. Moreover, the past is always understood in relation to the present. Frequently, contemporary historical narratives are created with the means of current socio-political and cultural categories and concepts that might have been inexistent in the very past that they are trying to engage with and describe. As Maurantonio (2014, p. 1) has pointed out, "consideration of memory requires less attention to issues 'accuracy' or 'authenticity' than it does to the values, beliefs, and norms shaping cultures at a particular historical juncture. Whether memories present a past that can be deemed objectively 'true' is beside the point." This way, attributing subjective meaning to the past lies at the heart of politics of history. Additionally, the process of production of politics of history can be conceptualised as being based on a move from an individual experience of the past (lived through or imagined) towards historical memory as a collective phenomenon. It is essential to bear in mind that memory studies, which form one of the crucial conceptual parts for the study of politics of history, are an extremely interdisciplinary area of research. They operate at the intersection of politics, international relations, sociology, anthropology, and many other disciplines. Their scope of interest ranges from individual experiences and memories of trauma, through collective identity-making processes and cultural practices, all the way to domestic and international policy-making and its relation with the past. In this context, some have argued that the very topic of politics of memory in IR serves "as a means of sharpening the bounds of the interdisciplinary enterprise of memory studies (*ibid.*, p. 2). Nevertheless, given the conceptual blurriness when it comes to the boundaries of memory studies, there is no "correct way to 'do' memory" (Confinio 1997, p. 1390).

What follows is a brief introduction of the main themes when it comes to the topic of historical memory and politics of memory in the context of contemporary China.

### 3. Historical memory and politics of memory in the context of contemporary China

Contemporary China could be described as a modern nation-state, yet throughout much of its history, it used to be perceived and perceive itself in very different categories. The civilisation of “everything under the heavens” or the “known world” in the geopolitics of Chinese empire (*tianxia*), the Central Kingdom, or the founder of the tribute system are just a few examples of the main conceptualisations of the historically Chinese sphere of influence and control (French 2017, p. 4). The system, however one labels it, was primarily based on China’s distant and indirect rule over its neighbours under the condition of accepting the emperor’s superiority and legitimacy. In return for the acceptance of the status quo, China would then develop trade ties with its neighbours and also develop a network of “universal standards” broadly based on Confucianism (*ibid.*, p. 5). Contemporary Chinese political thought is still deeply rooted in its historically grounded way of thinking about how to interact with the outside world. As French (2017, p. 7) has noted, “it is scarcely appreciated in the West today that the ‘international system’ we so readily take for granted is actually a recent creation.” For a long time, the international system created by the Chinese civilisation functioned unchallenged by any sizeable outside forces. The situation changed dramatically in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when China was forced to confront the outside world that had been developing the system of international relations based on new relations of power and different theoretical concepts, such as sovereignty. China’s clash with the West started the so-called “century of humiliation” (*bainian guochi*), which started after the First Opium War in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and became one of the defining features of contemporary Chinese national identity. The memories of foreign occupation, imperialism, and imposition of unequal treaties have formed a myth that has been reimagined throughout China’s contemporary history. This way, Chinese collective historical memory has been developing against the backdrop of numerous traumatic events, such as the Opium Wars, the destruction of the Yuanming Palace by the foreign forces in Beijing, the colonisation of

Manchuria by the Japanese or the Nanjing Massacre during the Second Sino-Japanese War. In this way, traumatising has been one of the key features of contemporary Chinese identity. It has been rooted in individual and collective memories of the nation's past. In this context, the role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in enabling this kind of collective memories to be created should not be underestimated.

When it comes to the post-1949 Chinese politics of memory, CCP has been largely seen as the main architect of the dominant historical narratives. Given the authoritarian nature of the Party-state system and its apparatus, the hegemonic power of the official narrative has made it difficult for most counter-narratives to emerge. Some would claim that the Chinese type of collective memory exemplifies the so-called "Orwellian type," where the political elites have absolute power over how the past is portrayed and disseminated. This does not mean that there are no alternative accounts of the past in China, but given the scale of the country's propaganda and censorship apparatus, most mainstream accounts of the past are to a certain extent sanctioned by the CCP. There is hardly any space for memory pluralism to emerge and most of the time, painful memories are being suppressed on both individual and collective levels. Although some traumatic events have been acknowledged, like the fact the Mao's decision-making was partially wrong during the Cultural Revolution, the public discussion has never reached the level where the actual guilt of the people involved could be brought up in public. Given the nature of the Chinese political system, an open debate about the past would open up a "Pandora's box," especially in the context of China's most recent past. The Chinese leadership has been aware that events like the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre or the ongoing prosecution of members of different societal groups (e.g. Falun Gong members and minority groups) could serve as a catalyst of potential unrest. This way, pushing forward some selective visions of the past while being aware of their potential disruptive power (if out of control) has proved to be a difficult task for the Party-state (as the author presents in the following part).

What is more, the CCP has mainly been preoccupied with the creation of new archenemies. They would be different over time, given the changing needs of the Party. In the Mao era, history was perceived as a process composed of stages that were conceptualised through a Marxist lens and then adopted to the Chinese realities. From this perspective, nationalism was not bolstered since it did not belong to the Maoist doctrine as such. Instead, it was seen as one of the representations of global



imperialism. When it comes to domestic history re-definition, the focus was on designating internal enemies who represented the old feudal system. The emphasis on class enemies as the “Others” within the society was aimed at domestically consolidating the power of the CCP, which at the time was one of the primary goals of the Party. The historiography was Mao-centred (e.g. the Yan’an base area as the core of the wartime narrative), while the Kuomintang (KMT) members, the Americans and the Japanese were portrayed as the evil forces of global imperialism. The narrative was reflecting the broader reality of the early Cold War era as well as the domestic needs of the Party (Mitter 2003, p. 118). Discursive creation of real or imagined enemies was part of a broader phenomenon where the past was being re-imagined.

The death of Mao and the change of the political climate brought about a new era of Chinese historical memory. For a brief period in the early 1980s, Beijing deemphasised the divisive interpretations of the country’s history. It was mostly related to Deng Xiaoping’s efforts related to attracting much-needed foreign investment, especially from Japan (French 2017, p. 10). Nevertheless, another round of Chinese history re-writing took place in the late 1980s, when the post-Mao economic and political reforms were accelerating. The ideological void created by the loss of legitimacy of the CCP with its symbolic peak during the nation-wide protests of spring 1989 resulted in the Party’s search for a new source of legitimacy. In this context, Chinese elites turned towards historical narratives of past glory and humiliation. The history of national modernisation started to be conceptualised as the story of the end of humiliation, with the CCP at its core. This way, the Party was pictured as the only guarantor of development, peace, and stability. This very image was enhanced by the unsettling vision of a chaotic international reality, where old aggressors were still trying to undermine China’s rise.

Although some have claimed that China’s recent economic successes have provided some sort of healing for its historical wounds, in reality, many of the political developments throughout the past three decades suggest that historical memory, based on both experienced and imagined traumas, is on the rise (Wang 2012a, p. 32). Probably the most evident example is the state of Sino-Japanese relations, which contradicts the liberal assumptions on the correlation between growing international trade and the improvement of bilateral ties. As far as Beijing and Tokyo are concerned, both parties have their own interests in politically leveraging their shared history. Especially for Beijing, the Sino-Japanese

war and its interpretations have served different needs, like the desire to reunify Taiwan, the need to reduce the US and Japanese power in the region, or the quest to bind the people of China together (Mitter 2003, p. 121). As French (2017, p. 10) has noted, for China, humiliation by Western powers was not the ultimate blow. Instead, the defeat by the Japanese was far more important for the Chinese collective psyche. For many centuries, the Chinese rulers have looked at Japan as “an intrinsically inferior nation whose very origins lay in immense cultural debt to China in everything from writing systems and literature to religion and governance” (ibid.). This way, the history of conflicts between China and Japan (i.e. the First and the Second Sino-Japanese War) has probably been essential in shaping Chinese contemporary historical memory. What is more, the topic has been influencing Beijing’s relations with Tokyo countless times throughout the past decades (e.g. in relation to the Yasukuni shrine, textbook controversies, the Nanjing massacre). Another important element was China’s general perception of the Western powers trying to humiliate the country on the international arena (e.g. the infamous bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by the Americans in May 1999).

Among others, the events listed above have sparked numerous controversies in the Chinese public debate, both among the CCP politicians as well as the general public. The latter’s reactions became increasingly intense. Starting from the late 1990s and early 2000s, discontent was being expressed not only verbally and symbolically (e.g. through the internet, where nationalism and pro-Chinese reading of history remain relatively uncensored) but it also took the form of street protests. The CCP did not crack down on these manifestations since it saw them as a security valve enabling the dissatisfied Chinese to channel their discontent towards an outside enemy, namely Japan or the US. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that such a strong emotional reaction to real or perceived humiliation by the outside forces became possible because of the previous policies spurring popular nationalism. As already mentioned, in the presence of an ideological void of the post-Mao era, the CCP had to reinvent itself as the only legitimate leader of the nation. This way, it embarked on a grand mission of the so-called “patriotic education campaign.” The new school curriculum, which started in the early 1990s, was aimed at nurturing the patriotic feelings of the young generations. Simultaneously, new museums and memorial places were established in order to put forward the importance of the CCP in the Chinese 20th-century history. A new

generation of Chinese citizens was raised and nurtured by the myth of the past humiliation and the CCP-led fight against it.

What is more, growing commercialisation and economic liberalisation should be seen as another important factor shaping the post-Mao historical memory of the Chinese people, especially the youth. Commercial nationalism has become an essential element in the increasingly consumption-oriented Chinese society. In the 1990s, patriotic books and films started to be produced on a large scale, simultaneously fuelling commodification of nationalism and suffering. The so-called “angry youth” (*fengqing*), or hyper-nationalistic Chinese youngsters, became more visible in the public discourse, especially on the internet. Meanwhile, the Party-state propaganda apparatus focused on producing even more historically rooted narratives, based on a selective choice of themes. As French (2017, p. 21) has noted, “to turn on the television in China is to be inundated with war-themed movies, which overwhelmingly focus on Japanese crimes. More than two hundred anti-Japanese films were produced in 2012 alone, with one scholar estimating that 70% of Chinese TV dramas involve Japan-related war plots.” Even in places such as the Nanjing massacre memorial hall, one can find films and merchandise that profit from the commodification of slaughter, torture, and abuse. As Denton (2014, p. 12) has remarked, the market economy turned the memory of past suffering into a product to be consumed in the Nanjing tourist scape.

However, this very nationalism and its commercialised representations could be seen as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, nationalistic sentiments can be used to mobilise and unite the nation against the outside world, thus channelling domestic grievances towards foreign enemies. Moreover, this kind of situation is favourable for the CCP when it comes to easing social anger, which lurks behind the image of social stability and harmony. On the other hand, if out of control, nationalism could easily turn against the CCP itself. That is precisely the scenario that the Chinese leadership is afraid of most. In a globalised environment, where international crises can break out at any moment, a decision deemed by the Chinese nationalists as not assertive enough could make the whole nation “lose its face.”

The context described above leads one to the conclusion that the historical memory of trauma and humiliation has been on the rise in China throughout the last decades. But how is it being externalised under the current Chinese leadership of Xi Jinping? The next part is the author’s take on the implications of China’s historical memory and politics of history on the current foreign policy-making processes in Beijing.

#### 4. Implications for Chinese foreign policy “for a new era”

Together with Xi Jinping's ongoing consolidation of power and a general course towards strongman politics, Chinese foreign policy has also become much more assertive. As Mitter (2003, p. 120) pointed out, “the idea of China as a victim state, persecuted by the global community, began to emerge at the same time as a rhetoric of China as a great power, ready to take its rightful place on the world stage.” The “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” is one of the leading slogans of Xi Jinping and his “new era” heralded during the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in October 2017. “Rejuvenation” implies a return to the glorious past that had been lost due to the inability of the previous Chinese elites to maintain stability in the face of foreign influence. In the increasingly multipolar world, characterised by both political and economic uncertainty, “the parallels with the past are very explicit, expressing fears of imperialism and invasion, economic if not territorial, and also reviving the social Darwinist atmosphere of a century ago” (Mitter 2003, p. 118).

In this context, it is important to point out that the biggest ever celebration of the War of Resistance Against Japan (the Second Sino-Japanese War) took place quickly after Xi Jinping took power. As French (2017, p. 20) has noted, “under Xi, a spate of other propaganda initiatives have been regularly orchestrated with the aim of reviving and channelling popular ire toward Japan.” For example, two new national holidays were introduced: the War Against Japanese Aggression Victory Day and the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Day. Although China has theoretically entered a “new era” of prosperity and strength, the old ghosts of humiliation and historical trauma have not left the political and social landscape of the country. As a matter of fact, given China's growing international influence and interests abroad, historical memory and politics of history might prove to be even more important in shaping the country's future policy-making processes.

One should also note that the tension created by the difference between the official discourse of the CCP, which portrays itself as the only saviour of the Chinese nation, and the popular nationalist narrative suggesting that this very humiliation is still taking place. Any major international crisis between China and another power could fit into this narrative (e.g. the trade war between China and the US under Donald Trump or alleged mistreatment of Chinese tourists abroad, continued misrepresentation of Chinese history in Japanese textbooks and media, just to name a few

possible examples). As Seo (2008, p. 389) notes, the only solution that seems applicable according to this narrative would be to completely reverse the power relations between China and the West/Japan. This conclusion is quite disturbing, especially given the previously mentioned double-edged nature of nationalism and its potential power to stir social unrest. Another vital factor to bear in mind is the fact that analysts usually assume that policymakers are rational actors who are not influenced by their personal preferences. Although instrumentalist explanations of top-down historical narratives of the CCP are to a large extent useful in explaining the dynamics of contemporary Chinese politics of history and memory, they also neglect one important thing: the fact that the decision-makers might actually believe their own narratives. They might not act as cold-blooded masters of puppets who create emotionally loaded interpretations of history. Instead, they might partially or largely believe in the dominant interpretations of the past. As some scholars have claimed, “a number of the most sober analysts of foreign policy and international affairs in Beijing say they fear the government is steadily becoming a prisoner of its own rhetoric” (French 2017, p. 23). In this way, one should not underestimate the emotional power and unpredictability of politics of memory, which are never purely rational and objective, as any history narratives never are.

Most recently, the issue of the growing Chinese influence and geo-economic interests abroad has been a trending topic among both academics and journalists. The role of the Chinese diaspora in various countries and its relation to the motherland has been another topic of research among many China hands, also in the context of Chinese nationalism and its growing international footprint. One case, which has been largely overlooked, is the example of one of the first large-scale Chinese riots in France that took place in Paris in March 2017. The overseas Chinese community, which historically has been perceived as a relatively peaceful and well-assimilated one, took to the French streets in order to protest what seemed to be an act of police brutality. The story, as reported in the media, concerned a French policeman killing a Chinese man. He was shot at his home. The neighbours who had complained about a family dispute next door called the police. When the officers arrived and knocked on the door, they encountered a man holding a knife. The man’s family claimed that he had been preparing dinner and that the tool had not been used against the officers. What followed after the incident were large-scale riots that turned violent. One can ask what was different in those protests? While analysing the pictures from the demonstrations, one could notice, that

many of the slogans used by the participants referred to their identity as Chinese citizens abroad, not as Chinese-French or French. Many of them were also holding Chinese flags. The author does not attempt at broad generalisations, yet she also thinks that this kind of assertive expression of discontent among Chinese overseas communities is somehow new. Although some claim that the Paris riots were primarily related to racism and domestic relations of power between different ethnic groups living in France, the fact that there was no evidence that the protests had been encouraged by the CCP (like the protests prior to China hosting the 2008 Olympic Games) suggests that Chinese nationalism abroad might develop its own dynamics in the future. These dynamics might pose new challenges for the Chinese leadership. The topic remains largely understudied and offers many opportunities for future research.

## 5. Conclusions

If “memory is a dynamic entity, crafted and recrafted in dialogue with the political, social, and cultural imperatives of the present” (Maurantonio 2014, p.1), then politics of history are the application of specific versions of memory by those in power in order to fulfil the needs of the present and to shape the future goals of a given state and its elites. In the context of China, politics of history have fuelled nationalism, which in turn started to be seen as one of the engines legitimising Chinese expansionism on the international arena. The narratives surrounding the century of humiliation have been regularly recreated in Chinese political discourse at the time of crisis. It has been used by the CCP as a historical argument for a stable government coupled with an assertive foreign policy. This combination has served the Party-state as one of its sources of legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese people. However, under unfavourable international conditions, this source of legitimacy might turn against the CCP itself. Building a legitimising discourse on the imperative of wiping out traumatic memories against all odds is indeed risky. If the country wants to achieve the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” new glories might in the future reflect China’s core interests, values, and its own vision of the world order. Nevertheless, before this newfound glory can be achieved, the nation has to deal with its past. Bearing in mind all the details described in this paper, the perspective of China coming to terms with its historical memory and politics of history might be a long process.

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## **Silk Belt between Lion and Dragon: Lyon (France)–China ties**

### **Abstract**

*In 1964, diplomatic relations between the Government of Charles de Gaulle of the French Fifth Republic and the People's Republic of China (PRC) were established at an ambassadorial level. This decision was made in the context of the Cold War and embodied in a French geopolitical strategy. At that time, China (PRC) had been isolated by the majority of the Western Powers, and its diplomatic engagement with France had allowed access to some new industrial products and technologies China had particular need of these as the Soviet Union (USSR) had withdrawn all of its technological investments in China during the Sino-Soviet Split in 1960. Some industrial contracts have been signed between the French and Chinese governments since the mid-1960s. Among these contracts, the contributions of the industrialists of Lyon were the most numerous. Paul Berliet (1918–2012) exhibited Berliet trucks in Beijing in 1965, and this was the origin of the first French technology transfer in China. In 1978, Alain Mérieux (1938–) presented in China human and veterinary vaccines from the Institut Mérieux.*

*It is worth mentioning that these Lyon-China relations had originally been initiated by the silk industrialists of Lyon in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and were further developed with the first commercial mission between 1843 and 1846. It was the first time since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, that missions referring to “New Silk Route” had been operated between Europe and China. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Lyon-China ties have also extended to many other industrial and technological fields, as well as to the field of education, with the establishment of the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon (Institut Franco-Chinois de Lyon) in 1919 in Lyon.*

*These Lyon-China relations persisted and evolved over the centuries, and covered periods of chaotic relations between France and China, notably The Opium*



Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860), the Second World War (1939–1945), the Cold War (1947–1991) and the Sino-Western Diplomatic Crisis in 1989.

Despite politically divergent ideologies and situations of conflict (particularly between Western countries and the Chinese world following the Cold War), some exchanges have been maintained between Lyon and China, because of the implementation and continuation of Gaullist policy. The aim of this article is to analyze the impact of Gaullist diplomacy on Franco-Chinese industrial and educational exchanges, and to try to reveal the issues and challenges in relations between Lyon and China, in particular in the current political and economic world situation, if Lion (in the Lyon armories) and Dragon (China) ties are to continue to prosper.

**Keywords:** China, France, Silk Road, Lyon-China relations

## 1. Initiation of the Gaullist diplomacy towards China

In the two press releases dated January 27, 1964, in Paris and Beijing, a joint announcement (*Le Monde* and *The People's Daily*) stated that France and China formally established diplomatic relations:

The government of the French Republic and the Government of Republic Popular of China have decided a common agreement, to establish diplomatic relations. They agreed to appoint ambassadors within a period of three months. (*Le Monde*, January 28, 1964).

Figure 1. Joint announcement published in *Le Monde* and *The People's Daily* on January 28<sup>th</sup> 1964



Photo credit: internet.

This declaration broke the traditional diplomatic dogma and created a possible alliance between two historically “colonial-colonized” countries, despite differences of political ideologies between a Western world that France belongs to and China. This new alliance wiped out the USA/USSR bi-dominance in the context of the Cold War and created a third line in this bi-domination sphere. This unexpected phenomenon embodied the geopolitical strategies of the two countries, marking diplomatic innovation for France, and a diplomatic turn for China, allowing China to seize the opportunity to enter the international arena.

From the perspective of Charles de Gaulle, the decision to establish ties with China was an indication of his willingness to break the relationship of vassalage that the USA maintained with Western Europe. This clearly characterized the initiation of Gaullist Diplomacy towards China, as stated by (Lenoir 1964):

France, in fact, is pursuing only the permanent line of Gaullist diplomacy: it attempts to break the Soviet-American condominium on the world, by engaging a separate part with China. Together, Paris believes, these two countries may have enough weight to loosen the American-Soviet vise and to make the world's diplomacy a bit more fluid.

At the time of the decision of the de Gaulle government, despite the recognition of China by the French National Assembly, (particularly supported by the French Communist Party), De Gaulle nevertheless made a statement at the press conference<sup>1</sup> held at the Elysée Palace on January 31, 1964, in order to obtain understanding from the French population:

It is not excluded that China will re-become in the next century what China has been for centuries, the greatest power of the universe... In tying with this country, this state, official relations, as many other free nations have done before, and as we have done with other countries that undergo similar regimes, France only recognizes the world (the country and its population) as it is. (De Gaulle 1964)

At this press conference, De Gaulle explained the reasons behind this diplomatic decision to the French public and to the world. This discourse was marked by a historical approach and characterized by a civilizational, human, geographical, historical, economic and diplomatic analysis.

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1 The press conference the Elysée Palace on 31 January 1964, during which General de Gaulle tackled several important points: the institutions, Europe, France's cooperation with other countries in the world, and the opening of standardized relations with China.

His speech began with a civilizational recognition:

China, the great people, the most numerous of the earth... since millennium... from a very particular and a very deep civilization. A very vast country, geographically very compact, yet without unity... a state older than history, always resolved in independence.

He also made a historical recall of the conflictual events and common agreements between France and China, and noted that both countries had lived from the Second Opium War (1856–1860) to the Geneva Conference (1954), claiming that the Chinese people are *people humiliated but proud... China was in conflict with the powers of modernity*. He also discussed sensitive issues concerning the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party, GMT) and its Taiwan government, clarifying his respect for Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) for his commitment and contribution to the victory of the Second World War, as leader of China before settling on the island of Formosa (Taiwan) in 1949. On the other hand, he criticized the system that Mao had installed in China over the past 15 years and denounced the human suffering caused by the regime. Nevertheless, after a thorough analysis, he concluded that *France recognizes the world as it is*. He also referred to the Soviet holding on China in the fields of industry, education and research, with the aim of controlling China etc. This speech laid the first foundation on Gaullist diplomacy with respect to China.

As for Beijing, this decision occurred at the end of the Korean War and the Geneva Conference in 1954 (ending the conflict in Indochina and the French presence in Vietnam), constituted a first step towards the resumption of diplomatic relations with France. Zhou Enlai (周恩来 1898–1976), Prime Minister, as well as Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, was particularly involved in the implementation of these agreements, which allowed China to orient its foreign policy to “non-aligned States.” Furthermore, this enabled China to position itself as a leader of the third-world countries, right after those states entered the international arena after the Conference of Bandung in 1955.

## 2. Setting up a privileged relation between France and China since Gaullist time

### *Intellectual-political marriage of the de Gaulle government*

French sympathy and fascination for post-1949 China have been strikingly apparent since the 1950s. This phenomenon occurred during a period of intellectual and philosophic “Existentialism.” Due to some historical reasons as well, the French Gauche (left wing), composed mainly of French intellectuals and artists, formed a premier group of sympathizers. Nevertheless, some of them belonging to the *Open Stream* opposing the *dogmatic stream* (Kesler 1978) guided by their humanist consciousness changed their opinion about China after discovering the political reality and the human conditions of the country. Some others would continue in their blindness or “convictions,” such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980). During the “May 68” movement in France, the Maoist movement appeared and was derived into an imaginary utopia totally out of the reality towards the communist China. This Maoist fever only gradually ceased at the end of the 1980s.

In this context, the second half of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s was a period of great fascination for French intellectuals towards China, especially André Malraux (1901–1976), who played a key role in the de Gaulle government from 1959 to 1969, as Minister of State (Ministre d’Etat), then Minister of Culture (Ministre de la Culture).

Prior to this period, these two men, (de Gaulle/Malraux) representing two different political movements had come together to engage in a common movement, “The Liberation of France” (La libération de la France), a political party called “Rassemblement du Peuple Français” (RPF, Rally of the French people).

Malraux’s involvements within the RPF had a clear objective: *Gaullism is part of a vast attempt whose reason is not simply political, but meta-physical* (Hoffmann & Mossuz 1970). That was one of the fundamental perceptions leading him later to devote himself to Gaullist political engagement, both culturally and diplomatically.

Despite the communist tendency that Malraux once had, after discovering the reality of the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union (USSR), he became a militant against the totalitarianism of Stalin. However, with regard to China under Mao’s regime, he acted differently, and even made an official visit to Beijing in 1965.

Malraux's personal encounters and his relationship with the Chinese intelligentsia of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century certainly contributed to his particular view towards the history and culture of China and Chinese society. His relationship with the Chinese world began during his second stay in Indochina in 1925. He established close ties with the Chinese community of Cho Lon, and with the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) who became the main source of funding for his newspaper entitled "Indochine" (Indochina). These links also allowed him to obtain information on the problem of the communist tactical alliance with the Kuomintang, before and after the death of Sun Yat-Sen (1866–1925) in 1925 (Larrat 2006).

On his return to Paris, Malraux nurtured relationships with French intellectuals such as Pierre Loti, Victor Segalen and Paul Claudel who had once lived in China. Malraux was passionate about the classical philosophies of India and China. During this period, he continued conversing with Chinese intellectuals, including his frequenting with the famous writer Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 (1905–1950) in the 1930s during Dai's time in France (student at the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon).

Malraux began to cite China in his bi-approach writings, regarding Classical and Contemporary China, which left traces in his novels "The Conquerors" (1928) and "The Human Condition" (1933). In both books, Malraux dealt with the political and social struggles that took place in Canton (Guangzhou) in 1925 and in Shanghai in 1927. The latter was based on a historic event: the violent repression in 1927 in Shanghai of the first generation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) composed mainly of emerging intelligentsia. The crackdown was carried out by military forces commanded by Chiang Kai-shek and conservative factions of the Kuomintang.

The influence of Malraux in the de Gaulle government might be important, despite the fact that we could not measure the effects of his influences on Gaullist diplomacy following his joining the cabinet.

Of more concern to civilization than politics, the role of Malraux in de Gaulle's government shows that there is an intellectual-political marriage in French political life. French intellectuals have influenced the political world and their views have had an impact on the French political decision-making process. It is clear that French Gaullist diplomacy vis-à-vis China, in addition to the motive of the geopolitical strategy, has been of philosophical and existential concern, placing it on a civilizational and historical horizon. This marked an originality of French diplomacy and this originality is linked to an intellectual debate.

**Figure 2. August 3, 1965, André Malraux, Minister of Culture, met Mao Zedong in Beijing during an official trip to China**



Photo credit: Agence France Press.

### **3. Forging industrial links between a Western Power and the Communist China**

#### *Industrial-political alliance since de Gaulle's government*

Since the middle of the 1970s some industrial and research conventions have been initiated and signed between the French and Chinese governments, on the basis of a mutual agreement that France and China together build a "Privileged Relationship."

Direct governmental intervention (of both France and China) in initiating industrial contracts was strikingly evident between the 1970s and the late 1980s and has been partially maintained from the late 1990s in order to guarantee a "privileged relationship between France and China," both in terms of industry and in the development of research.

In the early 1970s, China was still in the phase of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Therefore, industrial links between France and China were limited to importing of some French equipment, particularly French trucks to China, thanks to contracts discreetly signed between the two governments with the participation of some French industrial



manufacturers. The sphere was described as such by Jaques Marsouin (1994, p.17):

We had poor friends in the distance, but worthy, they had in Europe rich friends, but sincere. (...)

The peculiarity of the Franco-Chinese relationship was reduced to a formula of Zhou Enlai which was in place for nearly twenty years: At equal price and quality, we will choose French products.

In the 1980s, France, responding to the demand of China, played a key role in the development of the nuclear, energy and telecommunications sectors. Following the Tiananmen incident in 1989, France partially participated in Western sanctions imposed on China. Despite the changes, Lyon's industrial involvement in China never seemed to be absent.

Among common contracts that have been realized, the contributions of the industrialists of Lyon are the most significant. Paul Berliet who exhibited Berliet trucks in Beijing in 1965, and in the following years, had been devoted to the technology transfer, aiming also at educating a new generation of Chinese engineers in the relative field.

In 1978, Alain Mérieux presented in China human and veterinary vaccines, beginning a progressive and deep implantation of the Institut Mérieux in China.

This phenomenon points to another aspect of the originality of French diplomacy, in addition to intellectual-political marriage, an industrial-political alliance also plays its full role. In order to understand this approach, I would like to make a historical analysis as below.

#### **4. The diachronic: Lyon–China ties**

##### *Tradition of the French Catholic-Bourgeois with Imperial China*

It should be emphasized that these Lyon-China relations were initiated by silk manufacturers and traders in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and then got developed in a very pronounced way during the first Lyon commercial missions between 1843 and 1846. For the first time since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, those trade missions were referring to the maritime "New Silk Route" between Europe and China.

*Missions referring to the maritime “New Silk Rout”(Maritime) between Lyon and China*

The “New Silk Route” refers to the historic maritime route linking Europe to China via Chinese Mediterranean (South China Sea), notably for the silk trades. This maritime “New Silk Route” was partly parallel to the continental “Silk Road” that began in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and ended in the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD, it definitively replaced the “Silk Road” from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The Chinese maritime trade on the Chinese Mediterranean (South China Sea) has become important since the Tang (唐 618–690, 705–907) and Song (宋 960–1279) periods and it reached its peak with the Zheng He (郑和 1371–1433) maritime expedition during the Ming period (明 1368–1644). Nevertheless, Chinese important maritime expeditions ceased just after the 7<sup>th</sup> expedition of Zheng He in 1433, and this phenomenon occurred in the Age of Discovery initiated by Europeans (Cyrille P. Coutansais, 2016).

Despite the cessation of major official Chinese maritime expeditions, maritime trades on the South China Sea have not been condemned radically. The maritime silk trade in particular remained an important activity between China and the other regions of the world, including Europe. Henri Cordier (1908, p. 756) described this situation as follows:

It was only when the Portuguese, at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, had crossed the Cape of Good Hope and reopened the route of India and China, that the great Empire of East Asia and its industry began to be generally known in Europe, though antiquity did not ignore silk commerce... The trade of the Portuguese, valuable soldiers, but poor traders, landed in Canton in 1514, brought only a slow spread of Chinese goods in the west;... But when the Dutch entered East Asia, considerable traffic was established across the Indian Ocean, and business flourished until then.

Historically, the Rhone Valley, covering Dauphine, Provence, Lyon and Languedoc, was an important pole of sericulture. Pierre Clerget (1929, p. 1) explained the origins of sericulture in the Rhône valley regions, and stated that the silk commerce and tissue manufacturing had significantly exceeded sericulture in these regions.

...sericulture was introduced to the 6<sup>th</sup> century in the Byzantine Empire;<sup>2</sup> it was soon spread by the Arabs to Egypt, North Africa, Sicily and Spain, as a result of their

2 If is the case that means the sericulture was introduced to the 6<sup>th</sup> century in the Byzantine Empire, from China via the continental “Silk Road.”



migrations. In France, the sericulture came from Italy, or probably from Spain; its date of introduction is uncertain. The first sericulture trials in Provence appeared since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, or, possibly from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, according to Natalis Rondot. This chronological uncertainty stems in particular from the fact that the silk trade and tissue manufacturing have significantly outpaced sericulture. The sending to Queen Jeanne of Burgundy, in 1345, by the seneschal of Beaucaire and Nîmes, of 12 pounds of silk of Provence, bought in Montpellier 76 sols tournois la livre, is one of the first historical testimonies of a national production, to which may be added the mulberry plantations made in the Comtat Venaissin by Pope Clement V after the transfer of the Holy See to Avignon.

**Figure 3. The “Mulberry Tree Tavern” (“La Taverne du Mûrier) in Avignon (Provence), France was later renamed “The Breeze House” (la Demeure de l’Atmosphère), after the acquisition of the Baroncelli family from Florence in 1469. The former name probably reflected the knowledge of sericulture in Avignon, Provence, already dated at that time**



Photo credit: the author.

According to Mau Chuan-Hui (2006), beginning from the arrival of the Portuguese in China in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, they developed an active maritime trade of silks, spices and silver between China and South

America, Japan, Southeast Asia, Europe. At the same time European governments, particularly in France, worried about large quantities of money which were leaking abroad for the import of silks. Those countries made attempts to advance their sericulture.

Jean Peyrot (2001) has irrefutably demonstrated commercial ties which brought together the silk businessmen of Lyon and the silk-producing regions of China such as Jiangnan (Suzhou, Hangzhou), Canton, etc., since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

This offered a base enabling the significant emergence of silk trade between Lyon and China following the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The commercial marine traffic of Lyon, which historically was a European silk capital importing raw silk from China, multiplied starting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Opium War until right after the unequal Treaty of Whampoa signed in 1844. Lyon silk merchants henceforth conducted successive “Lyon Missions” (Commercial Exploration Mission to China) via the South China Sea. Among traders who participated in those missions, are Isidore Hedde (1801–1880) and Natalis Rondot (1821–1900) from the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon who participated in the first expedition, the Mission of Lagrené,<sup>3</sup> from 1843 to 1846.

**Figure 4. View of Canton circa 1800, water color and gouache on paper.  
Unknown Chinese artist**



Photo credit: La revue Musée des arts et métiers, février 2006.

3 In 1843, French diplomat Théodore de Lagrené undertook a long journey which took him to Qing China at a moment in which the country was opening to trade with West. He was heading a delegation of four members, appointed by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry with a mandate and mission to collect not only business information and contacts, but also samples of raw materials, finished products, tools, and information about the technical know-how. One of its delegates, Isidore Hedde, brought back a relatively large collection of objects related to the silk industry (Demeulenaere-Douyère 2017).

**Figure 5.** The former site of the Weaving Bureau of the Imperial Court in Suzhou, the office of the imperial administration to oversee the official manufacture of textile reserved for the Qing court



Photo credit: the author.

**Figure 6.** Map of China and Indochina. Colonel Niox, Eugène Darsy, Atlas of Geography, circa 1900



Photo credit: the author.

**Figure 7. Embroidery Roll (excerpt): Fluvial traffic scene on the Grand Canal in Suzhou of the Qing period. Collection of the Silk Museum of the Suzhou New District, Suzhou**



Photo credit: the author.

Two fluvial derivations of the silk trades continued to develop during Qing epoch. The Grand Canal ensured the delivery of the best fabrics including silks from Jiangnan (Suzhou, Hangzhou) to the north (Beijing) and silks of Jiangnan were transported from Shanghai to Canton (Guangzhou) by the maritime route, via the East China Sea. Then together with silks of Canton, from Canton the Chinese silks were finally expedited to Europe via the South China Sea, that was the maritime “New Silk Route” from which the Lyon Missions were operating.

*Lyon commercial exploration mission to China and creation of the political-business network by Ulysse Pila*

Reveneau Louis (1899, pp. 62–63) provided some detailed information on this Commercial Exploration Mission to China, conducted by Lyonnais during post-Opium War, corresponding with the French Indochina period. In spite of the author’s colonial point of view, from his narrative we can note the importance of the silk commerce between Lyon and China via Tonkin.

The Lyon Commercial Exploration Mission to China organized by the Lyon Chamber of Commerce left Marseilles on September 15, 1895, six months after the signing of

the Simonoseki Treaty inflicted on the Japanese winners by the Chinese Protecting Powers... By the diversity of its industries, by the boldness of its capital, the city of Lyons could have sufficed for itself. It maintains the most active relations with the Far East: more than half of the exported greige silks of Chang-hai (Shanghai), – 36,862 bullets on 70,690 in 1897, – take the road to France, that is to say of Lyon. But the Chamber of Commerce preferred associating the other Chambers with its project. Marseilles, Bordeaux, Lille, Roubaix, Roanne answered his call. The ten technical delegates, who formed the bulk of the mission, represented what is most open and most innovative in the great trade of France.

The fragment shows that the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon had employed a policy to associate with some French partners, a policy of network. It was also during the same period (1843–1906) that the Lyon silk merchants developed influence networks and colonial strategy.

Lyon silk merchants and financiers who created networks destined to better compete with their British counterparts on the Asian markets. Their initial goal was to build an integrated System that went from a depot bank to the installation of vast communication and transportation networks in Southeast France in order to link up Lyon and Shanghai. These liberals, strongly influenced by the philosophy of Saint-Simon, gradually took an interest in Tonkin, planning to make it the springboard for conquering the markets of southwest China. To achieve their goals, these businessmen, anchored in a liberal, center-left tradition, created numerous political desires with Republican opportunists. In doing so, they created the basis for what would later be known as the Colonial Party, and the result was an important network known as the 'linocracy'.

Jean-François Klein (2005, p. 21) claimed:

...It is always a question of setting in motion the subtle and complicated interplay of strengths and weaknesses of each individual, and using them to establish the effective links that make up the networks. In the end, we find that what gives entrepreneurs their strength, power and solidity is 'linocracy', the power of networks.

Among them, Ulysse Pila (1837–1909) was a key character in this strategic conquest of Lioncracy. Born in Avignon in 1837, Ulysse Pila studied in Béziers and moved to Lyon at the age of 18. In 1863, he entered silk trading circles and left for Shanghai and afterwards to Japan. It was the beginning of his extreme-Oriental vocation, which was reinforced in 1867 with the creation of a brokerage firm in Marseille dealing with silk trade, which was transferred to Lyon in 1876. A quarter of a century later Ulysse Pila was working in the service of Lyon's interests in East Asia, particularly in French Indochina. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a member



of the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon, he stayed several times in Tonkin, where he became an adviser to the General Government. He was working, among other things, on the preparation of the colonial exhibition of 1894 in Lyon and at the same time, he was active in Yunnan.

Ulysse Pila can be characterized as an ambitious person, expansionist, colonialist, liberal and the advocate of free-trade who against the autarchy, was the founder of the spirit of Lyon industrialists. He attempted to connect the business world with the political world, or directly create networks in which the business world could engage in politics. At the beginning of this political-business network, he aligned himself in particular with the spirit of Saint-Simonian Utopia.<sup>4</sup> Today, the tradition according to which the business world connects to the political world in order to influence political decision, remains active in French political life. This represents the inheritance of Pila.

*Silk trade between Lyon and China, in relation with Saint-Simonian Utopia (Liberalism with human face)*

In 1968, when Alexander Dubček (1921–1992) announced the construction of “Socialism with Human Face” in Prague, it was a political attempt of Dubček and the other reformers to liberalize the communist government, in order to improve the economic and social situation in Soviet regime. However, on the other way around, more than a century ago, there was an endeavor of “Liberalism, Industrialism with Human Face,” conducted by the French Catholic-Bourgeois under the guidance of Saint-Simonian utopic ideas.

Born of a Catholic culture, at the beginning of industrialization, the doctrine of St Simon accentuates: *Universal love of men, universal brotherhood* (Frick 1988).

The activities of the silk trade increased the wealth of both Lyon, and its silk merchants which led to the emergence of the bourgeois society of Lyons in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Lyon bourgeoisie was able to integrate

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4 Saint-Simonism is an ideological current originally based on the socio-economic and political doctrine of Claude-Henri de Rouvroy of Saint-Simon (1760–1825) from which it takes its name. This founding thought of industrialism, published through rather scattered writings and summarized according to Saint-Simon in the *New Christianity* (unfinished work published in 1825 at the death of Saint-Simon), was often reformulated by his disciples after his death finally to exert a decisive influence in France at the time of the industrial revolution, and the development of industrial society in that country. (source from Wikipedia)

liberal ideas with Saint-Simonian utopian doctrine, further elaborate and put it into practice. The St-Simonian doctrine, opened to the world and imbued with a certain humanism (Klein 2005). This Saint-Simonian doctrine, which I would describe as Socialist-liberalism or Liberalism with a Human Face, influenced by a tradition of Christianity, embodied the desire to find a balance between the pursuit of profit and the pursuit of humanism, at the time of the Industrial Revolution in France.

*The booming Lyon Industry of the Belle Epoque and its industrial-cultural-politic heritages*

The implementation of Saint-Simonian utopia is the result of the industrial and commercial prosperity obtained by the Lyonnais. By entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Saint-Simonian utopia continued to inspire and its practice has been further developed. The Lyonnais had the idea to associate industry and commerce to art, science and the economy.

Historically, Lyon became a commercial city and an important financial center during the French Renaissance. Its economic prosperity was built successively by the silk industry, then by the emergence of industries including textiles, following which it hosted in the south of the city, many petrochemical industries along the Rhone, named the corridor of chemistry.

Following the departure and closure of the textile and chemical industries, Lyon gradually refocused on the sectors of advanced technology, such as pharmaceuticals and biotechnology. Starting from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, industrial and technological inventions and innovations have marked the major spirit of the industries of Lyon. Inventors like Lumière,<sup>5</sup> who invented the technique of cinematography, Berliet<sup>6</sup> who devoted his life to designing and

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5 The company Lumière, previously a company Antoine Lumière and his sons, then anonymous society of photographic plates and papers Antoine Lumière and his sons, is a former major French world industry in photography and cinematography of 1884, founded and directed by Antoine Lumière, his sons Auguste and Louis Lumière (the Lumière brothers), grandson Henri Lumière, and heirs...

6 Berliet was a French manufacturer of automobiles, buses, trucks and military vehicles among other vehicles based in Vénissieux, outside of Lyon, France. Founded in 1899, and apart from a five-year period from 1944 to 1949 when it was put into "administration sequestre" it was in private ownership until 1967 when it then became part of Citroën, and subsequently acquired by Renault in 1974 and merged with Saviem into a new Renault Trucks company in 1978. The Berliet marque was phased out by 1980.

manufacturing trucks, Mérieux<sup>7</sup> who excelled in the field of biomedicine, made considerable contributions to the history of industrial innovation. It is important to claim that these industries have been trying to develop academic links with various institutions using an interdisciplinary approach. For example, Leon Bérard (1870–1965), oncologist working together with Auguste Lumière (1862–1954), inventor of cinematography, set up a scientific cooperation bearing interdisciplinary characteristics, which gave rise to new inventions and made progress in the field of medical care in oncology.

**Figure 8. Léon Bérard with the Bérard Insitute. Photo above right: Léon Bérard with Auguste Lumière on a boat at the Côte d'Azur, France**

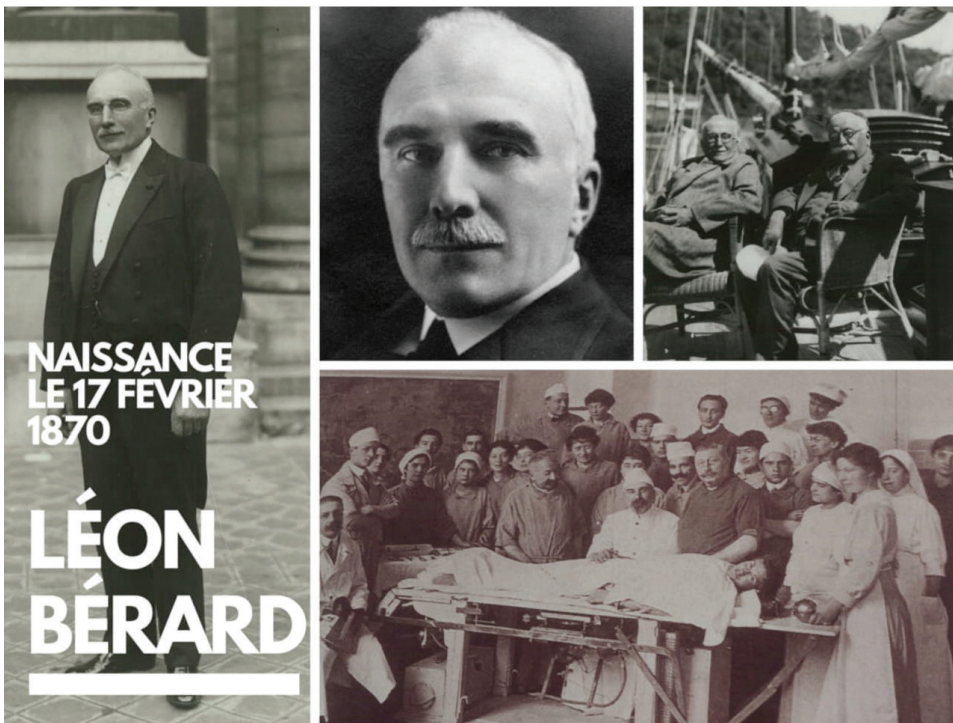


Photo credit: Center Léon Bérard.

<sup>7</sup> It was created by Marcel Mérieux in 1897 under the name Institut Biologique Mérieux (Mérieux Biological Institute). The vaccine development branch of the institute was separated early on and is now part of Sanofi Pasteur. (Above sources from Wikipedia.)



## 5. Modern time, the French-Chinese Institute of Lyon and the Work-Study Movement for Chinese student

The 20<sup>th</sup> century Lyon-China ties have also extended to the field of education, with the establishment of the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon (Institut Franco-Chinois de Lyon) in 1919 in Lyon. One of the reasons for the choice of Lyon is stated as follows:

Undoubtedly, the Lyonnais were also influenced by cultural and economic relations between Lyon and China, linked to centuries-old religious and commercial missions (Lyon is often considered the most western point of the Maritime Silk Road). Another advantage of Lyon, is the presence of a university and many specialized schools, a large faculty and quality. In addition, Lyon was probably preferred in Paris for reasons related to its less revolutionary political climate. (Museum of the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon)

The creation in 1921 of the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon stems from China's policy of openness to "Western studies" (Xixue 西学). Born in the last decades of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) this reform was a prolongation of Xixuedongjian 西学东渐 (Propagation of Western studies in the East) dating back to the Ming Period (1368–1644). In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the Opium Wars, China was forced to open to the Western world. This reform strategy attacked a society suddenly confronted with the West and struggling to adapt to a changing, modern world. In this context, a new educational model, modern education, namely Western education appeared necessary. Sending students abroad to assimilate Western knowledge is one of the responses to this need and demand. The first contingent of thirty people left for America as early as 1872; others went to Japan, Europe and especially France.

Lyon had a long-standing relationship with China, mainly related to the silk industry and trade. A museum was founded by Emile Guimet, collecting objects of art from the Far East. There was a cultural environment favorable to China with the teaching of Chinese language and culture since 1900, reinforced at the highest level by a Professor's Chair at the University of Lyon (l'Université de Lyon) created in 1913. Lyon enjoyed a rich academic fabric and diversity conducive to the training of young Chinese, with many institutions of higher education in all disciplines, scientific, medical, technical, literary, artistic and offering broad opportunities for guidance. Thanks to the Mayor, Edouard Herriot, convinced

of the benefit of intellectual relations with China, the city enjoyed a favorable political context. The idea of creating a Franco-Chinese university in Lyon was welcomed in China where three universities (Beijing, Canton and Amoy) agreed to be involved in this work by immediate or future subscriptions. Li Shizeng (李石曾 1881–1973) and Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培 1868–1940) were appointed to help morally and materially the work undertaken by the University of Lyon.

**Figure 9. Entrance of the former site of the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon**

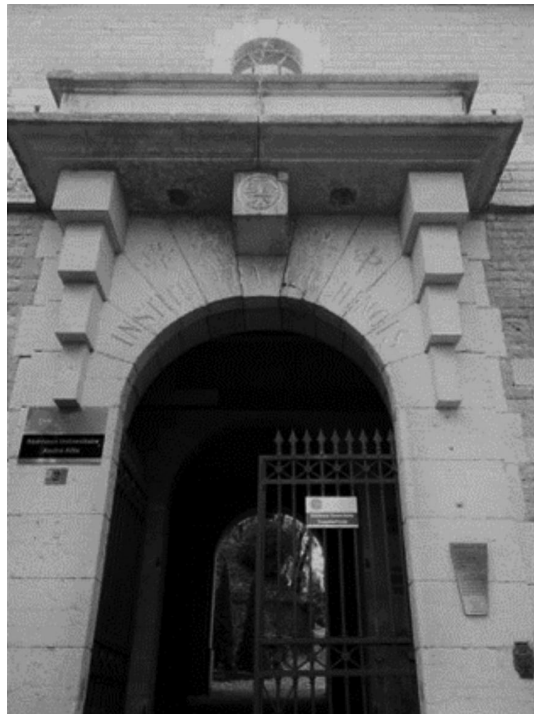


Photo credit: the author.

There were approximately two thousand Chinese who participated in the Work-Study Movement<sup>8</sup> in France. Nevertheless, this movement took

<sup>8</sup> The Work-Study Movement (Le Mouvement Travail-Etudes (French); Qinggong jiangxue yundong 勤工俭学运动 (Chinese), literally the movement of “diligent work-studies in frugality”) will concern several thousand young Chinese people in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Studies abroad (liuxue) – Japan, United States, Europe – aim to create an intelligentsia likely to make China access to modernity. (definition given by the Museum of History of the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon.)

place in a crucial and difficult social-political-economic circumstance: The passage of the last Qing dynasty to a first republican experience caused confusion and instability, as well as fighting between warlords which gave rise to abuses. A disastrous economic situation added to disorder and uncertainty, paralyzing the country and complicating the building of a new society, the intelligentsias.

The principle of the Work-Study Movement was developed by Li Shizeng, born to a Chinese traditional mandarin family, but who in his young age studied in France. From 1902, Li Shizeng began his studies at the Practical School of Agriculture, Montargis and the Pasteur Institute. The influence of anarchist ideals, widespread in France at the time, his deep admiration for the culture of his host country, as well as the vast network of relationships he had woven with important representatives of political, cultural French economics and diplomacy certainly helped to realize his project, allowing many of his compatriots to finance their studies in France through their work.

On July 8, 1921, the "University Association Franco-Chinese" (l'Université Association Franco-chinoise) was founded. The term "university" was chosen to affirm the French and Chinese will to establish a higher education institution. In its first meeting, the association created the Franco-Chinese Institute. On August 9, 1921 the declaration relating to the Institut Franco-Chinois (The Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon, IFC-Lyon) appeared in the *Journal Officiel*. The institute was named in Chinese "Li'ang zhongfa daxue 里昂中法大学" and nicknamed LIDA.

The Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon operated in two phases. The first phase was accompanied by the application of the Work-Study Movement. Due to the constant increase of living cost and economic degradation in France since 1909, the implementation of this movement caused difficulties and ended following the strike of Chinese students in 1921.<sup>9</sup>

The second phase took place from 1921 to 1949. During this period, the application of the work-study movement was almost nonexistent. Starting from 1946 the recruitment of Chinese students from China was difficult. In 1949 China entered into the communist era, a phase of isolation of China from the world resulted in the closure of the institute.

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9 The March on Lyons of 1921 is known as LiDa Yundong 里大运动 in the Chinese Communist Party's historiography. This event is important because it marks the end of the Work-Study Movement. The student-workers who are then in France live in a great material distress, victims of the economic crisis which does not allow them to provide for their needs.

Of the 473 students enrolled at the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon between 1921 and 1946, a quarter defended a doctoral thesis. Having become doctors, these Chinese returned to China with the highest grade of French faculty. While some students only briefly stayed at the Institute for several months, others stayed for more than ten years. Many of those students continued their studies in other French cities, or even in other European countries.

*Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in 1979 and his previous French years (1920–1925)*

The history of the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon (IFC-Lyon) remains one of the central elements of Chinese students' studies Movement in France between 1921 and 1946. It reflected the attempt of Chinese education reform to modernize and create a new 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese intelligentsia that the country needed. The administration of IFC-Lyon insisted that this institution encouraged only student academic activities, not political ones. Nevertheless, the economic, social and political context in France and Europe, led to a situation in which Chinese students were involved or influenced by leftist political tendencies of that time.

The French years of Deng Xiaoping are connected with the Chinese students' studies in France Movement. On October 19, 1920, Deng Xiaoping arrived in Marseille (France) with a group of student-workers, under the organization of the French-Chinese Education Society (SEFC)<sup>10</sup> probably with the idea of one day being able to contribute to the salvation of China by acquiring Western sciences and techniques (Barman & Dulioust 2017).

He continued his French studies, which he already had started at the French preparatory school of Chongqing in China, at the Bayeux College in Normandy for 5 months. However, due to the living costs in France, which had been steadily increasing since the spring of 1919, the SEFC, that paid the pension for student workers with limited funds, offered students who could not afford to continue their studies to work-at the factories. Deng Xiaoping entered Schneider du Creusot factory in Creusot on April 2, 1921, but he abandoned the exhausting work after three months. Later he arrived at the Hutchinson plant in Chalette on February 13, 1922, where gradually he began to participate in the political movements organized by the left-wing students.

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<sup>10</sup> La Société d'éducation franco-chinoise (Society of Franco-Chinese Education).

Until the end of 1925, during the short period of working in the Renault factory, he was involved in different students' politic groups like China Socialist Youth League Tour Europe Branch<sup>11</sup> which was a forerunner of the China Youth Communist League,<sup>12</sup> and Guomindang (GMD) in Europe, created in Lyon at the end of 1923. He was involved in the political engagement of anti-international imperialism groups during the last period of his French years, before he became an activist in the Chinese Communist Party.

**Figure 10. The shipping liner Des Messageries Maritimes that once transported Chinese students from Shanghai, Canton to Marseille. Images showed at the Museum of the Franco-Chinese Institute of Lyon**



Photo credit: the author.

This has clearly marked the evolutionary transformation of Deng Xiaoping, who has turned from a university student into a politician, motivated by his consciousness of social and human equality. He might not have expected it, but the epoch in which he lived made this transformation. Nevertheless, Western technological modernity had never been

11 Zhongguo shehuizhuyi qingniantuan lüou zhibu 中国社会主义青年团旅欧支部

12 Zhongguo lüfa shaonian gongchandang 中国旅法少年共产党

absent from his political conviction, which undoubtedly influenced and contributed to the policy of the Four Modernizations (sigexiandaihua 四个现代化)<sup>13</sup> being part of his Economic Reform policy (Gaigekaifang 改革开放) announced in 1979, just after his return to power in the central government and when he became president of China. At that moment, Communist China had just started to recover from the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) which had caused political, economic and human disaster with incalculable loss in all these aspects.

At the end of the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping once opposed a conservative extremist:

Modernity exists, and I saw it when I was a teenager, I took a huge ship to arrive in France and this ship was made of modernity!<sup>14</sup>

On May 12, 1975, at the end of the Cultural Revolution he presided over a Chinese delegation during an official visit to France. The first Sino-French industrial contracts between the two countries were negotiated and signed during these years, including the contract signed with Lyon industrialist Paul Berliet. This preceded Deng's policies of Opening Up China in 1978 and Four Modernizations in 1979.

## 6. Setting up of scientific-industrial links between France and China

### *Scientific-industrial-political alliance since de Gaulle's government in France*

On October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960, De Gaulle was visiting Grenoble and stayed at the castle of Vizille<sup>15</sup> for an unknown reason. However, he visited two companies from the hydraulic technology sector and the French

13 Those of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and the military.

14 From a documentary film diffused in the Chanel of Phenix.

15 The Departmental Domain of Vizille is a park of one hundred hectares in which is located the castle Lesdiguières sheltering the museum of the French Revolution since 1983. The castle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century stands on the town of Vizille in the department of Isere and the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region. Following the Day of Tiles in 1788, this castle was the venue of the meeting of the State's General of the Dauphiné that would spawn the French Revolution. It is the subject of a classification as historical monuments by the list of 1862.



Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission, CEA). He also met the scientific researchers from the Grenoble Institute of Technology (Institut Polytechnique de Grenoble, Grenoble INP) and from the CEA.

De Galle's visit to Grenoble evinced his goal of focus on the strategy of high technology development and his willingness to establish scientific and political connection. He was accompanied by Louis Néel,<sup>16</sup> the French scientist. De Gaulle questioned Louis Néel: *Mr. Néel, what do you think of the future of France?* (Ballu 2006). De Gaulle's visit to Grenoble has certainly encouraged Grenoble to become France's center of science and innovation. Grenoble was then named the French Silicon Valley. Grenoble is a French Alps city bordering Lyon, located in the Rhône valley, belonging to the Rhône-Alpes region.

**Figure 11. Charles de Gaulle in the Castle of Vizille on October 6, 1960**



Photo credit: Musée de la Révolution Française (Vizille).

<sup>16</sup> Louis Eugène Félix Néel (1904–2000) is a French physicist. He is interested in the magnetic properties of matter since 1938. He is notably at the origin of the discoveries of antiferromagnetism and Ferrimagnetism for which he will be laureate of the Nobel Prize of physics of 1970. During the Second World War, he is involved in work to protect ships against magnetic mines, saving the lives of hundreds of people. (Wikipedia)

**Figure 12. Louis Néel and Charles de Gaulle at the CEA, Grenoble on October 7, 1960**



Photo credit: Yves Ballu, De Mélusion à Minatec, Editions le Dauphiné Liberté, 2006.

The two prominent scientific personalities, Louis Néel and Michel Soutif, made an important contribution to the scientific development of Grenoble.

In 1945, at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, Louis Néel decided finally to settle down in Grenoble, desiring to create a scientific center in Grenoble, capable of competing with Parisian scientific institutions, and promoting a multidisciplinary (scientific-industrial) approach. This decision was for two reasons: there were preexisting advantaged and available academic premises, especially those of the Institut Fourrier (Grenoble). In addition, Grenoble offered an industrial environment conducive to cooperation with academia. In the same year he succeeded in creating a university chair in applied physics at Grenoble, as well as three master's degrees in electrical engineering, physical metallurgy, and magnetic and mechanical engineering. Louis Néel then became a professor at the Faculty of Sciences of Grenoble. (Wikipedia)

In 1951, Néel invited Michel Soutif (1921–2016), a young doctoral graduate from the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris (ENS) to join him in Grenoble. While accepting the invitation from Louis Néel, Michel Soutif refused an offer proposed by de Gaulle to be a scientific counselor in the De Gaulles's government.<sup>17</sup> He moved to Grenoble where he installed

<sup>17</sup> "I thought he was not a democratic man, so I refused him. But only at his death I realize that de Galle was a great man." Memory entrusted by Michel Soutif to the author.



the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Department, provided the first teaching of atomic engineering in 1955 and participated in the creation of the CENG (current CEA Grenoble). As a university professor, he was open to industry (he was an adviser to Alcatel), he founded the Laboratory of Physical Spectrometry in 1961 and directed it until 1976. He was the first president of the Scientific and Medical University of Grenoble from 1971 to 1976. Together with Néel, he established interdisciplinary links between different scientific fields, as well as elaborated links between academic world and industry, which clearly marked the originality of the scientific-industrial vision of Néel-Soutif.

Both men, Néel and Soutif, understood the importance of the relationship between industry and fundamental research, and of the consequent need to attract new industries to the surrounding region. (Wikipedia)

In the 1970s, Michel Soutif visited Japan, where he encountered an Asian cultural world that was still unknown to him. Under the influence of one of his Japanese counterparts, he became interested not only in the history of Japan, but also in that of China. Following his visit, he has deepened his knowledge of China's cultural and scientific history and

**Figure 13. Michel Soutif in Beijing, September 1983**



Photo credit: the author.

has become a connoisseur of China. He had made an intellectual contribution to the study of China's cultural and scientific history: he had achieved several books on the scientific history of classical China and initiated conferences in this field, along with his scientific dedication in the field of physics.

*Soutif-Mérieux alliance for the French-Chinese scientific and academic cooperation*

The scientific contribution and initiatives of Michel Soutif are numerous and significant, among these, the “marriage” between medical studies and physical studies realized after a merger of two faculties into a single Grenoble university is one of the most important elements. In addition of all his scientific contribution, since the late 1980s, Michel Soutif being the president of the University conducted a series of scientific exchanges with China, particularly with Shanghai, in the field of medical education.

**Figure 14. Aurore University located in the former French concession. Unknown – Book of the World Geography, Part Ninth, Monsun Asia, Part One, General Description, China, Japan. Published by publishing house Aventinum in Prague. Map of Shanghai after the First World War. The descriptions are in Czech**

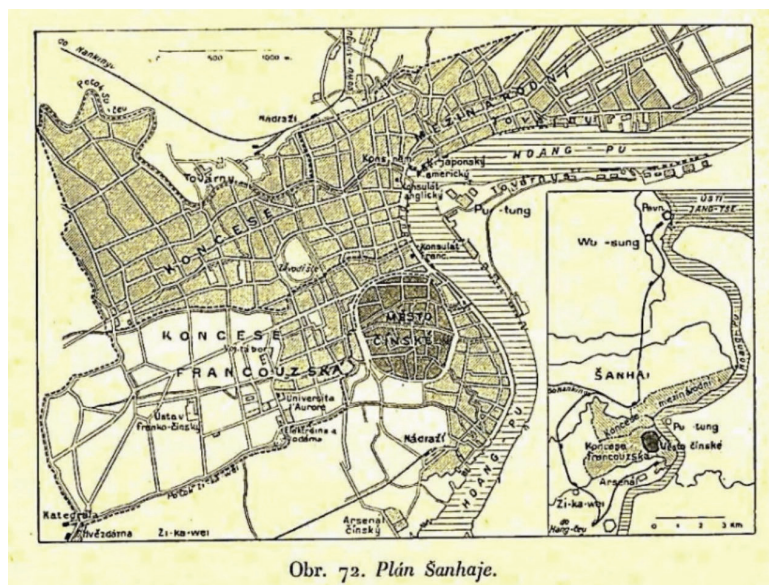


Photo credit: Wikipedia.

In 1988, Michel Soutif was contacted by the Chancellor of the Shanghai Medical University No. 2, to restore academic ties with French universities. This establishment is the former Aurore University (Univeristé l'Aurore 震旦大学), founded in 1903 by the Chinese Jesuit Joseph Ma Xiangbo (马相如 1840–1939) and his French confreres. Historically, the University of Aurore remained active until 1952. Michel Soutif perceived the importance of this demand, with many strategic aspects, and made effort to respond favorably to this request. Then, a series of academic exchanges between Shanghai and Grenoble has been established anew since 1989.

**Figure 15. Photo of the former French Concession in Shanghai in 2018, near to the site of the Aurore University**



Photo credit: the author.

However, at the time, the decision of the French side faced many criticisms following the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. In a publicized wave, the boycott of China by the West was not in favor of continuing this project. Michel Soutif thus asked for the political support of Alain Mérieux, a well-known figure in the biomedical sector in Lyon, whose institution had been investing in China since the end of the 1970s, (as mentioned earlier in this article). At that time, Alain Mérieux also held a political position as vice-president of the Rhône-Alpes region (Lyon and Grenoble are part of it) and was in charge of international affairs.

The two men (Soutif/Mérieux) finally made a constructive decision concerning this Franco-Chinese university cooperation in the field of medical studies in 1989. The cooperation was launched in 1990. This institution, Shanghai Medical University No. 2, merged within Shanghai Jiaotong University since 2016, has retained the prestigious Sino-French Medical Education Program, which offers 8 years of medical training ranging from undergraduate to doctorate, in French and Chinese languages, with parallel studies and internships in France.

At the time of the decision, some French academics considered that China was “retrograde,” incapable of modernity on the political and scientific levels and that it was therefore not necessary to cooperate with Chinese institutions. Michel Soutif refuted:

No, China is an intellectual country and the world owes a lot to China, notably to its classical scientific inventions and contribution to humanity.<sup>18</sup>

His refutation embodied in a historical approach (view on the history) shows a consideration of humanism and equality.

As for Alain Mérieux, China was not an unknown world. Since 1978, he has presented in China the human and veterinary vaccines with the Mérieux Institute (Institut Mérieux). His father-in-law Paul Berliet had been involved in Franco-Chinese industrial cooperation since 1965. Paul Berliet nurtured a conviction to help China to build an industrial research team in the automotive sector. There is no doubt that Alain Mérieux has the same conviction and affection for China, as he has affirmed below:

I have a lot of esteem for China, and we must not forget a tradition of the (maritime) Silk Road between France and China...<sup>19</sup>

More recently, during an interview in China,<sup>20</sup> Alain Mérieux has expressed his opinion on the Belt and Road Initiative: *This initiative can bring China’s medical team to countries and regions that are in dire need of assistance due to diseases, especially infectious diseases. This is a global issue.* He also told the reporter of the First Financial Affairs: *The Mérieux Foundation has established P3-level laboratories in Tajikistan, Lebanon and Belarus, and will soon establish P3 laboratories in Tunisia. These countries are located on the passage of the “Belt and Road Initiative,” which implies significant cooperation in the future.*

The key issue, which Michel Soutif and Alain Mérieux had to face in 1989 was the Western embargo on China and the question of whether French-Chinese academic cooperation should continue. In taking a constructive decision, Alain Mérieux elucidated his point of view, which was applauded by Michel Soutif:

18 Conference given by Michel Soutif in October 2015 in Grenoble.

19 Alain Mérieux, speech on “Homage day to Michel Soutif” at the University Inter-age of Dauphiné, March 20, 2018 Grenoble (France).

20 “China Net”, viewed 8 May 2018, [www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-05/02/c\\_1122774029.html](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-05/02/c_1122774029.html)

Boycotting China is to isolate China, it will aggravate the situation in China... it will make the hardest ones even harder, and will make the most vulnerable suffer the most.<sup>21</sup>

Alain Mérieux's statement echoed De Gaulle's diplomacy, just as he affirmed his Gaullist political tendency.<sup>22</sup> In historical, civilizational and human terms, *France recognizes only the world as it is*, said Charles de Gaulle, it is also breaking an ideological dogma, rejecting the ideology of isolating a nation, broadening and guaranteeing the meaning of human rights, so that another population under a different regime can also benefit from existential equality and receive the influences of modernity.

## 7. Conclusions

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was initially proposed by the Chinese government to France and Germany in Europe. The French government did not respond favorably to this cooperation project (Mierzejewski 2017).<sup>23</sup> The decision was made during the term of François Hollande. Despite a long history and tradition of cooperation between France and China described in the article, it was not taken into consideration by the French government of Hollande. The experience of previous cooperation on the Maritime Silk Route between the merchants and industrialists of Lyon, who established important industrial and commercial links with China were ignored in the decision-making process on the Belt and Road Initiative.

The China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) finally found a moderate echo in French politics and was applauded by Emmanuel Macron during his official visit to Beijing in January 2018. In November 2018, the Municipality and the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon organized a forum entitled "Les Confluences Franco-Chinoises" (Franco-Chinese Confluences), an event to discuss the issues of Franco-Chinese cooperation in the context of BRI.

21 Alain Mérieux, speech on "Homage day to Michel Soutif" at the University Inter-age of Dauphiné, March 20, 2018 Grenoble (France).

22 This could echo with a Chinese idiom: Hua gange wei yubo, lit. to exchange weapons of war for gifts of jade and silk; fig. to turn hostility into friendship.

23 Evoked by Dominik Mierzejewski at the Center for Asian Affairs Seminar, Europe-China: Security, perceptions and money. 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2017, Lodz.



**Figure 16. The venue of the Confluences Franco-Chinoises held in the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon, Lyon in November 2018**



Photo credit: the author.

In March 2019, prior to Xi Jinping's official visit to Italy and France, the European Union presented a proposal calling for a common agreement among European states to react together vis à vis China's BRI. During Xi Jinping's visit to Paris, the Elysée Palace organized a forum entitled "*La gouvernance du monde*" (The governance of the world). Will France regain its strategic and influential role, and continue the privileged partnership with China, initiated at the time of de Gaulle?

The centrality of De Gaulle's diplomacy with China is a civilizational and humanistic consideration based on equality. The legacy of De Gaulle's diplomacy shifted from a simple geopolitical motive to a privileged industrial and technological partnership based on academic and educational exchange.

In the current climate of trade war between the United States and China, it may be useful to revisit this history of Franco-Chinese diplomacy to reflect on an independent diplomatic policy, which operated outside the dominance of the leading powers.

Franco-Chinese relations range from "love and hate"<sup>24</sup> accompanied by divergences but also similarities. Mutual understanding and reciprocal respect can break a judgmental dogma that focuses solely on political and

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<sup>24</sup> "*Je t'aime, moi non plus*", the title of a French song written and composed by Serge Gainsbourg.

economic factors. Since de Gaulle, the impacts made by influential men and women (hommes et femmes d'influence) from the intellectual and industrial circles are significant for the French politic. This should not be neglected nor left forgotten.

As Victor Hugo declared: *Freedom begins where ignorance ends*. This could lead to a new approach to world diplomacy.

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# The Lost Heritage of the South China Sea Trade, Fishing, and Religion as Expressions of Popular Sovereignty

*They that go down to the sea in ships, that do  
business in great waters; these see the works of  
the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.*

*Psalm cvii. v. 23, 24.*

## **Abstract**

*China has a long history of fishing, trading, and settlement across the South China Sea. Recently, this maritime and economic history has been widely debated in Western countries as China reminds the world of her maritime heritage. Due to this disconnect, use of Western primary sources may be the key to unlocking the path for a common understanding of this history.*

**Keywords:** *South China Sea, Collective Memory, Dongsha, Xisha, Zhongsha, Nansha, Paracel Islands, Spratly Islands, Chinese maritime history, UNCLOS, 9-Dash Line, 11-Dash Line, Popular Sovereignty*

## **1. Introduction**

In 1947, the Republic of China (ROC) published a map of the South China Sea region that included a line comprised of eleven dashes (11-Dash Line) out from the Chinese coastline (ROC:MOFA:MAP). There had never been a map like it. It was unique in its concept; defining a territorial space that included the open sea. The events of the following years did not allow for international awareness of the map's publication, in effect

blocking the opportunity for protests to be registered according to international law (Prescott 2008, p. 91). Global political events and the United States of America's (U.S.) Strategy of Ambiguity, (Benson 2006) obscured any basis for a clear understanding, causing international disputes in decades to follow (Hayton 2014).

To explore the historical basis of the map's territorial claims, this paper will utilise evidence concerning trade, fishing activities, and the building of religious structures in the South China Sea region to consider the applicability of the concept of popular sovereignty (Schurz 1860; Van Leyden 1981). The assumption: A collective memory of a Chinese presence in the region could result in a "historic rights" narrative (Dupuy 2013; International Council for Science 2002). It asks if there is enough evidence of actions by peoples from a single culture acting on their own authority, to support the existence of a notion of popular sovereignty (Kahn 2000). The 1509 arrival of the Portuguese in Melaka (Borschberg 2004) (Malaysia), began the formation of a European textual corpus. This record of the "fourth stage" of Chinese maritime history forms the main body of sources for this investigation (Elleman 2012, p. xii).<sup>1</sup>

The methods established after the founding of the United Nations (UN) for resolving issues of a maritime nature are the mechanisms of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS). The Contracting Parties to the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS:1994) may resolve issues through these organisations. The PRC declined to join in a dispute brought before ITLOS by the Philippines in 2013, and therefore did not submit supporting documents, causing a modern reconstruction of history. This act affected the legal process of discovery in this case that could preclude a modern legal claim through the principle of *stare decisis* "maintain what has been decided" (Wells 1878, p. 561) by an exploration of recorded history. This may have rendered the question moot, instead it has added to the post-1947 confusion over the line's formation. Throughout the paper, UNCLOS is not considered greatly. It is not a universal principal or human right; a historic activity or norm that led to a rights definition under the UN Charter. Nor does it have a defining article for

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1 Professor Lo considered the Song to early Ming period as the last of three failed attempts by China to become a major sea power. The Author of this paper considers the mid-Ming to late-Qing period, circa 1509–1898, when China possessed the fifth strongest navy in the world, as a "fourth stage." See: S.A.R. (1888).

historic rights included, although the Arbitration did consider this question and rejected the suggestion (UNCLOS:Ph-PRC). Instead, the older laws of the sea will be applied, in line with the principal of the law in use prior to the act being applicable (ICRC: 1949).<sup>2</sup> This is also in line with the constitutions of the Philippines and the U.S., who share a colonial past. These constitutions expressly prohibit the enactment and use of *ex post facto* (retroactively applied) laws (Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1935; Shallus 1787; Farrand 1911).

The experiences of people who could be considered seasonal or specialist workers according to the universal principles of the UN (Schlesinger 2003),<sup>3</sup> parallel the historic activities and experiences of other people's performing similar activities. However, did these activities and experiences form a collective memory that led to a concept of popular sovereignty, later manifested through the creation of the 11-Dash Line on Chinese maps of the South China Sea?

## 2. Methodology

In consideration of this question, a multi-faceted approach allows for a broad spectrum of data acquisition. Archive material from the U.K., U.S., the UN repository, and publications from the 15<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century were considered. The result allowed the blending of theories into a philosophy that is as complex as the opinions surrounding the 11-Dash Line.

A major component of any organised sociocultural system are the interactions between society and culture in a form that includes religious practice and worship (Elwell 2013). These components combine with art and science, as considered by Einstein:

All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom. (Einstein 1930, p. 3)

This combination of "three branches" provides a focus for identification of a distinct culture. If religious practices can be defined as behaviours

2 Geneva\_Convention IV: "The courts shall apply only those provisions of law which were applicable prior to the offence."

3 As the principles of the UN and EU are deemed 'universal' by member states, they are applied here as an articulated human norm. This is considered applicable through ROC founder member status within the UN.

that appear to have no practical purpose, practised “alone or in the community of others and in public or in private” (UNHRC 2011, p. 12) this can be identified through a survey for the arts and sciences a culture has developed over time into identifiable traits. This paper will look for temples and graves as an identifier of cultural traits.

As religious behaviours have been defined within UN principles (*ibid.*; McCrea 2010, p. 27), these definitions will be utilised to guide a virtual survey of the region through the records of officials, explorers, traders, and naturalists over a 450-year period. This survey will utilise observations following the concept of Slim:

These accounts are not as official history should be... completely accurate and untouched by emotion. They are instead the more individual and freer canvasses of a man trying to paint things seen, felt and remembered; a shade blurred here, a trifle out of perspective there... Yet withal true impressions of actual happenings as he saw them. (Slim 1962, p. vii)

The concept; these external observers were recording their personal experiences for prosperity, providing a primary historical account following the long established legal principal of “other things said” (Howell 1822, p. 901; House of Peers 1710, p. 270; Cardozo 2005; Philippines Supreme Court 1934, p. 183; U.S. Congress 1919, p. 61). These techniques were developed by Manguin:

Foreign sources – mainly written by travellers and geographers – offer an indispensable textual corpus to help scholars reconstruct the maritime history of the region. (Manguin 2017)

To allow for the possibility of regard for peoples as inhabitants of the South China Sea as sojourners, consideration will be given to the meteorological conditions, utilising the findings of Dr. Halley:

Winds extend to within two degrees of the equator, during the months of May, June, July, &c. to November; at which time, between two and twelve, forth latitude, being near Sumatra and Java, the contrary winds from the north-west, or between the north and west, set in, and blow strong, accompanied with dark rainy weather, for half a year, viz. from the beginning of November to April; and this monsoon is observed as far as the Molucca Isles. (Halley 1705, p. 68)

These conditions will guide examination of human activity within the South China Sea. Consideration will be therefore given for observations of “migrant worker[s] whose work by its character is dependent on

seasonal conditions and is performed only during part of the year" (U.N. 1990, p. 263) or as people "who engage for a restricted and defined period of time in work that requires professional, commercial, technical, or other highly specialised skill" (*ibid.*, p. 262). This seasonal aspect is consistent with the exercise of authority for territorial title; "the degree of exercise of authority varies according to the geographic and natural conditions of the territory concerned" (Norquist & Moore 1998, p. 186; Ferraro 2012 pp. 56–60). These UN designations allow for specific harvest and work periods, guiding consideration according to universal norms. As China (ROC) was a founding member of the UN, it is therefore appropriate to consider these principles (U.S. Department of State 1967, p. 2).

### **3. Chiang Kai-shek and new constructions of territorial space**

Hainan Island is a historic Chinese source of pearls and sea food (Lowery 1992, p. 45) used as a base for naval operations by the Han Dynasty during 112 B.C. (Lo 1957; Michalk 1986). It later became known as a place of banishment for the literati (Mayers 1871 & 1872), which resulted in it becoming a place of learning, producing Charles Soong in 1866 (Chu 2017). He was a U.S. Coast Guard sailor, a Methodist Minister, and a bible publisher, experiences that were to affect his daughters global awareness, two of whom married Sun Yat-sen (Lee 2011; Wells 2001) and Chiang Kai-shek (Hollington 1937). Both men were Republicans and converts to Christianity; Sun Yat-sen in 1883 (Lee 2011; Wells 2001) and Chiang Kai-shek in 1930 (Hollington 1937; Junio 2017). These familial and religious connections to Hainan could be seen as important links in their "traditional knowledge" (International Council for Science 2002, p. 9).

Hainan was affected by the events of the Century of Humiliation (Bickers 2016) despite the statement; "hereafter no port, bay or island along the coast of China will be ceded or leased to any foreign country" (Van Antwerp 1921). However, the weak Republic could not prevent seizures of Chinese territory (Willoughby 1922, p. 371; LoN Commission 1932). Hainan became a Japanese Imperial Navy base, while the French occupied the Paracel Islands "as a counter to Japanese activity in that region" (CMS 1939, p. 11; Japan T&M 1938, p. 1). Japan made her position on the Paracel Islands clear in a conversation with the U.S. Ambassador, J.C. Grew: "The Japanese claim no title but sustain the Chinese

claim that the islands are Chinese" (U.S. Department of State 1938). As China's Ambassador to the U.S. would state in 1938: "China is literally bleeding to death" (Hu 1939). China's humiliation was continuing. However, opponents at that time were validating later Chinese claims through their official declarations concerning sovereignty.

Japan recorded China's loss of Guangzhou, and the ability to fish freely out to sea: "The growing European Crisis facilitated seizure of Hainan Island in February and the Spratly Islands in March 1939" (Takenboy 1940). As territorial encroachments continued, Chiang Kai-shek may have recalled his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday statement: "For so long as we have not recovered our lost sovereign rights and restored our territorial integrity, we will never be free as a people nor independent as a nation" (Fenby 2003). Retaining sovereign rights and territorial integrity were later written into the UN Charter (UN 1947). Chiang Kai-shek would go on to inform President Roosevelt in 1941: "The people of China... will be immeasurably heartened by your impressive reaffirmation of the will of the American people to assist them" (Linebarger 1941).

That year, the Declaration of Principles, commonly called The Atlantic Charter, was published. Among the principles; "signatory states promised to respect not only the rights of nations but those of peoples and 'all the men in the lands'" (Evans 1996; UN:DI 1947, p. 2). The 1946 independence declarations by Viet Nam (Vietnam Const. 1959; FR: Du Ministre 1909; Stanford 1909; Survey Department. Singapore 1954; Anon. 1921; Nederlandsche 1671; Chung 1936) and the Philippines' (Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1935; U.S. Senate 1899; Dawson 1899; Foreman 1906, p. 25) were later political changes; creating nations whose boundaries had been determined through colonialism. The eighth principle was also of primary importance: "They believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force" (U.N. 1947, p. 10). The suggestion of both realistic and spiritual reasons for a change in human behaviour was a principle in line with U.S. political philosophy.

This spiritual aspect of human behaviour could be found in statements made by the U.S. government pre-1941. Secretary of State Cordell Hull mentioned faith, spiritual integrity, God, or Church twelve times. He mentioned one other institution; schools, once (U.S. State pp. 335–6). Working towards the "desire to see no territorial changes" (UN:DI 1947, p. 2) Chiang Kai-shek clearly exhibited this also through his work during the war (Mayle 1987, p. 48). This was expressed through a joint statement from the Cairo Conference:

It is their [U.K., U.S., ROC] purpose that Japan shall be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the beginning of the First World War in 1914, and that all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China. (Van Slyke 1967, p. 519)

Chinese territory, which theoretically included the Paracel and Spratly Islands due to prior declarations, was to be returned. The U.S. however, were to further redefine the world order by breaking international law, in the interests of domestic fishing rights.

In 1945 (Duus 1996), the U.S. redefined land based territorial systems; a three-mile marine limit formulated before the country declared independence (Selden 1652; Flattery, 1790; Swarztrauber, 1970). President Truman unilaterally declared the first major claims over the seas since Pope Alexander VI (Dawson 1899). This “exercise of jurisdiction over the natural resources of the subsoil and sea bed of the continental shelf” (Truman 1945) from the coastlines of the U.S. showed differing intentions. The Proclamations mentioned fish on 31 occasions; yet oil was mentioned only twice, exhibiting the primary importance of fish.<sup>4</sup> However, the U.S. continued to refuse recognition of other nations claims to unique territorial space at sea, despite their own claims. This had unforeseen consequences. In 1968, the USS Pueblo, an intelligence gathering ship, was seized 15 miles from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) coastline; inside of the DPRK’s 20-mile territorial claim (USS Pueblo; Shulimson 1997, p. 226). The U.S. only recognised a 3-mile territorial limit internationally, 23 years after its Proclamation.

As colonial empires disintegrated, other cases involving maritime rights (LoN 1899; LoN 1929–1930) raised awareness, which China learned when treaties were lodged (UN 1947, p. 267). Amid the claims, China published the map that defined “lost sovereign rights and restored our territorial integrity” (Fenby 2003, p. 30). The 11-Dash Line did not encroach on accepted international practices; the three mile limit of eastern French Indo-China (Vietnam), or post-colonial Philippines, whose 1898 Spain-U.S. treaty defined its territorial limits (U.S. Congress 1930; PH:OC 1932). As this activity continued, was there a ‘historic rights’ narrative as the foundation? (Dupuy 2013, p. 124–141) Cree had observed on the South China Sea in 1840: “We were accompanied by hundreds of

4 Statistic calculated by the Author based on U.S.Arch: *Fed.Reg.Vol.13, No.193, 2 October 1945*.



junks and fishing boats." (Levien 1981, p. 53) 106 years later, a 1946 directive exhibited this activity:

The ROC government was to implement immigration [to the islands] for fishermen who regularly and seasonally travel from Hainan to the Paracel and Spratly archipelagos to fish, and provide greater protection of their fishing permits. (Chung 2014, p. 45)

The intention was clear; the ROC Navy would protect traditional fishing rights in Chinese maritime territory, 800 miles from Hainan, a Chinese fishing enterprise Horsburgh had noted in 1818 (Horsburgh 1818, p. 57). While not strictly following Truman's Proclamation, the intention was clearly the same; protection of fisheries in traditional territories.

#### 4. Definitions, principles and laws

The Western notion of territorial sovereignty utilises a fixed land mass and an aligning sea border for countries that are not land locked (Page 2013). Territory can be further identified as "of the geographic territory administered by a government within which persons, goods and capital circulate freely" (UN:ITSKn). Colonial expansion; the forced acquisition of territory populated by indigenous groups or disorganised peoples, has been repudiated (Pinkham 1972; Kratoska 2001). These definitions of territorial boundaries and methods for territorial acquisition provide a framework for examination of the post-1883 period considered by this paper. Generally, the concept of popular sovereignty will be supported through the activities of the peoples found to occupy the South China Sea (Kahn 2000; Schurz 1860; Van Leyden 1981).

In western maps of territory, lines prevail, exhibiting the rigid nature of borders and thought (Branch 2014; Prescott 1965). A map also visually attempts to depict "a zone created through the intersections of geography, culture and history" (Warren 2007, p. xxvii). In the context of political geography, territorial space, or "notions of 'frontier' and 'border' are the same, that is, a zone" (Winichakul 1994, p.74). This spatial concept of a zone can be observed in Chinese maps, expressing a historic Thai description; "if either side doubted any boundary, it should depute some officials and people from the frontier posts to inquire and settle mutual boundaries in a friendly manner" (ibid., p. 65). This can be seen in a modern context: "The Parties concerned undertake to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes... through friendly consultations

and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned" (ASEAN 2012). Other statements also exhibited desire to settle territorial issues through negotiation (PRC:FMOCC). These are in line with the traditional concepts of border and territory; borders can be discussed, based on local knowledge using direct and friendly methods. This can also be seen in the UNCLOS (UNCLOS:NEWSUB).

The PRC made statements on other matters concerning the South China Sea People's Daily, 2015. One interesting point: "built various military and civilian facilities on the islands, thus resuming exercise of sovereignty" (ibid.). The PRC clearly describes buildings; 'facilities' as sovereign expressions. This compares with the survey's intent in this paper, which considers the building of temples as a primary expression of popular sovereignty, a building often used for humanitarian purposes, including the sharing of food and shelter (Ch'en 1964, p. 283–285).

These statements, and the descriptions of historic Thai territorial matters all carry a common theme; borders can be discussed, based on local knowledge. Therefore, occurrences of discord in the South China Sea were sown by the Western establishment of fixed lines in the sea and the imposition of external political forces (U.S. Senate 1899; Foreman 1906, p. 25; Dawson 1899; Selden 1652; Flattery 1790; Swartrauber 1970; Malloy 1910, p. 1688; McPherson 1998; U.S. State 2014). It may be suggested that the use of dashes, rather than a solid line, exhibits this traditional concept of negotiation and "soft borders" (Gerstl & Strašáková 2017). This discord is visible in the 2016 UNCLOS arbitration award for the Philippines v PRC case (UNCLOS:SCS; ROC:SCSA 2016; ROC:MOFA 1989).

## 5. Man's actions in the settlement of territorial space

As man settles in new territory, this will be exhibited in an advanced culture through the building of common spaces; available for all within the community as it organises. This examination will concentrate on three examples, thereby exhibiting the universal nature of this behaviour.

Greenock, Scotland was erected into the Burgh of Barony in the year 1635 (U.K.P.O. Greencoek, p. 68). The first Magistrates and Council were elected in the year 1751 followed by a Sheriff's Court opening in 1815 (ibid.). However, The Old West Church was built in 1591 (SCHR: Greenock). Greenock exhibits development from church building to

localised law enforcement; a process that took 160 years to perform. Clearly, the people considered the construction of a church, a place for organised religious worship, a matter of primary importance.

The U.S. exhibited the same processes in the settlement of Idaho, beginning with Franklin in 1860 (Marcum 1992, p. 671). The settlers were missionaries with goal of “building homesteads, farming, and living among the Indians” (*ibid.*, p. 673). While their passage to new lands was religious in foundation, the primary purpose was that of settlers:

The stout-hearted pioneers had in mind to establish yet another frontier community, on an isolated, inconspicuous spot, with no name... to build small cabins and commence farming. (Shumway & Shumway 2004)

With log cabins forming a perimeter; “in the centre of the rectangle stood the bowery where their formal worship services and secular counsel meetings were conducted” (*ibid.*). From the above description, the primary aims of settlement were cultivation and harvest of food, and the manifestation of that culture the building of a bowery for religious worship (Tucker 1867, p. 282; Roberts 1902). A local courthouse was built in nearby Preston 79 years later (Hellman 2005, p. 263–266; Judy 1961). In a process of development similar to Greenock, the people of Franklin built a place for organised religious worship over a generation before a courthouse (Shumway & Shumway 2004).<sup>5</sup>

Spanish California exhibited the same traits in building 16 missions as the land was settled (SB: Court: DA). For example, the Franciscan mission in Santa Barbara was founded in 1786 (Forbes 1839, p. 55). It was not until 1855 that a store was purchased and then converted into a courthouse (SB: Court: LF; SB: Court: DA).

As these examples have shown, religious building establishment was the primary symbol of territorial sovereignty by sociocultural systems that intended to settle and retain their allegiances. They did not add structures for legal use until later, in effect arguing through action the Antifederalists debate over the U.S. Constitution: “The Constitution should not be ratified because judges would use their power of judicial review to violate the principle of popular sovereignty” (Padula 2002, p. 52).

These examples represent different cultures that adhered to their original national linkages. They exhibited the same expressions of religious

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<sup>5</sup> Prior to this event, court cases were heard in Salt Lake City, Utah.

belief and identity in the formation of territorial space over several centuries. Churches have taken primary importance, showing the religious structure as the first determinant of organised popular sovereignty by disparate cultures seeking food and trading in new territorial spaces.

## 6. A survey of the South China Sea

Chinese marine activities were noted as being of significant volume by the Portuguese when they took Melaka by force in 1511 (Cortese 1944, p. 282). While typically unregulated, Chinese port authorities began to issue trade licenses in 1567 (Blussé 1979, p. 196). This policy recognised that trade had continued despite Qing restrictions aimed at preventing support to Ming loyalists (Morse 1908, p. 16, 271). Later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the policy slowly fell into disuse after mariners were included in the census through “special registers and door placards” (Ping-ti 1959, p. 50; Durand 1960, pp. 209–256). These actions show that while overseas trade was officially closed at certain points, disorder and interrupted communications had not stopped Chinese trade or fishing activities (Cressey 1934, p. 136). Licences were reinstated in 1869 at the suggestion of British officials seeking to control opium smuggling, although it did not stop foreigners engaging in the illicit trade (Fox 1940, p. 181; Williams 1856, p. 268).

Overseas, Japanese regulation of Chinese shipping began in 1715 to control bullion outflows (Yoneo 1998, p. 91). This marine trade, and the fishing operations that formed a distinct portion of it, will form the activities being sought by this survey.

### *Liuqiu, Pescadores and Pinnacle Islands*

As junks sail south from Japan, they pass the Liuqiu (Goldsmith 1821, p. 37; Beechy 1831, p. 143), and Pinnacle Islands (Diaoyutai Islands) before reaching Taiwan and the Pescadores. Pinnacle Island, “called by the Chinese *Tsaou su* or the Chair-bearer” (Findlay 1878, p. 1047) is north-west of Taiwan. Collingwood visited in 1867 but couldn’t land due to tidal conditions. However, when he visited nearby Craig Island, there were two Chinese egg collectors’ residing (Collingwood 1868, p. 118). On nearby Agincourt Island: “On the west side is a poor village, or hamlet, whose inhabitants we could see watching us; and this accounted for the fact

that the highest part of the island was under cultivation." (ibid., p. 123) Belcher recorded visits to Napa Kiang (Nata Harbour, Okinawa), where "we were visited by some of the minor Mandarins" (Belcher 1848, p. 321) who spoke to his Chinese interpreter concerning Japanese located further north in the Satsuma territories. Beechey also recorded Japanese trade, and drew a chart of the port and town (Beechey 1831, p. 143, 165; Peard 1937, p. 322; Beechey 1835). This is the only record of persons on the Pinnacle Islands in the survey. It is clear however; Chinese had settled the Liuqiu islands, and Japanese visited for trade purposes.

Collingwood also visited the Pescadores Islands: "Before quitting Makung (Magong), we paid a visit to the chief Mandarin of the place, but were not successful in seeing him at his *yá-mun*" (Collingwood 1868, p. 51). The presence of a Qing government official on the Island and his established official residence, does not describe "an ungoverned space" (Corr 2018, p. 45). Collingwood also noted temple on the island: "They do not appear to have offered any personal molestation to the Europeans, who were even accommodated with the shelter of a joss-house" (Collingwood 1868, p. 51–52). This is a description Cree used; "joss-house or Chinese temple" (Levien 1981, p. 49; Chan 1989, pp. 94–120). Collingwood found our first temple on a South China Sea island.

### *Pratas Island and Reef (Dongsha)*

Heading south from the Taiwan Strait, Pratas, "called by Native pilots Tungsha" (Morse 1908, p. 17) is the first island group reached. Dalrymple found "this Shoal is of greater extent than I have made it [in my chart]" (Dalrymple 1786, p. 6). Ships had difficulty passing the area, "especially if the trade wind blows from the northward" (von Krusenstern 1813, p. 273) combined with the currents in December and January (Dunn 1791, p. 328). These navigation issues continued after 1813, when Ross made a survey:

On landing, there was found to be a deep inlet or harbour for boats on the West side of the island, which must afford shelter to the Chinese fishermen, who come here to fish in the early part of the year; and upon the island, was erected a Chinese Temple, by pieces of wreck, apparently that of a junk. (Horsburgh 1841, p. 288)

When Collingwood visited 48 years later, he offered a complete report, listing a well and the temple, which was "dilapidated," (Collingwood 1868, p. 26–27) a normal effect of the regional weather on structures (Froc 1920).

Clearly, this was not a “realm of semi-nomadic fisherfolk” (Corr 2018, p. 45) but an organised, multi-generational culture practicing freedom of expression. King also noted: “[Pratas Island] must afford shelter to the Chinese fishermen who come here to fish in the early part of the year. Brackish water can be obtained by digging a few feet into the sand” (King 1861, p. 266; Findlay 1878, p. 606). It is clear that Pratas Island had been settled within the meteorological conditions described by Halley. Other structures and official activities would follow after HMS Saracen surveyed the islands for lighthouse locations in 1858 (Richards 1858; USN:Sec 1919, p. 2242; Stanton 1861, pp. 80–91). Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (CMCS) built a lighthouse; “Doongsha Shoal Light,” (Banister 1932), p. 1, CIMS (1899) assigned to the Canton Customs District (CIMS 1882, p. 12). This was followed by a postal service utilising the supply ship after China joined the Universal Postal Union in 1894 (IGCS 1903; Van Antwerp 1921, p. 585) A Chinese long wave radio station was set up in 1926, providing ships weather and time signals (Admiralty 1945, p. 598; U.S.N. Hydrographic 1930, p. 479). While the Japanese later took control of the island, the record shows 1935 attempts “to obtain a foothold on the Chinese owned Pratas islands” (Oriental 1935, p. 48; Xu 1941, p. 574) after earlier attempts in 1909 which ended when Japan recognised China’s sovereign claims after territorial negotiations (Rhoads 1975, p. 141; Wreck 1917, p. 20). This followed the pattern formulated by ASEAN: “[T]hrough friendly consultations and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned” (ASEAN 2012).

### *Hainan Island*

Hainan has long been a source of natural resources: “The *Teng-liu-mei* gharuwood [from Melaka] ranks next to that of Hainan” (Wolters 1958, pp. 587–607). Pinto relates a 16<sup>th</sup> century conversation with a pearl fisherman: “I’ve heard from these old men. They told me that the total income from trade, silver-mines and customs duties in the ports amounted to two and a half million taels” (Lowery 1992, p. 45; Catz 1989, p. 80; Congreve 1695, p. 23). This exhibits the size of the tax income the state was apparently receiving from Hainan Island and the surrounding seas. Pires confirmed pearl fishing activity: “Near it are some islands in the sea, where they fish for seed pearls. There are large quantities of these” (Cortêsão 1944, p. 120). There are similar details from the 1699 French embassy to

China; “a Chinese craft from Canton passed us... She seemed destined for the island of Hainan, where the Chinese get much wax, salt, planks, cocoa nuts, and other produce” (Bannister 1859, p. 103). The maritime trade in natural resources is therefore a historic fixture in the economy of Hainan.

When Parliament examined the trade of Southeast Asia, Crawford provided the following evidence:

A great number of small junks belonging to the Island of Hainan, which carry on trade with Tonquin, Cochin China, Cambodia, Siam, and Singapore. Those for Siam amount yearly to about 50, and for the Cochin Chinese dominions, to about 43. (Lords 1830, p. 741)

The quantity of junks and trade levels confirms Dunn’s findings (Dunn 1791, p. 385), and the ports used by the *Tôsen* 200 years prior (Yoneo 1998, p. 13). Horsburgh later confirmed Pinto and Pires statements in his directory, giving descriptions of seasonal harvest and work that matched Halley’s weather patterns (Halley 1705, p. 13). He also stated that the fishermen would head 800 miles south to the Spratly Islands; “in the vicinity of Borneo” (Horsburgh 1818, p. 57).

After French colonialization of Tonkin (northern Vietnam) in 1874, requests were made for Chinese declarations concerning “alienating or ceding Hainan to any other foreign Power” (MacMurray 1921, p. 98). This was later expanded to all border provinces: “Because of the necessity of taking care that no change be introduced in the existing situation as regards the provinces bordering on Tongking [Tonkin]” (ibid., pp. 123–124). By 1930, Chinese declarations were ignored by France. However, this section has found that Hainan was historically governed, and used as a base for trade and fishing operations to acquire “adequate food” (UNHR:OHCHR 2010, p. 2, OHCHR) and for an economic life of their own (UNCLOS).

### *Paracel Islands (Xisha)*

The Paracel Islands have often been perilous to ships when the Northwest or Westerly gales blow, causing notable wrecks over the centuries (Bullock 1884, p. 34). Due to the geography and weather conditions, sailing along the coastline of Viet Nam was the regular sailing route (Dunn 1791, p. 386; Huddart 1801, p. 468; Horsburgh 1817, p. 256; Bullock 1884, p. 34). A region where in 1627 “the intercourse between Cochin-China [Viet Nam] and China was uncontrolled” (The Asiatic



Journal 1816–Jun.1822, p. 446) carried a risk of piracy, although passing Hainan allowed for a pilot to be found (Horsburgh 1817, p. 251). The alternative was to sail East of the archipelago, to find a passage past the area Portuguese called “a continued chain of rocks and sands” (Dunn 1791, p. 447). The route south of the Paracels carries another risk; the currents may run westward, towards the Viet Nam coastline. Chung suggests that a 1730 Qing directive contained a warning due to these sailing conditions:

[the islands] were not intended to be travelled to. Chen noted only that if one strayed East from his described route, these islands would be “encountered.” The corresponding Chinese character, 犯 (fan), normally denotes ‘illegality,’ “trespassing,” and “violating,” indicating that the Qing regarded the islands as locations to be avoided. (Chung 2016, p. 51)

Chung then goes on to suggest this and later Chinese directions do not show historic domination through deliberate avoidance (*ibid.*, p. 52). This is due to the many warnings to avoid the islands, a directive he suggests show they were not visited by Chinese junks. However, soundings around the archipelago show why the direction was correct for *large* junks, which could reach 1000tons burthen (Barrow 1804, p. 28). The rocks and shoals should be avoided due to the possibility of grounding and shipwreck (Bullock 1884, p. 34). Therefore, if a large junk *infringes* or *trespasses*, it will be *violating* the laws of nature and maritime navigation. This is shown by the warning in Horsburgh’s New Sailing Directory: “Ships ought, therefore, never to come within these dangers” (Horsburgh 1817, p. 254). However, smaller junks of 100–300 tons with a flat bottom, can survive grounding, or be grounded deliberately; waiting for a rising tide to float back off. This is among the features Needham described: “In sailing to the South Sea [*Nan-Yang*] where there are many islands and rocks in the water, ships with dragon-spines can turn more easily to avoid them” (Needham 1971, p. 429; Keith 1981, pp. 119–132). The design of Southern junks therefore gave the fishermen and smaller trading vessels a technological advantage.

Crawfurd recognized trade patterns a century later that accounted for this design feature: “a great number of small junks belonging to the Island of Hainan, which carry on trade with Tonquin, Cochin China, Cambodia, Siam, and Singapore” (Lords 1830, p. 741). These small junks could sail upriver to Hué, as Chapman found in 1778; “twenty-five junks were at anchor” (The Asiatic Journal Jan.1816–Jun.1822, p. 450). Junks that could safely negotiate the twists of the Perfume River (Huong) (Shulimson

1997, p. 185) could also sail among the dangers of the Paracels. Therefore, the various Chinese directions do not preclude small Chinese trade or fishing vessels. It suggests they are good fishing grounds through their topography, which the destination of the pearl fishers recorded by Pires and Pinto in the 16<sup>th</sup> century shows (Cortesão 1944, p. 120). The result of these various warnings, within what Dunn called “this great assemblage of dangers” (Dunn 1791, p. 447) therefore does not mean fishermen will avoid sailing there. It shows their fishing locations can remain private, and remained out of view due to “highly specialized skill” (United Nations 1990). This also raises another possibility; historic domination was applicable through regular seasonal use and settlement that provided economic gain; “the degree of exercise of authority varies according to the geographic and natural conditions of the territory concerned” (Norquist 1998, p. 186). Ross also found fishermen present in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, from “January to May” (Horsburg 1817, p. 253). The Japanese later offered confirmation in a 1938 statement:

Ordinarily the only human visitors to the Paracels are Chinese fishermen from Hainan in shallow junks with leisurely matting sails. They venture cautiously around spots where the blue sea churns white against coral reefs, or dimples in sinister pale blue-green patches above the extensive hidden shoals. (The Japan Times & Mail 1938, p. 8)

Their “cautious” ventures, in “shallow junks” confirm French findings: “The islands had been visited by Chinese fishermen for generations” (The North China Herald 05.04.1938, p. 206). No presence of temples were found in the historic records. However, the Japanese detailed their observations as the archipelago became a topic for the newspaper reports we will now consider.

A modern expression of governance may be state supplied aids to navigation (Rosen 2014, p. 11). In 1923, the Chinese government planned to build a meteorological observatory, and prohibited all Japanese undertakings on the archipelago; expressions of sovereignty and title through governance (The Japan Times & Mail 1926, p. 1). A subsequent report notes the ruins of a Japanese guano mining venture were found, the undertaking prohibited by the Chinese government (Dowdall 6.06.1934, p. 162). The writer also notes there is a row of graves on Woody Island (The North China Herald 6.06.1934, p. 162), the first location in the survey where possibility for Chinese ancestor veneration is recorded (Lakos 2010, p. 2, 17).

Unfortunately for the fishermen, the peace of their existence was shattered. France occupied the Paracel Islands with Annamite policemen (The Japan Times & Mail 1938, p. 1), despite the signing of a 1921 Treaty that promised “to refrain from taking advantage of conditions in China” (Willoughby 1922, p. 371). This broke the “Regulations for Mixed Police on Sino-Annamite Frontier, 1896” (ibid., pp. 32–35). A later agreement defined “the whole of the Sino-Annamite frontier” (ibid.), giving treaty limits that France was now breaking for defence reasons “before the other nations could” (The North China Herald 4.06.1938, p. 206) despite Chinese protests (The North China Herald 13.07.1938, p. 58).

The Japanese, who had relied on the *Tôjin* for centuries, followed the French by breaking the same Treaty (Phillips 1980, p. 93–109; Marshall 1995, p. 61). They occupied Hainan according to Chinese statements, who also informed Britain; to no avail (Portsmouth Evening News 7.07.1938, p. 9; CIMC 1939, p. 11).

Knowledge, use and economic benefit by generations of Chinese fishermen “according to the geographic and natural conditions of the territory concerned” (Norquist 1998, p. 186; Ferraro 2012, pp. 56–60) was acknowledged by all parties, however Chinese protests were ignored (The North China Herald 13.07.1938, p. 58).

There were no records found in the survey of temples in the Paracel Islands until 1974. This does not preclude their existence however, as Western sailors were less likely to find evidence of their existence due to Horsburgh’s directions “never to come within these dangers” (Horsburgh 1817, p. 254). This section has shown that Pinto, Dunn, Horsburgh and Ross recorded details of pearl fishermen, trade, and a supply of pilots in the 16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries who were found on Hainan and among the Paracel Islands.

### *Spratly Islands (Nansha)*

The Spratly Islands “ought to be avoided by all navigators” (ibid., p. 316) a warning the Admiralty still gives for the “Dangerous Ground” (U.K.RN 2018). Horsburgh advised sailing closer to the centre, a route used by “Chinese vessels trading to Java, Borneo, and Rhio [Singapore]” (Horsburgh 1805 p. 24). This is possibly the route *Tôjin* Chen Siguan used on voyages between Java and Nagasaki (Yoneo 1998, pp. 148–150). Others sailed to Borneo, which was “well frequented by the Chinese, who carry

Surat Piece-goods from Malacca and Johore, and barter to very good purpose" (Earl 1836, FO881/482:1855). This trade to Borneo was recorded over two centuries, providing ample opportunity for Chinese knowledge of the central sailing route (Hamilton 1727, p. 79; Milburn 1813, p. 419; Craufurd 1853, p. 83; Krause 1867, p. 14).

Preference for this route is an indication of the dangers presented by the Spratly Islands and the Philippines. Ross made this observation during his survey: "The Hainan fishermen, visit the islands and shoals in this part of the China Sea, in March and April to fish, as well of those of the Paracels" (Horsburgh 1817, p. 317). The descriptions by Ross are clear; Chinese fishermen sailed 800 miles to the archipelago. They would remain there, deriving an economic life from the region dangerous for large ships. Due to the instructions to avoid the region, it can be assumed that earlier details are scarce. However, the remote location brought about a security issue when submarines and seaplanes were developed, providing us modern records (U.S.N. 1976, p. 1; Herrmann 1927).

As the early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought the height of colonialism, rising Japanese nationalism brought security concerns (Matthiessen 2015, p. 17, 102). In this period others have suggested the French warship *Malicieuse*, a 1916 built Ardent Class gunboat (Couhat 1974, p. 179), claimed sovereignty through a visit when she gave a 21-gun salute. It has been claimed the only witnesses "were four marooned and starving fishermen" (Hayton 2014, p. 53). Japanese newspapers presented very different details:

Hainan fishermen... some of them remain for years among the reefs. Junks from Hainan annually visit the islands of the China Sea with supplies of rice and other necessities... and supply themselves with water from a well in the centre of the north-eastern cay. (The Japan Times & Mail 1993, p. 3; Greenwich:TIZ/4Tizard)

These are not "marooned" persons when junks regularly visit and trade for produce. For example, turtle meat, which Horsburgh noted was brought back to Hainan in a dried form from the Spratly Islands (Horsburgh 1818, p. 57), is high in proteins, vitamins A, B1, B6, trace minerals, and low in lipids (Gremillion 2011, p. 100; Moseley 1879, p. 562). The French claimed the islands were unoccupied territory, or *terra nullius* (Ulstein 1995, p. 50). However, the fishermen, who identified as being originally from Hainan had begun their seasonal occupation in the archipelago at minimum a century before the arrival of the French according to Horsburgh and Ross. A contemporary example to the French visit can be found

on West York Island, named in 1905 after a shipwreck of the same name (U.S.N. 1976, p. 378). It is located at 11° 05' 15 N., 116° 51' E.; outside of the official 1935 118° territorial line of the Philippines (Hodgson 1908; Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1935; U.S. Senate 1899; Dawson 1899; Foreman 1906, p. 25). This island was visited by the USS *Nanshan* (South Mountain), present in the Far East until 10 May 1913; three years before the *Malicieuse* was built (U.S.N. 1915, p. 70; U.S.N:ZC, U.S.N. 1970, p. 8). Master William Prideaux logged this report;

Chinese fishermen from Hainan appear to frequent it... as a josshouse [temple] and three graves were found on the island, as well as an old cannon. Some remains of wrecks were also seen. (The Japan Times & Mail 1993, U.S.N. (1915) p. 378)

In this record of a temple, the presence of graves, where Chinese ancestor veneration can be practiced (Lakos 2010, p. 2,17), combines with the presence of Chinese fishermen who “remain for years among the reefs” (The Japan Times & Mail 1993, p. 3; Greenwich:TIZ/4Tizard). Cultural resource protection laws concerning graves and historic human existence define this site as an area of Chinese cultural significance, built by the long-term occupiers of territorial space for economic life and existence from which they sustained a livelihood (Westlake 1904, pp. 246–247; OKSC. OKIAC 1994, p. 216, 240; Blanco 2004, p. 66; Labadi 2013, pp. 127–145; ICC-01/12-01/15; Kwiatkowska 1994, p. 203; Stahn 2015, p. 19).

## 7. Conclusions

In their trade and fishing activities, it has been shown that Chinese sailors occupied the South China Sea according to the seasons defined by Dr. Halley. This survey has shown these activities, and that technology and practices were developed to allow for seasonal voyages to trade and harvest produce. These activities showed an exercise of authority according to the geographic and natural conditions of the territory examined. The experiences of peoples considered migrant or specialist workers today, according to UN principles, worked within their communal space; a parallel to other peoples that have performed similar actions in other regions over the centuries. During these activities, their social-cultural heritage was kept intact as they derived economic benefits for themselves and their families.

As China changed politically, consideration has been given to the actions of Chiang Kai-shek and his contemporaries. Specifically, President

Truman's development of vast maritime territorial space. In Chiang Kai-shek's subsequent actions, the finding can be made that he applied cultural and religious belief, historic knowledge, and an awareness of the actions being taken by other nations. The conclusion is therefore that he combined this information, and directed the creation of the 11-Dash Line. In doing so he was formalising through the government publication of an official map a unique combination of law and recognised sovereignty in the Paracel, Pratas, and Spratly Islands in the area long known as the China Sea.

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## **Sino-Cuban relations from 1964 to 1995: conflict and reconciliation**

### **Abstract**

*The aim of this chapter is to examine bilateral relations between Cuba and China since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1960 till the 80s when both two countries strengthened cooperation. The paper shows reasons for conflict between Cuba and China which started in the mid-60s emphasizing crucial moments like “rice war” and termination of party relations. It also analyzes incentives which led to the process of reconciliation and normalization of bilateral ties. The author underlines the role of Sino-Soviet relations and Sino-American rapprochement as a crucial factors which impacted relations between Beijing and Havana but also argues that China has never seen Cuba as a security threat but rather target for “moral attack” to deprecate Moscow.*

**Keywords:** Cuba, China, Sino-Cuban relations, foreign relations

### **1. Introduction**

Cuba was the first Latin American country which established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1960. Although revolutionary leaders like Mao Zedong and Fidel Castro proclaimed to take a socialist road and viewed their revolutions as part of “the world's countryside” to encircle “the world's city,” the honeymoon period in Sino-Cuban relations was short-lived and the ties remained sour throughout most of the remaining Cold War years. Tension erupted in the mid-1960s, leading to the termination of party ties which were not revived until 1988. In addition, no Chinese head of state had visited Cuba until the arrival

of President Jiang Zemin in 1993, followed by President Fidel Castro's reciprocal visit in 1995.

Until the present, the Sino-Cuban conflict has been a rarely-studied topic. The pioneer work by Cecil Johnson (1970) argues that the intensification of the Sino-Soviet conflict in the 1960s and Castro's tilt toward Moscow were crucial factors leading to the deterioration of Sino-Cuban relations. Another work by Maurice Halperin (1981) also shows that strained relations between China and Cuba by 1965 resulted in the end of Beijing's preferential treatment in its trade with Havana, which in turn led to the so-called "rice war" between the two countries in 1966. Recent study by Yinghong Cheng (2007), though using rarely-explored sources of information like memoirs of Chinese diplomats, also draws the same conclusion.

Scholarly works mentioned above have laid the foundation for understanding the origin of the Sino-Cuban conflict. However, what is missing from these studies is about factors leading to its prolongation from the mid-1960s until the 1980s. So far, two scholars have tried to fill this loophole. The first one is William Ratliff (1990) who states that different stances of China and Cuba on the Angolan civil war and the occupation of Cambodia by the Vietnamese forces were crucial factors for the prolongation of the conflict throughout the 1970s. The other study by Damian Fernandez (1993) holds the views China's rapprochement with Cuba's arch-enemy, the United States, in 1972 was the turning point leading to the deterioration of Sino-Cuban relations and it was not until the 1980s, with the Sino-Soviet normalization and the collapse of Soviet Eastern Europe, that both countries saw the need to improve and strengthen relations with each other. Still, reference materials used in these studies are in Western languages, mainly Spanish and English, while the newly-available ones in Chinese are still rarely explored, especially memoirs of Chinese leaders and diplomats.

Therefore, the author aims to explore the origin and the prolongation of the Sino-Cuban conflict from 1964 to the early 1980s and the road to reconciliation and strengthening of relations by the late 1980s from Chinese perspectives by using China's official publications and other relevant Chinese-language sources. Notwithstanding his agreement with previous studies in treating the Sino-Soviet conflict and the Sino-American rapprochement as crucial factors, the author argues that China never saw Cuba as a security threat in concrete terms and her conflict with Cuba was mostly polemic. However, the prolongation of the Sino-Soviet conflict and Cuba's

pro-Soviet stance throughout the 1970s rendered the Sino-Cuban reconciliation impossible. In other words, until the Soviet Union proposed to begin the negotiation for the normalization of relations in 1982, China still needed Cuba as a target for “moral attack” to defame the Soviet Union and to rally support for anti-Soviet stance among Third World countries.

## 2. The honeymoon period in the early 1960s

China reacted to the victory of Fidel Castro over the pro-American Batista regime in Cuba in January 1959 with joy and support, although Fidel Castro did not proclaim Marxist orientation of his revolution until the United States cut diplomatic ties with Cuba in 1961. Even in early 1962, Mao Zedong still described the Cuban revolution as “nationalist democratic” rather than socialist (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC & the Party Literature Research Center under the CC of the CPC 1998, p. 373), but China seemed content to see the emergence of the anti-American regime in the backyard of the United States. Unofficial contacts were done through the opening of Xinhua News Agency’s Havana branch in March 1959, the first branch in Latin America, and diplomatic relations were eventually established in September 1960.

The early 1960s was the honeymoon period of Sino-Cuban relations. In terms of security, China showed its support for Cuba’s stance against American imperialism. When the Kennedy administration tried to invade the Bay of Pigs to topple Castro in April 1961, China condemned it and mobilized 100,000 citizens to the Tiananmen Square to show support for Cuba (“All-out support for Cuba” 1961). The similar mass mobilization occurred again in early November 1962 after President Kennedy ordered a blockade of Cuba during the Missile Crisis. Beijing Party Secretary Peng Zhen stated that US aggression toward Cuba was also an aggression toward the Chinese people (“Defend the Cuban Revolution” 1962). Besides, both countries refused to sign the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963.

Economically, China exported rice, soybean, oil, canned meat, chemical products, and machine tools to Cuba, while Cuba exported sugar, nickel, and copper to China. Bilateral trade volume rose quickly from 23.79 million USD in 1960 to 222.42 million USD in the following year (see Table 1), making China Cuba’s second largest trading partner after the Soviet Union (He 1991, p. 25). In addition, China in November 1960 agreed to give Cuba no-interest loans from 1961 to 1965 with the total

value of 246 million rubles (Cheng 1972, pp. 126–127). In 1965, Cuba was offered 22.8-million-peso credit to solve the problem of trade deficit with China (He 1991, p. 25). Also, when Cuba was greatly devastated by the hurricane in October 1963, humanitarian assistance in food and medical products was dispatched from China with the total values of 70 million yuan (Zhu 2003, p. 12), despite the fact that the latter just recovered from the three years of “Great Famine” (1960–1962).

In return, Cuba welcomed 100-plus Chinese students to study Spanish and sent Spanish-language teachers to China (Xu 2003, p. 294). More importantly, it had been one of the staunch supporters for China’s admission to the United Nations and claimed that the stationing of US Seventh Fleet on the Taiwan Straits was an interference in China’s domestic affairs. As Fidel Castro spoke of this issue clearly in his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 1960:

China represents one-fourth of the world population. What government really represents that nation? It is the government of People’s China. It maintains its government there in the midst of civil war, interfered in by the U.S. Seventh Fleet. By what right does an extracontinental power use its fleet to interfere in domestic Chinese affairs for the sole purpose of preventing the total liberation of the territory? That is illegal. So the United States does not want the case of China to be discussed here. Well, we want to set forth our view here and ask the United Nations to give a seat to the legitimate representatives of the Chinese Government. (Deutschmann & Shnookal 2007, p. 183)

Sino-Cuban cordial relations could also be seen from the frequency of mutual visits. Chairman of Cuba’s National Bank Che Guevara visited Beijing in November 1960 and told Mao Zedong that the Cuban and Latin American people must learn from the revolutionary experience of China, especially on the making of alliance between peasants and workers (“Cuban government economic mission in China” 1960). Vice-Chairman of the National People’s Congress Guo Moruo attended the celebration of the second anniversary of the Cuban revolution in Havana in January 1961. The highest-level visit took place in September 1961 when President Osvaldo Dorticos Torrado arrived in Beijing and signed a joint communiqué with President Liu Shaoqi calling for anti-imperialism and upholding world peace (“Sino-Cuban joint declaration” 1961). Also, Fidel Castro was a frequent guest for dinner at the Chinese Embassy in Havana (Huang 2007, pp. 31–32). Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai described Sino-Cuban friendship by using Chinese proverb, “things that come easily are valueless, a resolute person is hard to find” (*yiqiuwujiabao*

*nandeyouxinren*) (Zhu 2003, p. 13) and in October 1964 accepted an invitation to visit Havana (Yun 1996, p. 84). However, the planned visit in December was cancelled as the tension between the two countries arose by the end of the year.

### 3. The origin of the conflict in the mid-1960s

By the mid-1960s, the Sino-Cuban honeymoon ended because of the two factors, i.e. the radicalization of Chinese politics and the Sino-Soviet conflict. Although Mao Zedong had condemned Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's policy of "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism since the late 1950s, his domestic campaign to reemphasize the role of ideology and curb the influence of the Party's pragmatic leaders in the first half of the 1960s necessitated the use of polemics against Soviet "revisionism." In other words, class struggle inside China needed revolutionary and aggressive foreign policy (Chen 2001, pp. 11–12; Li 2012, p. 117). Therefore, China tried to bring Cuba into its side during the Sino-Cuban honeymoon period. Knowing that Fidel Castro was upset with Khrushchev's withdrawal of missiles from Cuba to avoid clashing with the United States in October 1962, China took a chance to win Castro's mind. The editorial of *People's Daily*, the Chinese Communist Party's mouthpiece newspaper, stated that the US promise not to invade Cuba in exchange for the Soviet withdrawal of missiles was an empty one, like the Munich Agreement signed with Hitler in 1938 ("We stand by Cuba" 1962; Cheng 1972, p. 152). Besides, after having been hesitant since Castro's revolution in 1959, China by late 1962 accepted that Cuba was taking a socialist road and became "comrades-in-arms" of the Chinese people ("Defend the Cuban revolution" 1962).

However, Fidel Castro did not agree with Mao Zedong's rift with the Soviet Union and called for solidarity among socialist countries to fight against "Yankee imperialism" (Castro 1963). Notwithstanding the fact that both Castro and Mao held similar views on several aspects of the revolution (e.g. their beliefs in "subjective condition" as a key to the success of the revolution, and in the role of mass mobilization as a mean to solve economic difficulties), and that Castro had promised Chinese diplomat Zeng Tao in 1961 to choose Beijing as his first destination abroad (Zeng 1997, p. 46), Castro whose heart, according to K. S. Karol (1969 cited in Cheng 2007, p. 100), was with China but his stomach was with the Soviet Union, decided to visit Moscow in April 1963.



The turning point in Sino-Cuban relations took place when Nikita Khrushchev fell from power on October 15, 1964. Fidel Castro hoped that leadership change in the Kremlin would be an opportunity for ending China's polemic against the Soviet Union. He therefore made a visit to the Chinese Embassy in Havana on October 18 to express such hope (Yun 1996, p. 87), but it did not bear fruit as China's relations with the Soviet Union remained tense. The new Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev told Zhou Enlai during the latter's visit to Moscow in early November that he would continue Khrushchev's policy of peaceful co-existence. Therefore, China still condemned the Soviet leadership of practicing "Khrushchevism without Khrushchev" ("Why Khrushchov fell" 1964). However, Castro tried again in December by sending Chairman of Agricultural Reform Institute Carlos Rafael Rodriguez to meet Mao Zedong who angrily told Rodriguez that the battle against Soviet revisionism could not be stopped and would possibly last ten thousand years (Wang 2013, p. 85). Another visit by Che Guevara in January 1965 did not yield results as well. After that, Castro began to criticize China more fiercely. In his speech to the students at the University of Havana on March 13, Castro said that China's polemics against the Soviet Union destroyed solidarity among socialist countries and was not a "wise strategy" in face of the enemy (Kenner & Petras 1970, p. 121).

Entering the year 1965, Chinese politics became more radical and ultra-leftist, creating negative impacts on foreign relations. The article "Long live the victory of people's war" by Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party Lin Biao published on September 3 stated that Mao Zedong Thought was a common asset of the revolutionary people of the whole world (Lin 1965). In other words, China by the mid-1960s proclaimed itself to be the mentor of the world revolution. Therefore, Chinese propaganda materials were sent to all leftist revolutionary movements including those in Latin America, which in turn inevitably challenged Fidel Castro's presumed leadership of the revolution in his continent. Losing his patience toward China, Castro on September 14 called Chinese Charge d'affaires to Cuba Huang Wenyou to his office, put Chinese propaganda materials on the table and said China was throwing "improper seeds" on the Cuban soil. He even stated that China's propaganda activities in Cuba were worse than the sabotage against Cuba by US imperialism (Yun 1996, pp. 89–90). Knowing the news during his stay in Beijing, Chinese Ambassador to Cuba Wang Youping wrote an urgent report to Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Foreign Minister Chen Yi. The advice he received from all the

three leaders was summarized as, “when the wolf become the hegemon, be friendly to the fox; do your best despite glimmering hope; do not pay attention unless it is beyond endurance; solve the problem cautiously when it arises” (ibid., p. 90). Thus, China had stayed calm until another problem arose at the beginning of 1966.

#### **4. China’s rice war with Cuba and the termination of party relations in 1966**

Rice has been vital to the Cuban people’s livelihood since the colonial era, and by the late 1940s, 90% of it was imported from the United States. Shortly after Castro’s revolution in 1959, the United States imposed embargo on Cuba, followed by the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1964. Meanwhile, as the world market price of rice had increased in the early 1960s, rice in Cuba became a rationed commodity with the limit of 5 pounds per head per month (Halperin 1981, pp. 197–198). As the Soviet Union could only supply Cuba with wheat, China became the major rice supplier of Cuba in exchange for the latter’s exportation of sugar. However, by early 1966, trade dispute between China and Cuba called “rice war” arose and greatly aggravated the strained relations between the two countries.

On January 2, 1966, on the eve of the opening of the Afro-Asian-Latin American People’s Solidarity Conference (informally called the Tricontinental Congress) in which almost 600 representatives of nationalist and socialist movements from 82 countries came to attend in Havana, Fidel Castro disclosed that, according to the report from his officials in the Ministry of Foreign Trade, China in 1966 would decrease its rice exportation to Cuba from 250,000 tons in 1965 to almost half of it, and would not imported as much as 800,000 tons of sugar proposed by the Cuban side (Johnson 1970, p. 165; Cheng 1972, p. 213). Castro’s revelation led to the reaction from *People’s Daily* on January 10 which stated that 250,000 tons of China’s rice exported to Cuba in 1965 was considered on year-by-year basis without any commitment to keep the same figure forever, and that its rising domestic demands of rice necessitated an export reduction to 135,000 tons in 1966, which was still equivalent to the figure in 1964 (“Facts on Sino-Cuban trade” 1966). Shortly afterward, *Granma*, the Cuban Communist Party’s mouthpiece newspaper, on January 12 published the statement from Cuba’s Ministry of Foreign Trade, saying

that the Chinese figure was inaccurate and in fact 135,000 tons of rice were be the lowest figure since 1961, and that China's export reduction would aggravate the situation of rice ration in Cuba ("Quarterly chronicle and documentation" 1966; "Further remarks on the Sino-Cuban trade question" 1966).

Until now, there has been no evidence to prove if the reduction of rice exportation was a result of China's rising domestic demands as the Chinese claimed, or it was a result of China's dissatisfaction with Cuba's tilt toward Moscow in the Sino-Soviet conflict as argued by Johnson (1970) and Halperin (1981). But what is clear is that China lost its patience toward Cuba after Castro's revelation of the dispute to the public in early 1966. The Xinhua News Agency on January 9 stated that Castro was a liar and an obstacle in Sino-Cuban relations (Cheng 1972, p. 214). On the next day, *People's Daily* questioned the hidden agenda behind Castro's revelation despite that fact that the trade negotiation was still going on ("Facts on Sino-Cuban trade" 1966). It seemed that, in Chinese views, Castro's disclosure of the dispute on the eve of the Tricontinental Conference was part of the Soviet plan to discredit China in international arena. As a result, China in that month decided to terminate party relations with Cuba.

Shortly afterward, Fidel Castro made another speech on February 6 which disclosed another problem in relations with China, i.e. the infiltration of Chinese propaganda in Cuba. Castro stated that, in the meeting with Huang Wenyou in September 1965, he had asked the Chinese to end it, but from then until early January of the following year, 58,041 issues of China's propaganda materials still flew to Cuba (Castro 1966). His speech led to another reaction on February 22 by *People's Daily* which asked why the Soviet Union was allowed to distribute anti-China materials in Cuba whereas China was not ("Renmin Ribao editor's note on Prime Minister Castro's anti-China statement" 1966). Another speech by Castro at the University of Havana on March 13 branded Mao Zedong as "a senile idiot" and criticized Mao's personality cult by suggesting that he read Friedrich Engels's *The Dialectics of Nature* to realize the eventual eclipse of the sun (Cheng 2007, p. 112). A week later, on March 20, Mao told the Politburo that "traitors and scabs have always opposed China. Our banners must be new and fresh in color, they must not be bedraggled. Castro is nothing more than a bad man in an important position" (Mao 1966).

The Sino-Cuban conflict further aggravated throughout the latter half of the 1960s. During the Cultural Revolution, Vice President of the

Cuban Academy of Sciences told a Soviet diplomat in Havana after visiting Beijing in October 1966 that “it is hard to imagine, to what type of idiocy the ranks of the Red Guards and the people led by them reach. The Hitlerites could have learned something from them” (Friedmen 2015, p. 154), while Yao Wen Yuan, member of the “Gang of Four” and one of the rising stars during the Cultural Revolution, called Fidel Castro a revisionist (Kulik 2000 cited in Friedman 2015, p. 154). When the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, it was condemned by Zhou Enlai as a demonstration of Soviet chauvinism, social-imperialism, and social-fascism (Chou 1968). In contrast, Castro hailed the Soviet intervention as a method to control the “counterrevolutionary situation” instigated by capitalism and imperialism (Castro 1968).

## 5. The prolonged conflict throughout the 1970s

For a short period from 1969 to 1971, Sino-Cuban ties slightly improved because of the three factors. Firstly, by 1968, the Cultural Revolution was deradicalized and China began to repair its damaged foreign relations. On the May Day of 1970, Mao Zedong told acting Cuban Ambassador to Beijing on the Tiananmen rostrum, “we want Cuba, not the Yankees” (Wang 2013, p. 100). In July 1970, the Chinese delegation attended the celebration of the National Rebellion Day (i.e. the day commemorating Fidel Castro’s first uprising against the Batista regime) in Havana, the first one to Cuba since 1965. The celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary its diplomatic relations with China was also held in Havana in September 1970 and Cuba dispatched the delegation led by President of the Cuba-China Friendship Association Baldomero Alvarez to visit Beijing in the following month (“Cuban Delegation in China” 1970; Wang 1973, p. 25). In December 1970, after being recalled to participate in the Cultural Revolution in 1967, the Chinese Ambassador was sent back to Havana. During his visit to the Cuban Embassy in Beijing to celebrate the Cuban Revolution Day on January 2, 1971, Zhou Enlai expressed his hope that Sino-Cuban relations would enter a new era (Wang 2013, p. 100).

Secondly, the two countries shared the same stance on international issues in 1970. When General Lon Nol was successful in staging a coup with the US support against Cambodian Head of State Norodom Sihanouk in March, both China and Cuba condemned the incident and recognized Sihanouk’s government-in-exile in Beijing. In October, when

Marxist politician Salvador Allende won presidential election in Chile. China congratulated Allende's victory, showed its support for his policy of eradicating US economic influence in Chile (Wang 1973, pp. 26–27), and established diplomatic relations with Santiago in December. Cuban-Chilean diplomatic ties were also established in the following year.

Thirdly, after two decades of attempts, China finally entered the United Nations in October 1971. In his speech to the General Assembly in November of that year, Chinese Representative Qiao Guanhua thanked Cuba for its support ("Speech by Chiao Kuan-hua" 1971). In the same month, Fidel Castro said in an interview with Mexican journalists that China's entry to the UN would strengthen political and economic ties between China and Latin American countries, which in turn undermined the influence of the United States (Castro 1971).

However, tensions between China and Cuba came to light again after China's decision to make a political rapprochement with the United States and welcome President Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing in February 1972. Zhou Enlai's report to the Tenth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in September of the following year stated that Sino-American rapprochement was a necessary compromise against Soviet revisionism (Chou 1973). As a result, China toned down its criticism of US foreign policy, whereas Cuba still perceived the United States as its greatest threat. Difference between the two countries became obvious when Chilean President Allende was toppled with US support by General Augusto Pinochet and committed suicide in September 1973. Although Chinese authorities stated that the coup was instigated by "reactionary forces" inside and outside Chile and hailed Allende as a Marxist martyr ("Premier Chou sends condolences" 1973; "Military coup" 1973). China did not cut diplomatic relations with Pinochet's government, in contrast with Cuba and most of the socialist countries. This led to Fidel Castro's criticism of China in his speech in Havana to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Cuban victory at the Bay of Pigs on April 19, 1976 that said:

At times imperialism holds back the course of liberation in certain countries such as Chile.(...) Shamelessly furthering this strategy are those who from the rank of revolutionary movement itself betray the principle of proletariat internationalism through vanity, ideological inconsistency, personal ambitions, or simple decadence and senility, as in the case of the arrogant, demented clique that governs the destiny of China. (Castro 1981a, p. 108)

Meanwhile, Cuba strengthened its ties with the Soviet Union by becoming a member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COM-ECON) in 1972, condemning those who labeled the Soviet Union as imperialism in the Non-Aligned Summit in Algeria in 1973, and joining the Interkit, the forum between the Soviet Union and its allies in formulating China policy in 1975. In addition, with its moral commitment to liberate the Third World from imperialist powers, Cuba throughout the 1970s and 1980s had given military assistance to several revolutionary movements in Africa, making it second only to the United States in terms of the number of troops operating abroad during the Cold War (Gleijeses 2010, p. 327). Cuban behavior was thus interpreted by China in the 1970s as part of Soviet expansionism.

Two major issues became sources of polemics between China and Cuba in the 1970s. The first one was the civil war in Angola which, on the eve and in the wake of its independence for Portugal in 1975, was fought between three armed movements, i.e. the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). By the mid-1970s, the first was supported by weapons and military technicians from the Soviet Union, whereas the others received the same support from China and the United States. However, China abruptly withdrew itself from the civil war in October 1975 after apartheid South Africa joined the Chinese and American side by sending armed forces and weapons to help FLNA and UNITA against MPLA, causing an embarrassment for China whose anti-apartheid stance had so far gained prestige among African countries. In contrast, alarmed by the South African intervention, Cuba decided to send troops to help MPLA. By the end of its mission in 1991, there were totally 375,000 Cuban troops operating in Angola (Choy, Chui & Wong 2005, p. 79).

Notwithstanding the Chinese withdrawal and the Soviet/Cuban-backed MPLA's victory in establishing the People's Republic of Angola in November 1975, the civil war in Angola was still used by both China and Cuba to attack each other. In an interview with French journalists in May 1977, Fidel Castro said China was betraying Marxist internationalism by joining with the CIA, the neo-colonialists, and the racists in the civil war in Angola (Castro 1977), while China raised the issue of Cuba's intervention in Angola to discredit Castro's presumed leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement as the Soviet "trojan horse." An article in *Peking Review* in June 1978 asked a question, if Cuba's real intention for the



intervention in Angola was to liberate the people there from the imperialists, why hadn't Cuba intervened since the years of Portuguese rule? ("Is Cuba a non-aligned country" 1978).

The second major issue in Sino-Cuban polemics arose when Vietnam signed an alliance treaty with the Soviet Union in November 1978, invaded Pol Pot's Cambodia on the Christmas Day of the same year, and installing the pro-Vietnamese regime in Phnom Penh led by Heng Samrin in January 1979. China reacted by, in Deng Xiaoping's words, "giving Vietnam a lesson" with 170,000 troops invading Vietnam's northern provinces on February 17, 1979. Four days later, Fidel Castro held a mass rally to support Vietnam in Havana, saying that China under fascist rule betrayed socialism and joined hand with the US imperialists in invading Vietnam. He called Deng Xiaoping "a numbskull" and the caricature of Adolf Hitler (Castro 1981c, pp. 167–179). Castro attacked China again in his speech at the Non-Alignment Summit in Havana on September 3 of the same year (Castro 1981b, p. 209). Therefore, China reacted to Castro's speech through the editorial of *People's Daily* on September 14, 1979, saying that the Soviet Union was behind the scene, as follows:

The Havana summit had the positive aspect of making many non-aligned countries see more clearly the true colours of the "non-aligned" Cuba and Vietnam and realize their own strength of unity in struggle. One can predict that Cuba and Vietnam, instigated by the Soviet Union, will place all sorts of obstacles along the path of the non-aligned movement. In particular, the Cuban authorities will abuse their power as "the current chairman" to push the Soviet conspiracy to sabotage the fundamental principles and orientation of the movement. (Peng 1979, p. 24)

It should be noted that, unlike India and Vietnam which in the 1970s became Soviet allies and had territorial conflicts with China, the Sino-Cuban conflict was mostly polemic. Although Cuba's military combats abroad were condemned by China, they were limited to Latin America and Africa, far away from China's concrete security interests. As a result, it would have been easier for the two countries to reconcile with each other, like the Sino-Yugoslav rapprochement in the late 1970s. But why didn't the Sino-Cuban one occur in the same decade? The possible answer is that China throughout the 1970s adhered to Mao Zedong's Three Worlds Theory, calling for the united front against "Soviet social-imperialism" ("Chairman Mao's theory of differentiation" 1977). Therefore, as long as China and the Soviet Union remained enemies, China was still able to utilize its polemics with Cuba to rally support from Third World countries



against the Soviet Union. As Chih-yu Shih (1993, p. 186) argues on the role of morality in Chinese foreign policy that:

China does not see the Third world in economic terms, so economically undeveloped countries willing to serve hegemonic states are unacceptable allies. Many of these perceived Third world defectors are involved in efforts to organize the Third World: good examples include Cuba, India, and Vietnam. China would refuse to deal with them because to do so would hurt the credibility of the united front against hegemonism.

By the beginning of the 1980s, as the Sino-Soviet relations further deteriorated after the latter's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, there was no prospect for the improvement of relations between China and Cuba. In the emergency meeting of the UN General Assembly on January 14, 1980, China with 103 countries supported the resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, whereas Cuba objected to it ("Aligned chairman of non-alignment" 1980). The resolution of the Second Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba in December of the same year stated that Cuba was glad to see the Afghan people being liberated from despotic and semi-feudal rule ("Resolution on international policy" 1981). As late as February 1982, China still condemned Cuba as a tool of the Soviet Union (Lan 1982).

## 6. The Sino-Cuban reconciliation after 1982

There were at least three factors leading to the reconciliation between China and Cuba by 1982. The first one was Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev's overtures to China in his speech in March 1982, which led to three rounds of negotiations by the end of the following year. Although the two countries had not reached the breakthrough until 1988, the atmosphere of the relations between China and the Soviet Union by late 1982 began to relax. It can be seen in Chinese Communist Party Secretary General Hu Yaobang's report to the Twelfth Congress in September 1982 stating that the major threat of world peace came from the competition between the superpowers (Hu 1982), in contrast with Party Chairman Hua Guofeng's report to the Eleventh Party Congress in August 1977 emphasizing the Soviet Union as major threat (Hua 1977). In addition, the labeling of the Soviet Union as "revisionism" and "social-imperialism" in the Chinese constitutions of 1975 and 1978 disappeared from the new constitution promulgated in December 1982. Besides, by 1983, Mao Zedong's

Three Worlds Theory calling for the anti-Soviet united front was no longer mentioned by Chinese authorities. Therefore, as Lowell Dittmer (1992, p. 132) argues, it was no longer necessary for China to use anti-hegemonism as a precondition for the improvement of relations with the Third World socialist countries.

The second factor was a result of Deng Xiaoping's institution of reform and opening-up policy since 1978. After having collaborated with the United States against the Soviet Union in the late 1970s, China in 1982 declared "an independent foreign policy," which emphasized the expansion of foreign economic relations (Jian 1996, p. 219). Hu Yaobang's report stated that China supported economic cooperation among developing countries which would lead to "the new international economic order" (Hu 1982). As He Li argues, given China's intention to expand economic ties with the South, the improvement of relations with an influential figure of the Non-Aligned Movement like Fidel Castro seemed to be necessary (He 1991, p. 64).

Another factor came from Cuba which began to face an economic crisis by the early 1980s because of rising import oil price and falling export sugar price. Cuba's trade deficit with the Soviet Union and the COMECON countries thus increased from 196 million pesos in 1979 to 833 million pesos and 1,023 million pesos in 1980 and 1981 respectively (Dominguez 1989, pp. 94–95). The Soviet Union's giving of low-interest loans to Cuba, though solving the deficit, increased the latter's debt burden in the long term. Cuba therefore had to expand its economic ties with countries outside the Soviet camp, including a big economy like China whose trade with Cuba in 1980 constituted only 2.6% of the latter's total foreign trade (Mesa-Lago 1993, p. 139).

The Sino-Cuban reconciliation began when Cuban Vice Minister of Foreign Trade Ricardo Cabrisas visited Beijing on October 19, 1983, the first ministerial level visit in 18 years since Che Guevara's visit in 1965. It should be noted that his visit was the same time as Soviet Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Leonid Illychev's visit to negotiate the normalization of relations with China. Later, in July 1984, Chinese Assistant to Minister of Foreign Affairs Zhu Qizhen visited Cuba to inspect the work of Chinese embassy and exchange views with Cuban authorities (Wren 1984), followed by Cuban Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Pelegrin Torras's visit to China in May 1985. Finally, during the Twenty-Sixth Congress of the French Communist Party in December 1987, the Cuban representative met Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Secretariat Yan Mingfu and proposed for the reestablishment of party relations (Wang 2013, p. 137).

However, China did not promptly agree with Cuba. According to Li Beihai, then-Vice Minister of the Chinese Communist Party International Liaison Department, it was not until early August 1988 that he was sent to Havana to negotiate for the reestablishment of party ties (Li 2010). Although he did not disclose the reason for a seven-month delay, it is highly possible that China waited for substantive progress on its normalization talks with the Soviet Union. By the end of 1987, Cambodia was still a thorny issue between the two countries and Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson on January 12, 1988 stated that Deng Xiaoping would meet Gorbachev only after Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia (Home News Library of the Xinhua News Agency 1989, p. 479). Therefore, after the Vietnamese declaration in July 1988 to withdraw all troops from Cambodia by early 1990, Li Beihai's visit to Havana took place in August and was reciprocated by the visit to Beijing by the delegation of the Cuban Communist Party International Department in the following month, symbolizing the reestablishment of party relations. Later, Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs Isidoro Malmierca visited China in January 1989, followed by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen's reciprocal visit to Cuba in June of the same year. In the book commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the International Liaison Department published in 1992, Yang Baibing, then-Deputy Director-General of Latin American Affairs wrote that China's branding of Fidel Castro as a revisionist and a Soviet puppet was incorrect (Yang 1992, pp. 183–184).

## **7. The strengthened Sino-Cuban relations at the end of the 1980s**

Shortly after the restoration of party ties, both countries faced crises which resulted in the strengthening of bilateral political relations. In China, the demonstration of students calling for the Party's accountability ended with the military crackdown at the Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, leading to the condemnation of China by Western countries. Meanwhile, socialist regimes in Eastern Europe were collapsing one after another after facing mass protests. Therefore, Deng Xiaoping in his talks with former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere on November 23, 1989 saw the chaos in China and Eastern Europe as part of the US policy of "peaceful evolution," i.e. to destroy socialism without doing a war (Deng 1994, pp. 333–334).

For Cuba, political changes in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the Soviet collapse in 1991 created disastrous impacts on its security and economy. The administration of US President George Bush held the views that, in the light of political changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the days of Fidel Castro regime were numbered and thus there was no need to negotiate with Cuba. In an interview in February 1990, US Secretary of State James Baker refused to give a guarantee that his country would not to invade Cuba, and in the middle of that year, an official from the Pentagon urged the US government to plan for “humanitarian intervention” if unrest arose in Cuba. Later, the Cuban Democracy Act was passed in 1992, increasing more restrictions for US companies on their trade with Cuba until the latter’s showing of substantial progress on democratization and implementation of free market economy (Gunn 1993, pp. 18–21).

Therefore, by the end of the 1980s, China and Cuba became supporter of each other in defending socialism and upholding the principle of non-interference in foreign countries’ internal affairs. Fidel Castro told Qian Qichen during the latter’s visit to Havana on June 8, 1989, or four days after the Tiananmen incident, that Cuba supported the crackdown to uphold China’s unity, and that China under anarchy would be the tragedy of the world (Qian 2003, p. 169). In reciprocity, Chinese President Jiang Zemin made a visit to Havana in November 1993, his first destination abroad after assuming state presidency and the first visit by China’s head of state. He was warmly welcomed by Castro who ordered tens of thousands of people to stand along both sides of the road from the airport to the hotel, despite that fact that this practice was abolished as part of austerity measures by the end of the 1980s. In addition, the Cuban leader awarded Jiang Zemin the Order of José Martí and extended his regards to Deng Xiaoping (Xu 2014, pp. 86–88, 95–96).

During his talks with Fidel Castro, Jiang Zemin expressed his confidence on the bright prospect of socialism by giving four reasons. Firstly, there were still countries upholding socialism, especially a country with one-fifth of the world’s population like China. Secondly, China would not meet the same fate as the Soviet Union because it did not allocate its resources to compete militarily with the United States throughout the Cold War. Thirdly, from the experience of generations of Chinese people, only socialism could save China. Fourthly, as socialism was born several centuries after capitalism and was on the process of development, one should not consider its setbacks as an evidence for the failure of socialism. He also criticized the US interventionism by saying that democracy, freedom,

and human rights were relative, not absolute (Jiang 2006, pp. 336–338). After listening to Jiang Zemin, Castro said that the survival of Chinese socialism was the utmost inspiration for Cuba (Xu 2014, p. 90).

Fidel Castro paid a reciprocal visit to China on November 29, 1995. Jiang Zemin thanked Cuba for supporting China on the issues of Taiwan, Tibet, and human rights, and, in return, expressed China's support for the government and the people of Cuba to maintain their sovereignty against foreign intervention (Chen 2009, p. 298). Meanwhile, in an interview with Chinese journalists, Castro cherished the contribution of the Cuban Chinese who fought alongside the local people for Cuban independence, praised the Chinese people for their century-long struggle against foreign powers, and expressed his confidence that China would be a rising economic power in the twenty-first century ("Further reportage on Castro's visit to China" 1995).

The symbolic act to end the decades-long rift with China by Fidel Castro during his stay in Beijing was the visit, upon his request, to Mao Zedong's mausoleum (Xu 2014, pp. 243–244) to pay respect to the man he once condemned as head of "the arrogant, demented clique that governs the destiny of China." Unfortunately, he had no chance to meet Deng Xiaoping because Deng's health had greatly deteriorated since 1993. When Deng Xiaoping passed away in February 1997, he was hailed by Fidel Castro as a leader with great contribution to the construction of Chinese socialism (Ratliff & Fontaine 2000, p. 54).

## 8. Conclusions

Tensions between China and Cuba lasting from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s were the result of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Fidel Castro's tilt toward Moscow by 1965 led to the termination of party ties with Beijing in the following year. Entering the 1970s, China's rapprochement with Cuba's arch-enemy, the United States, aggravated the tense relations. However, it should be noted that although Cuba's military involvement in Angola and its support for Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia were perceived by China as part of the Soviet Union's expansionist plan, China did not see Cuba as a security threat in concrete terms but only used it as a target for moral attack. In other words, as the author argues, China until the early 1980s still needed to attack Cuba to rally support for anti-Soviet stance among Third World countries. The situation improved after

the beginning of Sino-Soviet normalization process in 1982, paving a way for the restoration of party relations between China and Cuba in 1988. Finally, the collapse of the socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union from 1989 to 1991 resulted in the strengthened political ties between the two countries in defense of socialism and the principle of non-interference.

Figure 1. Sino-Cuban Trade Volume from 1960 to 1980 (Unit: Million USD)

Year	China's Export to Cuba	China's Import from Cuba	Total
1960	9.74	14.05	23.79
1961	107.54	114.87	222.41
1962	80.43	106.71	187.14
1963	89.24	79.86	169.10
1964	106.71	89.56	196.27
1965	111.74	104.27	216.01
1966	87.48	81.52	169.00
1967	77.05	59.92	136.97
1968	60.58	69.66	130.24
1969	68.49	51.88	120.37
1970	70.88	69.85	140.37
1971	65.24	65.51	130.75
1972	72.38	53.36	125.74
1973	95.27	83.44	178.71
1974	106.66	111.67	218.33
1975	84.84	110.55	195.39
1976	48.76	87.27	136.03
1977	54.11	58.89	113.00
1978	59.27	93.79	153.06
1979	93.58	117.75	211.33
1980	92.83	127.29	220.12

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (1982, p. 365).

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# **Responses to current security challenges in Asia-Pacific**



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# The “Sins” of American foreign policy illustrated in the North Korean nuclear crisis

## **Abstract**

*This study applies four alleged “sins” of American foreign policy – ignorance, lack of empathy, quick resort to military action, and arrogance – to America’s failed policy regarding the North Korean nuclear program. While that failure cannot be attributed directly to the sins, there is evidence that an approach not characterized by them might lead to better results.*

**Keywords:** *foreign policy sins, North Korea, American foreign policy, nuclear weapons*

## **1. Introduction**

The American scholar Loch Johnson developed the idea of the seven “sins” of American foreign policy in an article published in 2003 and a book published in 2007 (Johnson & Caruson 2003; Johnson 2007). The sins include ignorance, a lack of empathy, the dominance of the President in the making of foreign policy, excessive emphasis on military solutions, arrogance, unilateralism, and isolationism. These sins have “cost [the United States] the friendship and support of many allies abroad, and as a result, have impaired the ability of the United States to advance its own international interests” (Johnson 2007, p. xiv).

While the context for Johnson’s work was the widespread global disapproval of the Bush administration’s policies after 9/11, he argues that the sins were also manifested by earlier Presidents. Given the more than seventy-years of America’s global activism, it is easy to identify particular

instances in which American policy illustrates one or more of the sins. A better way to consider them is to look at the same issue over a number of years and a number of administrations to see if the sins are manifested over time. Moreover, a decade has passed since Johnson published his book, so there is a need to see if the sins are still present in the post-George W. Bush years. These are the purposes of this study. It will examine the North Korean nuclear issue, i.e., the development of its nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. These activities threaten American allies South Korea and Japan, endanger regional security, and call into question the global non-proliferation regime. As a result, the issue has been important for nearly thirty years and challenged five U.S. Presidents – the first Bush, Clinton, the second Bush, Obama, and Trump. As such, it provides a good case to apply the alleged sins of American foreign policy. This article will do so, applying four of the seven sins – ignorance of the world, lack of empathy, an emphasis on military solutions, and arrogance. It will ignore presidential imperialism, because that sin concerns more the process of policymaking than the content of policy, and the twin sins of isolationism and unilateralism that, in different ways, reflect an American indifference to international issues and global opinion. These are clearly not present: it has been dealt with by five Presidents and the U.S. has periodically employed multilateral diplomacy and multilateral sanctions to deal with it.

## **2. An introduction to the North Korean nuclear issue**

The North Korean nuclear program dates from the 1960s when it asked the Soviet Union for help in building the bomb. The Soviets did build several small research reactors but never provided the technology for building a nuclear weapon. The North began to work on its own nuclear program in the 1970s, beginning construction of the Yongbyong nuclear reactor in 1979 and completing it in early 1986. These efforts heightened U.S. and international concern about North Korea's nuclear ambitions and American intelligence agencies concluded in the mid-1980s that North Korea was working on a nuclear weapons program. Under pressure from the Soviet Union and with a promise of four civilian nuclear reactors, North Korea signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation agreement in 1985, although it did not sign a necessary follow-up safeguards agreement until



early 1992. By that time, North Korea's strategic situation had deteriorated dramatically. South Korea's economic growth continued to outpace that of the North and the U.S. continued to place that country under its nuclear umbrella. Pyongyang was also increasingly isolated. The Soviet Union had collapsed and the successor regime was reducing support for Pyongyang and reaching out to South Korea. China continued to provide support, but its economic reforms required that it, too, reach out to South Korea and the United States.

Given these strategic changes, the North appears to have decided to pursue a nuclear weapons program more energetically. The Yongbyong facility was shut down for lengthy periods in 1989, 1990, and 1991, probably, in the view of U.S. intelligence officials, to withdraw fuel rods from the reactor in order to process the spent fuel and develop nuclear weapons. When inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency examined North Korean facilities, they found discrepancies between what they found and what North Korea had declared. The North also restricted IAEA access to certain nuclear facilities, leading the IAEA to refer the case to the UN Security Council in February 1993 for possible application of sanctions. That threat led North Korea to announce its intention to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the beginning of the “first North Korean nuclear crisis” (Wit, Poneman & Galluci 2005, pp. 2–4; “Arms Control Association” 2018; “Timeline on North Korea's Nuclear Program” 2014).

North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs have continued since that time. It first tested a ballistic missile in 1993 and later tests demonstrated improved capabilities. It conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006. More recently, during the rule of Kim Jong Un since 2011, missile and nuclear tests have accelerated. There have been four nuclear tests since 2011, one in 2013, two in 2016, and one in September 2017 (there had been two tests prior to 2011, in 2006 and 2009). Pyongyang claimed that its September 2017 test was of a hydrogen bomb, a claim some international observers deemed plausible. An early 2018 estimate was that North Korea had between ten and twenty nuclear warheads and enough missile fuel to produce thirty to sixty more. Kim Jong Un's regime has also conducted more missile tests than his predecessors, eighty in all, and while there are doubts about the accuracy of the missiles launched, there is no doubt about their increased range: the missile tested in November 2017 could reach anywhere on the American mainland (Albert 2018b; “Arms Control Association” 2018).

### 3. A summary of American policy

While details about the sins will appear later in the study, it is worthwhile at the outset to provide a brief summary of American policy (Sigal 1998; Wit, Poneman & Galluci 2005; Foreign Affairs Anthology Series 2017; Wampler 2017a; Wampler 2017b; Davenport 2018). For the most part, the U.S. has employed what Leon Sigal has referred to as a “crime and punishment” approach to the North Korean nuclear issue (Sigal 1998, pp. 12–13). That is, because North Korea has not honored its nuclear non-proliferation commitments, it must be forced, not persuaded, to abandon its nuclear program through the exertion of pressure. Pressure has taken many forms. Militarily, the U.S. has long maintained an alliance relationship with the Republic of Korea (South Korea), has placed that country under the American nuclear umbrella and stationed nuclear weapons there during the cold war, has a large military presence, conducts joint exercises with South Korean forces, and has periodically threatened to strike militarily. Economically, the United States has long imposed its own sanctions against North Korea and worked with the United Nations to impose multilateral sanctions. These sanctions have sought to impose asset freezes on leading officials, to isolate Pyongyang economically, to limit its ability to earn foreign currency via trade or remittances from abroad, and to restrict its access to the global banking system. Politically, the United States and North Korea do not have diplomatic relations, and few Americans can travel to the country.

There have been periodic efforts to negotiate with North Korea about its nuclear weapons activities, but these, too, might be considered as part of the crime and punishment approach. That is, the U.S. and its international partners usually insist that North Korea abandon its nuclear activities, e.g., the longstanding American demand has been Complete, Verifiable, and Irreversible Dismantlement (CVID) of its nuclear program, and only then will the U.S. be willing to negotiate political, economic, or security concessions but these often remain vague. This approach was reflected in the Obama administration’s policy of “strategic patience,” which “essentially demanded that North Koreans recommit to concrete steps towards denuclearization... as a precondition for any future talks” (Mak 2016). This approach effectively ruled out any serious negotiations, but even when negotiations did occur, for example, during the Six Party Talks during the second Bush administration, U.S. negotiating positions reflected the same general attitude. To cite one example, the U.S. proposal

at the July 2004 round of talks was that the first step had to be a North Korean commitment to dismantle all of its nuclear programs, followed by a three month period during which it had to declare all of its nuclear activities and open them to international inspection, after which the U.S. would begin a “discussion” about easing of American sanctions, but any “lasting benefits” would occur only “after the dismantlement of [the DPRK’s] nuclear program had been completed” (Chinoy 2009, p. 271).

Needless to say, American policy towards North Korea has been a failure. William Perry, Secretary of Defense in the Clinton administration and long involved with North Korean issues, has described it as “perhaps the most unsuccessful exercise of diplomacy in our country’s history” (quoted in Hirsh 2016). Much of the remainder of this study will document the presence of sins in American policy. The conclusion will consider whether their presence is a cause of the failed American policy.

#### 4. The sin of ignorance

Specialists in international affairs lament Americans’ limited knowledge about world affairs and global issues. This is certainly true of North Korea. According to a poll conducted in April 2017, only 36% of Americans could locate the country on a map of Asia. Over the course of the next year, US-North Korean relations were much in the news; nonetheless, in April 2018, more than a majority of Americans (56%) had heard only a little or nothing at all about negotiations on North Korea’s nuclear program and 10% of the public had never heard of or had no opinion about Kim Jong Un (Quealy 2017; Polling Report 2018).

More importantly, what do those in government responsible for U.S. policy know about North Korea? The answer is “not enough,” something that can have consequences for American policy. A former director of the Central Intelligence Agency has argued that “there is no greater threat to world peace than poorly informed leaders and governments” (Richard Helms quoted in Chinoy 2009, p. 86). There are multiple causes of this ignorance. One is that few in the American government have knowledge of North Korea. The fact that there were few diplomatic contacts in the Obama years means that there are few lower-level people in the bureaucracy who have dealt directly with the North Koreans. The absence of expertise at upper levels is an especially significant problem in the Trump administration, because many upper-level positions remain unfilled by

permanent officials or were filled only recently. The Special Representative for North Korea Policy, Joseph Yun, retired in February 2018. Trump did not name an ambassador to Seoul until May 2018, the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control had only been approved in April 2018, and there was only an acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia (Sonne & Hudson 2018).

A final reason for official ignorance is that North Korea is a very difficult country to learn about and understand. While the collection of intelligence is always difficult and judgements are never concrete, North Korea is an especially difficult target. Characterized as the “hardest of the hard” by the Central Intelligence Agency, one former analyst identified the difficulties: the regime’s “opaqueness, self-imposed isolation, robust counter-intelligence practices, and culture of fear and paranoia” served to provide “at best fragmentary information” (Pak 2018). As a result, intelligence uncertainty about DPRK intentions is likely. Famously, few predicted that a weak North Korea would attack the South in 1950. More recently, an official in the Obama administration argued that, “[a]nybody who tells you what North Korea wants is lying, or they’re guessing. We don’t know what Kim Jong Un has for breakfast, so how can we know what his real end game is?” Although one hopes this has changed, in the years prior to becoming North Korea’s leader, the only photo of Kim John Un was as an eleven-year old and the primary source about him was his former sushi chef. The widespread uncertainty about North Korea intentions is present in the Trump administration, where there are debates about whether the North Korean leader is enhancing the country’s nuclear arsenal for defensive reasons, in an effort to split the United States from his South Korean and Japanese allies, and/or to assume a more prominent position on the world stage (Rich & Sanger 2017; Cho & Fackler 2009).

## 5. The sin of a lack of empathy

The Free Dictionary defines empathy as the “ability to identify with or understand the perspective, or motivations of another individual” or society. This ability is something the United States has long lacked; Adlai Stevenson remarked in the 1950s that the technology most needed by the United States and Americans is a hearing aid (Johnson 2007, p. 231). With respect to the North Korean case, there are several manifestations of this way of thinking. One is the loose talk about military action, especially

by members of the current administration, but Americans have long been relatively indifferent to Asian deaths in wars, e.g., using the atomic bombs against Japan in World War II, carpet bombing of North Korean cities during the Korean War, and causing millions of Vietnamese deaths during the Vietnam war. President Donald Trump has stated that if a war does occur in 2018, “If thousands die, they’re going to die over there. They’re not going to die here” (Klimas 2017). These consequences have not manifested themselves, of course, because the U.S. has not launched military action in Korea since the 1950s, but the mere consideration of such action – by Trump’s predecessors as well as the current President – is a manifestation of a lack of empathy.

Perhaps a better example of a lack of empathy is indifference to the consequences of sanctions on the North Korean people. Of course, if this is a sin, it applies to all who have imposed sanctions – the United Nations, the European Union, Japan and South Korea – in addition to the U.S. While many of the sanctions target the nuclear program, itself and/or persons involved with it, others likely have an impact on ordinary people and workers. The United Nations, for example, has imposed limits on exports of a number of products, including coal, seafood, agricultural products and electrical equipment; restricted North Korean fishing rights; placed caps on North Korean oil imports, and the number of North Koreans working abroad. The most significant United States sanctions block entry into the American banking system of any overseas entity that does business with North Korea (Albert 2018a).

The impact of sanctions on North Korea is not completely known, given the difficulty of getting information about that country and the fact that many of the sanctions are of relatively recent vintage. However, it is known that North Korea is a less developed and poorer society than Iraq was in the 1990s, when that country was subject to wide-ranging and devastating sanctions. According to the Central Intelligence Agency, North Korea is one of the world’s poorest countries, with an estimated GDP/capita of \$1,800 in 2015, i.e., before the imposition of the most severe UN sanctions, and GDP had declined in the years before 2015. More than eighteen million of the country’s twenty-five million people lack electricity and it has been estimated that 70% of the population is “food insecure,” i.e., regularly hungry (Central Intelligence Agency 2018). Consequently, the country’s people face tremendous humanitarian needs. The UN’s Human Rights Commissioner, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, told the Security Council in December 2017 that aid programs were “literally a lifeline” for

thirteen million North Koreans, but sanctions “have caused a slowdown in UN ground operations, affecting the delivery of food rations, health kits and other humanitarian aid.” Private groups are also struggling. Save the Children has ended its programs in the country, although perhaps only temporarily (“UN warns” 2017; Fitfield 2017).

In another indication of lack of empathy, American officials blamed the victim in their assessments of the impact of sanctions. Then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson blamed the North Korean regime for the suffering of its people: “The regime could feed and care for women, children and ordinary people of North Korea if it chose the welfare of its people over weapons development...” That insensitive comment is similar to one made by one of Tillerson’s predecessors, Madeleine Albright, who, when asked about the deaths of thousands of Iraqi children as a result the 1990s sanctions, responded that, “This is a very hard choice, but the price, we think, the price is worth it” (Tillerson quoted in Fitfield 2017; Albright quoted in Reiff, 2003).

## **6. The sin of precipitous military action**

In one sense, the allegation about the sin of quick resort to military action is easy to reject: the United States has not engaged in military action against North Korea since the end of the Korean War in 1953. This is not to say that the U.S. has not considered military action. One scholar has argued that, “No country has been the target of more American nuclear threats than North Korea – at least seven since 1945” (Sigal 1998, p. 20). While some of these threats occurred during the Korean War, others have occurred in the years since. Even before North Korea began its nuclear program in earnest, two American Presidents, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, contemplated military action in response to North Korean provocations. For Johnson, the issue was the seizure of an intelligence-gathering ship off the Korean coast in January 1968 and the holding of its crew for nearly a year. Many military options were considered including the use of nuclear weapons. The crisis was eventually resolved by negotiations, and the sailors were returned in December 1968. Several months later, the North Koreans shot down a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft, although in this case there were no hostages as all on the plane were killed. By this time, Nixon was President and he, too contemplated a military response, possibly including the use of nuclear weapons, but,

like Johnson, he decided not to do so. The reason for Nixon and, probably, Johnson, was that the military was uneasy about military action; as summarized by one historian, "...constantly you find the military saying, 'But the risks probably still outweigh the potential gains'" (Majumdar 2017; Prados & Cheevers 2014).

Presidents in the more recent era, when North Korea has had a nuclear program, had even more reason for circumspection. Still, some of them, too, considered but then rejected military action. The Clinton administration was the last one that could initiate military action without a likely North Korean nuclear response. It considered two military options in the spring of 1994 after the DPRK threatened to withdraw from the International Atomic Energy Agency, a war with North Korea and a strike at North Korean nuclear facilities. Both entailed great risks, and the administration decided to support the mediation effort of former President Carter instead (Wit, Poneman & Gallucci 2005, pp. 192–220; Sigal 1998, pp. 90–123).

Two recent Presidents have made perhaps the most explicit threats. For George W. Bush, North Korea's nuclear weapons program and support for terrorism placed it in the "axis of evil" along with Iran and Iraq. These governments were warned that the "United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons." This was not an idle threat. A 2002 Pentagon planning document on America's nuclear posture contemplated the use of nuclear weapons in certain contingencies: the "United States will continue to make clear that it reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force, including the resort to all of our options, to the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction abroad against the United States, our forces abroad, and friends and allies." North Korea was identified in the appendix as one of the countries targeted in the document ("Text of President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address" 2002; Chinoy 2009, p. 147). Perhaps the most explicit threat came from President Trump who, in an address to the United Nations in September 2017, said that if North Korea continued its nuclear program, "we will have no choice but to totally destroy" it, adding that Kim Jong Un is "on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime." Trump's National Security Adviser, John Bolton, has also issued explicit threats, telling the *Wall Street Journal* in February 2018 (just before he was named National Security Adviser) that the North Korean weapons program was an "imminent threat" to the United States, and "it is perfectly legitimate for the United States to respond to the current



‘necessity’ posed by North Korea’s nuclear weapons by striking first.” At that time, some insiders in the Pentagon estimated that there was a 40% chance of war within a year (Nakamura & Gearan 2017; “John Bolton: 5 things” 2018; Zegart 2018).

That no President has honored these threats is probably due to the risks and likely consequences of war on the Korean Peninsula, something that Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis believes would be “more serious in terms of human suffering than anything we have seen since 1953” (Rawnsley 2017). While few doubt that American and South Korean forces would win the war, the number of casualties would be truly staggering. Any effort to capture and totally secure the North’s nuclear sites would require a ground invasion involving more troops than used in Iraq or Afghanistan and the most concentrated exertion of air power since the Vietnam War. Kim would probably not sit idly by if North Korea was attacked, even if the American intent was merely to launch a limited, “bloody nose” strike discussed by some in the Trump administration: “...North Korea is the most consistent country in the world: It always meets pressure with pressure of its own. There is overwhelming, decades-long evidence that North Korea will fight back... There are exactly zero examples of a time North Korea caved into pressure” (Kang 2018). Even if the North Korean response was limited to conventional weapons, the Congressional Reference Service has estimated that more than 300,000 residents of Seoul, only 35 miles (56 kilometers) from the border with North Korea, would die (Dreazen 2018; Narang & Panda 2017; Fitzpatrick 2018).

While one must thus reject the sin of use of military force – at least to date – American policy was typically characterized by other components of hard or coercive power. That is, in the North Korean case, where that country’s nuclear weapons now preclude serious thought about military action, this sin might be re-characterized as the early resort to pressure. Elements of pressure include U.S. troops in South Korea, the American nuclear guarantee to the Republic of Korea, and economic sanctions. Another, discussion of regime change, will be discussed below.

## 7. The sin of arrogance

One manifestation of arrogance identified by Johnson is America’s efforts to remake the world, periodically seeking to overthrow foreign governments to do so. It does not appear that the U.S. has employed such

tactics in the North Korean case, although the very nature of covert operations precludes a definitive assessment. This has not stopped discussion about doing so. For example, a retired Defense Department official told a congressional committee in March 1994 that “the only sure way to defuse the North Korean strategic threat is to defuse the regime” (Henry Sokolski quoted in Sigal 2008, p. 240). As with many of the sins detailed in this study, the Trump administration provides good examples. Mike Pompeo, at the time director of the CIA and now Secretary of State, hinted at regime change in a July 2017 meeting, arguing that, while it “would be a great thing to denuclearize the peninsula... the thing that is most dangerous about it is the character of who holds the control over them today... So from the administration’s perspective, the most important thing we can do is separate those two... Separate capacity and someone who might well have intent and break those two apart.” Bolton argued in December 2017 that, “My proposal would be: Eliminate the regime by reunifying the peninsula under South Korean control” (Pompeo quoted in Watkins 2018; Bolton quoted in Borchers 2018). There has also long been hope that America would not need to take covert action to overthrow the regime, relying instead on the cumulative weight of sanctions. As a senior Defense Department remarked in 1994, long before the imposition of the most serious multilateral sanctions, North Korea was “teetering on the edge of economic collapse” that would soon be followed by a political collapse (Paul Wolfowitz quoted in Hirsh 2016). Later, one reason for the Obama administration’s strategic patience approach was its belief that the regime in Pyongyang would soon fall.

Efforts to kill North Korean leaders might be an easier and quicker way to achieve regime change. As one former senior U.S. national security official told *The Atlantic*, “Decapitation does seem to be a way to get out of this problem. If a new North Korean leader could arise who is willing to denuclearize and be somewhat of a normal actor, it might lead us out.” While the United States appears not to have tried assassinations, South Korea has, and its failures may serve as cautionary advice for the United States. Two South Korean attempts are known in the West: a failed attempt against Kim Il Sung in March 1946 and a late 1960s effort to train commandoes and have them infiltrate into North Korea to kill the leader. That plot was never implemented and the potential assassins turned on their South Korean commanders and killed them. More recently, Seoul has created a special operations force tasked with killing Kim Jong Un in the event of a pre-emptive war. One suspects that the U.S. is considering

such options, too, but there are significant obstacles, including the extensive security apparatus surrounding North Korean leaders and South Korea's failures, to say nothing about America's failed assassination efforts in Cuba and elsewhere (Rawnsley 2017; Bowden 2017).

Evidence that the United States is probably not actively plotting to overthrow the North Korean regime or kill its leader might lead one to argue that the U.S. has not manifested the sin of arrogance in this case. Yet, the arrogance label might apply in another way. The United States has long argued, correctly, that North Korea often does not adhere to its non-proliferation promises, leading the U.S. to refrain from making any sort of irreversible agreement with it. Implicit here is that the U.S. honors its obligations, yet there is much evidence that it does not – with respect to North Korea and in other circumstances. That is, the United States is arrogantly imposing a double standard on North Korea. Of course, all great powers make commitments they do not honor, but with respect to the issue of nuclear weapons proliferation in general and North Korea in particular, the US has violated many pledges. Kim certainly knows that the U.S. placed tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea beginning in the 1950s, despite the prohibition in the ceasefire ending the Korean War against the introduction of new types of weapons into the Korean Peninsula. These weapons were only removed in 1991 after the end of the Soviet-American cold war (Pincus 2018).

A more relevant example might be America's failure to implement the terms of the 1994 Agreed Framework in which North Korea agreed to significant limits on its nuclear program in return for energy assistance from Washington, light water reactors to replace its nuclear reactors, the easing of sanctions, and promises against Washington's threat or actual use of nuclear weapons. Yet Washington was slow to implement its terms; it seldom delivered the promised fuel oil on time, the consortium designed to build the light water reactors had not begun work by 2002, and little effort was made to end official enmity between the two countries. The North Koreans also violated the terms of the Agreed Framework, but senior US and IAEA officials told the Congress in 1998 that there had been "no fundamental violation of any aspect of the Framework Agreement" by North Korea (Ryan 2017; Sigal 2017).

The North Koreans might also take to heart American actions against other states that had been persuaded or forced to abandon their nuclear programs. Most relevant in this context is Libya. There, President Muammar Gaddafi had given up a fledgling nuclear program in 2003 in return

for implicit American guarantees not to overthrow his regime, i.e., not to do in Libya in the name on counter-proliferation what it had just done in Iraq. The US adhered to that agreement for less than eight years, deciding in 2011 to participate in a military effort seeking to overthrow Gaddafi. The North Koreans understood the implications: according to a 2016 statement from the official news agency, “The Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and the Gaddafi regime in Libya could not escape the fate of destruction after being deprived of their foundations for nuclear development and giving up nuclear programs of their own accord” (Friedman 2018). All of these examples of American failures to live up to its promises on nuclear weapons has led one leading American analyst to ask, “If you were Kim Jong Un, would you rather pin your survival on a nuclear deterrent of your own or promises from the United States?” (Walt 2018).

The Libya model remains relevant in another way. Despite the DPRK’s interpretation of the outcome in Libya, Trump administration officials repeatedly referred to their hopes for a similar disarmament outcome in North Korea. This might be an example of the sin of ignorance or of a lack empathy, i.e., not knowing or anticipating North Korea’s reaction to such comparisons, but more likely, it seems, an example of arrogance, i.e., not caring about the North Korean interpretation and/or using the model to threaten it. Trump referred to the Libya case as both a model and a threat, saying he would offer unspecified “protections” not offered to Gaddafi, but also explicitly warning about that element of the Libya model that the North Koreans most fear: regarding the removal of Hussein and Gaddafi from power, “[t]hat model would take place if we don’t make a deal, most likely” (Friedman 2018).

## 8. Conclusions: An approach without the sins?

This study has demonstrated both the failure of America’s counter-proliferation policy with North Korea and the presence of some of America’s foreign policy sins. This does not mean, of course, that the policy failures were caused by the sins. As Johnson argues, the “sins do not lead ineluctably to failed results... but they often are to blame.” This suggests that a better approach might be one without the sins: “America’s greatest successes in the world have usually been achieved when the nation’s leaders have rejected their temptations.” Johnson refers specifically to North Korea, writing – in 2007 – that “Quiet diplomacy and working behind the

scenes with other nations in the region is likely to produce better results than the public berating that... has been America's approach the difficult problem of nuclear weapons' in North Korea" (Johnson 2007, pp. 272, 287). More specifically, Sigal calls for a strategy of diplomatic give and take, one that "combines reassurance with conditional reciprocity, promising inducements on the condition that potential proliferators accept nuclear restraints" (Sigal 1998, p. 4). Such an approach would be a very different one than current American policy, placing greater emphasis on diplomacy, greater interest in knowing and understanding North Korea's negotiating position, and taking for granted the continued existence of the North Korean regime. Critics might argue that this approach is naive, but there is some evidence from the Korean Peninsula that it could work.

One largely forgotten American proliferation success was its ability to prevent South Korea from developing nuclear weapons. That country had begun a clandestine nuclear weapons program in the 1970s. Unlike North Korea, which has justified nuclear weapons in terms of defense against an American attack, ROK President Park Chung-hee was worried about the reliability of the American security guarantees to South Korea. The United States had withdrawn 20,000 troops from South Korea in 1970, had not responded forcefully enough – in Park's view – to North Korean provocations in the late 1960s, and had effectively abandoned its South Vietnamese ally in the early 1970s. Given these concerns, the ROK began working to develop nuclear weapons; initial U.S. intelligence estimates suggested that Seoul could develop a nuclear device by 1980. As American officials became aware of these efforts, they used diplomacy and reassurance to dissuade the South Koreans from developing nuclear weapons. Diplomatically, the U.S. worked with South Korea to persuade it that a nuclear program would harm mutual interests, with France to cancel the sale of a plutonium reprocessing plant, and with Canada, which agreed to sell nuclear reactors only if Seoul did not purchase the reprocessing plant. There were also American efforts to reassure South Korea, including a decision not to reduce American troop levels any further and a decision to provide technical assistance for a peaceful nuclear program. Those actions in 1975–76 effectively ended the South Korean nuclear weapons program (Burr 2017a; Burr 2017b).

Of course, this case occurred more than forty years ago, South Korea is an American ally, and its nuclear weapons program was only in its early stages, realities that are very different in the contemporary North Korean case. Still, some sort of give-and-take-mutual-concession process

might work. Again, critics might argue this is naive, but this is the general approach advocated by Joseph Yun, the State Department official responsible for North Korea until February of 2018. He identifies the concessions that can be made early in any negotiation: North Korea could make a commitment to a permanent moratorium on weapons testing, open its nuclear facilities to IAEA inspections, and provide an accurate accounting of its nuclear activities. As for initial American concessions, it has already granted a longstanding North Korean demand to hold a summit with the North Korean leader; in addition, it might offer humanitarian aid, work to normalize relations via the opening of liaison offices in Washington and Pyongyang and declare that it does not have hostile intent toward Pyongyang. Should these initial steps be successful, then further mutual concessions might take place, e.g., North Korea agreeing to a timeline for ultimate denuclearization and the U.S. agreeing to at least some sanctions relief (Yun 2018).

There is some evidence that this approach might work, because when the United States has offered concessions in the past, North Korea has followed with its own concessions. For example, when the first President Bush decided in late 1991 to withdraw American tactical weapons from the Korean Peninsula and to cancel the planned 1992 US-ROK military exercises, North Korea followed in the next several months by halting plutonium reprocessing, agreeing to a joint declaration with South Korea to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, and signing an inspection agreement with the IAEA. A similar give-and-take process led to the 1994 Agreed Framework, in which the North Koreans agreed to remain a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Agreement, to freeze their nuclear processing activities, and to eventually seal the reprocessing plant to prevent it from extracting plutonium from its spent fuel rods. In return, the United States agreed to move toward normalized political and economic relations, e.g., by establishing a liaison office in Pyongyang and to lower trade and investment barriers. The U.S. also agreed to participate in an international consortium that would provide North Korea with fuel oil to replace the energy lost with the dismantling of its nuclear facilities and to build two new nuclear reactors in which diversion of plutonium to build nuclear weapons was much more difficult. While the incoming Bush administration had criticized the Agreed Framework early in the administration, it agreed to essentially the same arrangement in February 2007. North Korea agreed to halt shut down the Yongbyong nuclear reactor, readmit international inspectors, and begin work on a list of all its nuclear programs;



the U.S. and other parties to the talks agreed to provide fuel oil and other forms of aid to Pyongyang, with more aid being provided as North Korea met its obligations (Sigal 1998, pp. 257–264; Chinoy 2009, pp. 325–326; “Timeline on North Korea’s nuclear program” 2014).

President Trump has initiated a negotiating process, although an unorthodox one, with North Korea. Rather than a gradual step-by-step process in which the two sides traded small concessions to build confidence as recommended above, Trump held a face-to-face meeting with North Korean leader Kim in Singapore on June 12, 2018. The statement following the meeting promised that “the DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” (“Full text of the U.S.-North Korea agreement signed by Kim, Trump” 2018). While talking with DPRK is better than threatening to destroy it, as Trump had done earlier in his presidency, there is little reason to expect that North Korea will actually relinquish all of its weapons. It has used the phrase “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” since 1992. Plus, the Singapore agreement has no mention of a timeline for denuclearization nor any mention of verification measures. There are already reports that North Korea continues to build intercontinental missiles and enhance its uranium stockpile, that the U.S. has reneged on Trump’s promise to sign an agreement ending the Korean War, and that Trump has grown frustrated with the absence of progress. All this in just two months since the Singapore meeting (Ward 2018; Panda & Narang 2018).

Thus, it seems that the current efforts at negotiating a solution to the problem, like previous ones, will be brief as a result of widespread distrust, the failure of both sides to honor their obligations, and a return by America to a policy characterized by the sins. That is, while there are good arguments in favor of cooperation in 2018, especially in light of the failures of a more coercive policy, the development of North Korea’s nuclear program, and the dangers of war, there are also good reasons for caution and no guarantee that it will be successful. That is, an American policy characterized by the sins and a policy that avoids them might both fail to solve the North Korean nuclear problem. As Gary Samore, who worked on proliferation issues in both the Clinton and Obama administrations, has argued, “All of the approaches we’ve used – first to prevent, then eliminate North Korea’s nuclear weapons program have failed. When we’ve negotiated, it’s failed and when we haven’t negotiated, it’s failed” (Mak 2016). Perhaps this identifies another American “sin,” or, at least attitude, that complicates its foreign policy – the idea that all global issues can be solved.



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# Solving North Korean missile crisis

## Abstract

*The Article examines the North Korean missile crisis situation. It starts with providing a background of North Korean nuclear program and identifying primary drivers of North Korea's continued interest in weapons of mass destruction. The article analyses hypothetical solutions like military action and the ineffectiveness of the economic sanctions. The three solutions to North Korean case start with a plan to prepare a policy of regime transition, and are followed with an explanation why making Pyongyang feel more secure and helping to improve its country economy are crucial to achieving American goal, which is at least freezing its country nuclear weapons program.*

**Keywords:** North Korea, the United States, nuclear threat, economic sanctions, military solution, regime transition, improving North Korean economy, diplomacy

## 1. Introduction

The time when only two superpowers, the United States and Russia, had nuclear weapons is over. The number of countries that are in possession of atomic weapons continues to grow, including France, Great Britain, India, Pakistan and others. In 2006, a ninth country joined the nuclear club – North Korea. Today, it has nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles which can reach South Korea, Japan and even the United States. Some people like Donald Trump, who refer to Kim as a “madman with nukes” (Nakamura & Gellman 2017), argue that Pyongyang poses a significant threat to the international community. Is Kim Jong Un, who represents a regime that oppresses the North Korean people, more likely to use nuclear weapons to

manifest his power to his opponents than other democratic leaders? Maybe he only wants to protect his country from the United States, which has violated the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement and since the 1960s has stored a range of weapons from anti-aircraft missiles and land mines to tactical bombs and surface-to-surface missiles in South Korea (Pincus 2018). Donald Trump has enough military arsenal close to North Korean borders to really unleash “fire and fury as the world has never seen” (Baker 2017).

Regardless of whether Kim Jong Un’s actions are justified or not, there is a crisis in the Korean Peninsula. If not stopped, this crisis could more likely lead to the escalation of a conflict that neither sides want. What has been done so far in order to prevent Kim Jung Un from developing the nuclear arsenal? The international community led by the United States has mainly focused on two solutions: imposing economic sanctions and putting military pressure on North Korea.

The current situation shows that the harsh economic sanctions did not improve the situation but actually made it worse. They have encouraged Kim Jong Un to “sprint toward the completion of a nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile” (Delury 2017). Under Kim Jong Un alone, more than eighty missile tests have been undertaken (Sang-Hun 2017), “including three intercontinental ballistic missile tests and the detonation of a thermonuclear bomb in September 2017” (Borger 2018). Sanctions have not achieved their stated purpose, which was slowing down or halting the North Korean nuclear program. An international security expert, professor Bo Ram Kwon from the University of North Carolina, stated that sanctions were not as effective as expected (Kwon 2016, pp. 139–161).

Using military force by the US through actions such as airstrikes could most likely lead to the destruction of the capital of South Korea – Seoul, and trigger a war in a highly populated region. Therefore, in order to achieve peace with North Korea, the United States should, as John Delury (associate professor of Chinese Studies at Yonsei University) puts it, “stop looking for ways to stifle North Korea’s economy and undermine Kim Jong Un’s regime and start finding ways to make Pyongyang feel more secure” (Delury 2017).

Before looking at the specific solutions to this argument, one should explain why we have to deal with the North Korean case, which is the possession of nuclear arsenal to begin with, and what are the primary drivers of North Korea’s continued interest in weapons of mass destruction? There are three opinions on that matter. First two represent two opposite groups of scientists; “Doves and Hawks.” The “Doves,” believe

that North Korea holds to its nuclear arsenal because it is “threatened militarily, isolated politically, and ailing economically” (Anderson 2017, p. 1). At the opposite the “Hawks,” argue that the North’s nuclear program is powered by “psychological proclivities, domestic political incentives, extortionary motives, and revisionist intentions” (ibid.). The “Hawks” believe that the problem is not only the leader – Kim Jong Un, his personality and country regime, but “the nature of the country.” For the “Hawks,” “the problem is not the US or South Korean foreign policy, the problem is North Korea” (ibid.).

In addition, there is also a third theory, stating that “the problem is not fundamentally one of personality, nor is it one of policy – the primary problem is of power and position” (ibid., p. 2). North Korea shares its peninsula with the most powerful country in the world – the United States – that explains North Korean nuclear behavior. “However, it is not the threatening nature of the U.S. foreign policy, as the doves might suggest, but the raw fact of the U.S.’s tremendous power and its proximity that motivates the North’s nuclear intentions” (ibid.). The Hawks on the other hand are right expressing that Kim will not abandon WMD’s, but they “overlook the centrality of the position of the United States on the Peninsula in leading to this outcome” (ibid., p. 17). The conclusion driven from the third theory perspective is simple: Donald Trump must accept its opponent Kim Jong Un as a leader of the nuclear weapon state if he wants to sustain his country military position on the Korean Peninsula.

The fear of the U.S. attack explains why Kim believes he needs a sufficient nuclear weapon to protect. He says that North Korea’s nuclear weapons are a “powerful deterrent firmly safeguarding the peace and security in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia” (Pearson 2017). Kim does not want to die like the Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi or the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, both of whom gave up their nuclear programs only to be attacked later by the United States (Sagan 2017). “The North Korean nuclear arsenal is not a bargaining chip. It is a potent deterrent designed to prevent a U.S attack or disrupt one that does occur by destroying U.S. air bases and ports through pre-emption, if possible, but in retaliation if necessary” (ibid.). In addition, there are premises that Kim may have ordered army generals to launch all available weapons of mass destruction at the enemy if he is killed (ibid.). If that is the case, it should be a signal to U.S. leaders that any even “surgical,” attacks to either eliminate the leader, whom Trump calls “madman with nuclear weapons” (Nakamura & Gellman 2017) or to damage North Korean nuclear storage facilities would not end the nuclear threat.



## 2. There is no military solution

If the U.S. would decide to use military tools in order to destroy North Korea's nuclear infrastructure, any strike would be preventative rather than pre-emptive (Litwak 2017, p. 9). International law is very clear and strict when it comes to the use of force, allowing for pre-emptive military action only in the face of a truly imminent threat. For example, in 2003 when George W. Bush started a war with Iraq, it was preventive, because Saddam Hussein was not an imminent threat to the United States. Current situation with North Korea does not legally allow the United States to use military force, because it does not meet the requirements of international law. In addition, there are at least two arguments, which suggest that there is no military solution to the North Korean crisis.

Firstly, it is impossible from a military standpoint to destroy every North Korean missile and nuclear weapon simultaneously. To give a better example, Korean situation is much different from the one in 1981, when Israel faced a threat from Iraq and precisely destroyed a single target, the Osiraq reactor – Tammuz 1. In North Korea there are multiple targets, and some of their locations are not known. North Korean weapons of mass destruction program includes many sites, which vary from reactors, enrichment facilities, warhead storages and stockpile locations to airfields, command-and-control centers, and other facilities. In addition, even if in some lucky scenario the United States destroyed the entire nuclear infrastructure, it would not deprive North Korea of know-how and experience (Anderson 2017). Finally, if Donald Trump decided to use military, the United States and its allies such as South Korea and Japan would face the prospect of nuclear retaliation.

Secondly, American missile defense systems, such as the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense or THAAD will fail if North Korea fires multiple missiles at one target. And that is the reason, why North Korea has been practicing launching not one, but several missiles simultaneously. In the case of a nuclear attack, most likely some North Korean nuclear-armed missiles would reach the US territory (Sagan 2017). If that happened the potential fatalities would be very high.

The nuclear weapons scholar Alex Wellerstein created a NUKEMAP to calculate how many civilians would die in a nuclear attack. For example, 100-kiloton nuclear bomb which was used by the North Korea during its sixth nuclear test if detonated, could kill around 440,000 South Korean people in a matter of seconds. Secondary effects could easily bring a number

of dead close to one million. While analyzing the possible casualties of a nuclear strike, one needs to take into consideration the danger of preemption and the consequence of it. Clear statement relating to a possibility of a war caused by the fear of a surprise attack was made in 2013. General Jeong Seung-jo, the chairman of the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that: "if there is a clear intent that North Korea is about to use a nuclear weapon, we will eliminate it first even at the risk of a war ...an attack against the North trying to use nuclear weapons does not require consultation with the United States and it is the right of self-defense" (ibid.).

It is also important to consider additional arguments, which are a major constraint on the use of a military strike. First one is the danger of unacceptable collateral damage – either to the environment or to the civilian population. When Israelis were attacking a chemical weapons sites (Iraq 1981, Syria 2007), they were not full of fissile material. Intelligence reports show that most of the nuclear targets in North Korea, such as the Yongbyon nuclear facility, are active sites with radioactive materials. Yongbyon is very close to the capital of North Korea, the city of Pyongyang. Even with the advanced precision of military air strikes the potential risk of collateral damage remains very high. Second argument describes the possibility of the inadvertent escalation, which could lead to an all-out war in the region with the engagement of superpowers such as China and Russia. It is rather important to acknowledge, that administrations of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barrack Obama withdrew from the military option against North Korea, partly, because South Koreans were very concerned with the risk of escalation the conflict. The United States has decided to pursue a non-military approach like economic sanctions, which so far has not accomplished their goal – end North Korean nuclear threat.

### **3. Why sanctions on North Korea won't work**

The United Nations, the United States and the European Union have been imposing economic sanctions on North Korea since 2006 to encourage the regime to stop its nuclear program. Over more than a decade, despite significant growth in the number of sanctions, North Korea continues to work on its nuclear program.

Sanctions on North Korea do not work, because they are not being implemented rigorously. Implementation highly depends on the commitment of North Korean most important trading partners, China and Russia,

who both joined in the Security Council's unanimous July 27, 2017 vote penalizing their neighbor. "The new measures prohibit all exports of North Korean coal, iron, iron ore, lead ore and seafood. They put new restrictions on North Korean's Foreign Trade Bank, forbid the country to increase the number of workers sent abroad and strengthen oversight of North Korean shipping" (Perlez & Gladstone 2017). Despite such clear new policies, everyday experience indicates that the new rules are not being followed by China and Russia and both are violating sanctions. Russia is doing so for three reasons. First, because it has a different definition than the US of an effective sanctions policy. Second, "Russian President Vladimir Putin wants the political benefits of resisting U.S. led sanctions policies toward North Korea" (Ramani 2018). Distinguished Asia-Pacific security expert Artyom Lukin, adds that it is also because Russia wants to "preserve its historical alliance with North Korea" (*ibid.*). How exactly are sanctions being violated by Russia? Mainly through illegally exporting oil to the country its neighbor and by hiring many North Korean construction workers at various construction projects. "The U.S. State Department approximates that around 20,000 North Koreans are sent – most, forcibly – to work in Russia each year for Russian companies (some estimates say the number is as high as 50,000) (Thoburn 2017). For example, North Korean workers participated in the building of the newly opened Zenit Arena in St. Petersburg and repairing the Moscow stadium for the 2018 World Cup (*ibid.*). Furthermore, there are many small North Korean-owned businesses across Russia ranging from restaurants and travel agencies to transport and home-maintenance companies (Sharkow 2019). Moreover, to help Russian businesses trade with trade with North Korean, the port of Nakhodka received a significant support from the Russian government, becoming the hub for transporting North Korean coal. European security reports show that in 2017 alone North Korea shipped coal at least three times to Russia's Nakhodka. In addition, Russia has aided North Korea in other ways: "in 2014, it forgave 90% of the nearly \$11 billion in debt that it (and the Soviet Union before it) was owed by North Korea. The remaining portion of the debt was to be repaid to Russia by deposits into an account that could then be used to grow Russian-North Korean ties and trade. To avoid the difficulties that western sanctions have placed on payments and financial transfers to North Korea, the two countries have an arrangement by which Russia pays Pyongyang in rubles" (Thoburn 2017).

Russia is a major player in the North Korea nuclear crisis. "It can help nudge Pyongyang toward strategic restraint, and help defuse tensions in

the meantime, by offering it new economic prospects" (Trenin 2017). Although Russia is not directly affected by North Korea's nuclear ambitions, it has an interest in helping to de-escalate the current crisis. The City of Vladivostok, located quite near several North Korean nuclear and missile sites, is a strategic and very important site on the Russian map, because it hosts the Pacific Fleet and is a gateway to the Asia-Pacific region. "Any malfunction or other mishap with North Korea's nuclear tests or missile launches could mean contamination in Russia itself" (ibid.). The Russian government also wants to limit further development of American missile-defense systems in Japan and South Korea. Russian's government officials say that North Korea will not denuclearize and that sanctions, no matter how strict, will not stop it from developing the nuclear program. They are opposed to cutting off oil supplies to North Korea. In October 2017, during an economic summit conference in Vladivostok, President Vladimir Putin said that stopping oil exports to the country would instead hurt ordinary North Koreans by disturbing hospitals and other civilian facilities (Sang-Hun 2017). He added that North Koreans will "eat grass" before they give up nuclear weapons, because they see it as the key to their very survival" (Trenin 2017).

There is also another key player in the North Korean crisis, China, which wants to avoid the collapse of North Korea and helps the regime even if it has not stopped its nuclear program. "One piece of evidence for this is the firm request from the Chinese authorities to South Korea and the United States not to attempt to disturb the stability of North Korea after Kim Jong-Il's death. Furthermore, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated in January 2012 that China would deliver food aid to North Korea and urged other countries to join in this effort" (Byung-Yeon & Roland 2012, p. 512).

The Chinese historically North Korea's best trading partners, are also violating sanctions. For example, North Korean seafood – crab, lobster, shrimp, shellfish – is sold directly to many Chinese restaurant and hotels. Most of the Korean distributors are army personnel. The same can be said about metal trade from North Korea to China. The North's iron ore exports, "have dwindled in the past several years" (Perlez & Gladstone 2017), but smuggling of coal still occurs on a large scale. Economists claim that the revenue to the state from seafood is not as high as that from the metals trade. In addition, many Chinese banks and corporations do business with North Korea despite being banned from doing so. For 2017, Chinese exports to the DPRK rose 8.3% to \$3.34 billion, the highest since 2014. Despite

clear evidence of breaking the rules, the U.S. Treasury Department wants to give China a chance to enforce the new United Nations sanctions and is hesitant to alienate Beijing by immediately imposing sanctions on Chinese organizations. As a result of "The penalties that came into force on Sept. 5 last year (2017) banned countries from buying coal, iron ore, lead, lead ore and seafood from North Korea" (Chen & Woo 2018). China's imports from North Korea plunged 81.6% year-on-year in December to their lowest level of \$54.34 million since at least the start of 2014 (*ibid.*). In November 2017, there were no reports of North Korean imports of iron ore, coal or lead. The most recent findings from the beginning of 2018 indicate that China still remains North Korea's largest trading partner, however trade has fallen: "Trade between China and North Korea totaled US\$215.97 million in January, down 52% from the year-earlier period and 31% month on month, final trade numbers from the General Administration of Customs showed on Friday. China's exports to North Korea totaled US\$168.88 million in January compared with US\$257.73 million in December, while imports from North Korea were US\$47.09 million versus US\$54.68 million in December" (Zhou 2018).

In addition, to Russia and China there is a third country, South Korea, that also violates the economic sanctions imposed on North Korea. Currently, many South Korean firms do business unofficially with their northern neighbor. "These firms are on the verge of collapse because of the current economics actions unless they hide their true identity to disguise themselves as Chinese businesses. These business transactions are effective in transforming North Korean culture and the society, exposing them to a market economy. Future North Korean entrepreneurs will be nurtured through these business transactions" (*ibid.*).

Since evidence shows that economic sanctions are not working, what should be done? In my opinion, sanctions should not be ended all at once, but rather gradually and partially: "Washington could lift them on sectors such as coal and oil, which affect the basic needs of the North Korean economy, while maintaining those directed at nuclear and missile programs. Over time, more economic engagement could yield additional benefits in slowly opening up North Korea" (Fuchs 2017).

Even though there is evidence that shows that economic sanctions have to date not done to North Korea and have not forced the regime to reduce its nuclear capacity, one ought to acknowledge one historical example where economic sanctions did contribute to limits in a country's nuclear program. This is the Iranian case, in which "sanctions – including

secondary sanctions – clearly moved Tehran toward negotiations” (Haggard 2016, p. 940). In 2002 the international community headed by the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany became highly concerned about newly discovered evidence that the possessed a nuclear weapons development program at Natanz. In order to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state that threatens its enemies, especially Israel, the United Nations imposed comprehensive sanctions, such as an arms embargo, travel bans, financial sanctions and cargo inspections. In 2005 after talks with Iran failed, EU members joined the US and imposed stronger energy and financial sector sanctions. However, the real difference was made by the secondary sanctions imposed by the US in January 2012 on Iran’s banking sector that were designed to hit directly the Central Bank and all business connected to it. “Since Iran’s major oil importers work with the Central Bank, this prohibited Iran’s export of oil. Also, in January 2012, the EU imposed sanctions that banned the import of Iranian oil and insurance of Iranian tankers. This made it difficult for states such as South Korea and Singapore to buy and transport Iranian oil” (Kwon 2016, p. 143). Those secondary sanctions were the ones that finally forced Iran to sit at the negotiating table. They were effective because Iran, as one of the world’s biggest oil suppliers, was heavily dependent on the world economy via trade and investment. Additionally, Iran was likely to be affected by sanctions because the Iranian economy “was already suffering from the backlash of economic mismanagement under President Ahmadinejad and low global energy prices” (ibid.).

There are two main reasons why sanctions worked in the Iranian case but will not be as effective in North Korea. First, the North Korea economy is built on a self-sufficiency principle and does not depend heavily on income from one crucial source such oil and as a result is more flexible and more resistant to sanctions. Second, “the West demonstrated unprecedented levels of orchestrated commitment toward imposing comprehensive sanctions on Iran to halt its nuclear weapons development program” (ibid.), which was and still is not the case with North Korea where some countries such as China are much less involved in imposing sanctions, because it has strong political and economic ties with North Korea.

The key to restoring peace and stability to the region is to convince Kim Jong Un that he already holds the deterrent he needs, and that increasing his nuclear arsenal would be counterproductive. To accomplish that goal Donald Trump needs to offer Mr. Kim new economic prospects to help improve North Korea’s economy.



#### 4. A policy of regime transition

The process of helping to improve the North Korean economy and making Pyongyang feel more secure should start with a policy of regime transition. This is not regime change, where a new dictatorship takes power. But who is to say that a follower of Kim Jong Un would be better than the current leader? Therefore, one ought to focus on the goal of a changed regime headed by Kim Jong Un. Col. James M. Minnich (2018), a senior military professor at the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, says a changed regime can result from “a policy of consistent, prolonged engagement that engenders a transformation from within by resolute exposures from without.” That kind of strategy was implemented by the American government in South Korea, where its long consistent presence and engagement helped to it become a country it is right now, a strong American ally. It was also by the US towards North Korea before 2000 with official meetings between DPRK dignitaries by first Bill Clinton and soon after with Madeleine Albright. Unfortunately, the more recent presidencies of both George W. Bush and Barack Obama did not continue the approach. Bush practiced a “less than hospitable approach toward North Korea’s Kim Jong Il,” while Obama strongly believed in a “policy of strategic patience, which was an unsuccessful attempt to pressure Pyongyang to denuclearize through U.S. led economic sanctions” (ibid.). As of today, we experience a situation on the Korean Peninsula in which American interests, abolition of a nuclear weapons program, are not the same as North Korea’s. What needs to be done by the American government is to implement a process of dynamic policy actions seeking regime transition that would eventually lead to a resolution of the North Korean missile crisis. Those actions should start with security assurances and the reestablishment of relations between the United States and North Korea and with economic policies that to help improve DPRK economy through cooperative prosperity and nonnuclear energy provision (ibid.).

#### 5. Making Pyongyang feel more secure

In order to proceed with plans toward North Korea that return security to the region, diplomacy must first be established. Making Kim Jong un feel more secure must start with dialogue. For a long period of time Kim was not ready to talk. Michael Fuchs, a Senior Fellow at the Center



for American Progress states that: "North Korea may not be interested in talking until it feels assured that it has what it needs for deterrence – namely, the ability to place a nuclear warhead on an intercontinental ballistic missile that could hit the continental United States (as of this writing, such a capability may or may not exist). Yet Washington must convey that it is ready to talk anytime and anywhere, without preconditions and with the full backing of the president" (*ibid.*).

The most recent meetings between Kim and Western representatives prove that Kim finally is ready to talk. The first meeting took place in Pyongyang on March 5, 2018. It might be a good indication that finally the leader of North Korea feels secure enough to begin negotiations with the West.

Following that, on April 27, 2018, Kim Jong Un, himself crossed into Panmunjom to meet personally South Korean President Moon Jae-in. Issues regarding peace and prosperity topped the agenda. The two leaders talked mainly about nuclear weapons and about reestablishing relations between the two Koreas through industrial cooperation, humanitarian aid and cultural exchange. They also spent some time discussing the topic of connecting separated families, who could not see each other for many years due to the Korean crisis.

A historic meeting took place in Singapore on June 12, 2018. It brought Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump together. Never before had leaders of those two nations met face to face. The success of talks was partly determined because Kim had been able to restore good relations with South Korea. That allowed the American president and the North Korean leader to focus on the most important issue – stopping the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. One ought to recognize that a year ago both leaders were exchanging personal insults and threatening war. To see Trump and Kim smiling, shaking hands and talking about cooperation was a success. Itself, and a step forward, and reduced the risk of war. However, reactions after the summit were mostly negative. Newspapers, Democrats and even some Republicans were dissatisfied, saying out loud that the meeting was more symbolic and lacked substance, because nothing concrete was decided, and no written commitment with deadlines and a definition of denuclearization was signed. However, those critics are forgetting that the goal of the summit was to bring the two feuding nations closer and open the door to negotiations – and that certainly has been accomplished, making it historic. Now, Kim and Trump must step back and allow the diplomats do their job.

The goal of diplomacy should be to stop North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. Siegfried Hecker, former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, specifies these goals: "first, no new weapons (freezing North Korean production of plutonium and enriched uranium); second, no testing of weapons or ballistic missiles; and third, no exports of nuclear technology or weapons to state or non-state entities. A freeze would preclude the additional testing that North Korea still needs to master miniaturization and reliable long-range missiles" (Litwak 2017, p. 7). All six parties should be involved in talks: North Korea and the United States, along with China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea, but not directly and not at once. The main diplomatic work would have to be done bilaterally between the US and North Korea. It seems logical that after the agreement between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un on freezing North Korean nuclear program is accomplished, the parties could move to the next step and that is making Pyongyang feel more secure.

In order to proceed with that, Donald Trump with his colleagues should prepare a package of security guarantees and political incentives, along with practical means to verify Kim's compliance. Trump should propose substantive concession to Kim, well beyond food aid, and suggest convening four-power talks with China, North Korea, South Korea, and the United States to negotiate and sign a treaty formally ending the Korean War, as Pyongyang has long demanded (Delury 2017). It is positive to note that South Korea confirmed on April 18 2018, that "it had been in talks with American and North Korean officials about negotiating a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War after more than 60 years, as the United States and its ally try to establish a basis for persuading the North to give up its nuclear weapons" (Sang-Hun 2017).

Establishing a constructive dialogue between Kim and Trump should go along with establishing liaison offices in Washington and Pyongyang. Those actions could help re-establish diplomatic relations between the two conflict-ridden countries and through direct negotiations discover what steps Kim is ready to take and which ones will have to be postponed. Those high-level talks should tackle the case of launching North Korean satellites, which the U.S. believes are simply ballistic missile tests. Trump might suggest to the Koreans that Russia launch the satellites for them.

There are many political leaders, who are in favor of dialogue with North Koreans. One is Vladimir Putin, who has said, "we should not act out of emotions and push North Korea into a dead end... we must act with calm and avoid steps that could raise tensions" (*ibid.*). During a joint news conference

in Vladivostok with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, Putin clearly stated, “without political and diplomatic tools, it is impossible to make headway in the current situation; to be more precise, it is impossible” (ibid.). It is hopeful that after a long period of rather “cold relations,” diplomatic actions are finally taking place. The personal visit of then CIA director and now Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, to North Korea to meet with Kim Jong Un and prepare a scenario for high-level talks between Trump and Kim is a positive indication that the process of resolving North Korean crisis is starting to head along the right path.

Simultaneous with diplomatic actions, the United States must halt the major military exercises it holds with South Korea, as it did in 1994, 1995 and 1996. Historical evidence shows that halting the exercises did not slow the North Korean nuclear program from slowing down, but now, more than two decades later, ending the exercises will have a greater impact on North Korean’s nuclear program than in the mid-1990s. Most significantly nowadays, Kim Jong un possesses much more military power than he had in the past and the science of military technology has greatly improved. “Many exercises already take place on computers and can continue, and altering the real-life exercises would do nothing to weaken the strongest component of U.S. deterrence: the United States’ military presence in South Korea and its pledge to defend the country against nuclear attack” (Fuchs 2017). The United States and its allies acknowledge that, given the stronger military position of North Korea today, they should change their strategy from aggression to diplomacy to Pyongyang feel more secure.

The same applies to the North Korean regime that should not only stop launching missiles over the heads of South Korean and Japanese people, but certainly ought to remove its heavy artillery located very close to South Korea’s border. Kim Jong Un cannot persuade achieve the goal of “making himself secure” through constantly threatening its main adversaries; the United States and South Korean are threatened enough, if they weren’t, we would not have “North Korean Missile Crisis.”

## **6. Improving North Korean economy**

The talks between the US and North Korea have taken place at the highest possible level. They have relaxed tensions and created an opening for further negotiation, which should eventually lead Kim Jong Un and

Donald Trump to making a deal: “helping Kim plot a path of prosperity by integrating North Korea’s economy into the region” (Delury 2017). When preparing a plan that could help to improve the North Korean economy, one ought to focus on three areas that seem to have the most potential: tourism, natural resources and agriculture.

North Korea is a secret state, a country which is not easily accessible to tourists. Most tourists are citizens of China, Russia and Japan, whose citizens do not have to apply for visas to enter North Korea. I believe that changing policies with regards to foreign travel from highly restrictive to more open could turn North Korea from a country completely closed to the international community into one that is open and willing to show its interesting culture and landscape. The country’s economy could benefit from it, because western foreigners visiting would see it as an attractive opportunity with regards to the favorable exchange rate.

North Korea is one of the biggest producers of fresh fruit in the world, but its agriculture is in terrible condition due to two factors. First, agricultural business was highly dependent on the former Soviet Union; its collapse contributed to cutting North Korea off from fairly inexpensive Russian fuel that had been used by North Korean farmers. Secondly, the country’s soil has been impoverished due to its very abusive cultivation practices. Those two factors contributed to the famine of 1994–1998 that killed over two million North Korean people. I believe that with significant help from the international community to help modernize DPRK agricultural machines and teach modern ways to cultivate the soil, North Korea could restore its agriculture. When that is accomplished North Korea could take advantage of its very good geopolitical location on the Korean Peninsula and benefit from exporting agricultural goods to neighboring countries. North Korea’s location at the crossroads of Northeast Asia is a great, natural asset that should not be ignored, but taken advantage of through encouraging businesses in China’s northeastern provinces and the Russian Far East to ship their goods to Rason, North Korea’s ice-free port. International financial institutions such as, the World Bank or International Monetary Fund could find ways to stabilize the North Korean currency and provide development assistance. Certainly, North Korea would have a chance to become an attractive manufacturing land for many international corporations, given not only low wages, but more significantly the country’s disciplined and educated workforce.

Finally, one should not forget the country’s rich natural resources, which include coal and iron ore, precious metals, and rare earths.

Currently, North Korea cannot benefit from their possession due to economic sanctions. If the United States together with United Nations decided to lift sanctions, attracting foreign partners interested in those goods would be just a matter of time and would quickly and significantly could improve the North Korean economy.

Improving the North Korean economy in the above three areas can only take place if its government makes significant changes in economic policies that would eventually lead to an economic transition. There are three possible economic scenarios. The first is the collapse scenario, in which the young and inexperienced leader Kim is replaced by someone else following leadership fights; this is the least likely scenario. The second scenario is a Chinese-style scenario, where Kim will remain in power and will decide to follow the example of Deng Xiaoping in China to carry out successful economic reforms (Byung-Yeon & Roland 2012, p. 529). Those reforms should include decollectivization of agriculture, the encouragement of entry by small and medium enterprises into the market and the establishment of a manufacturing base aimed at exports (*ibid.*, p. 530). Decollectivization can take place through redistributing land to people and giving out property rights, as has occurred in Vietnam. Encouraging business openings will require access to credit and securing rights for private businesses. The establishment of a manufacturing zone for exports is very important in any transition strategy, because it “would provide a major source of export revenue for North Korea and give the opportunity to many workers to earn relatively high incomes” (*ibid.*, p. 532). The last scenario is the one where Kim Jong Un changes nothing or very little: this is rather hard to imagine observing his current open-minded diplomatic activity and historical trips to China and South Korea. Both demonstrate his willingness to cooperate and do business as opposed to isolate.

The question that must be answered is whether the North Korean regime will be able to successfully introduce a market economy? The examples of China and Vietnam indicate that it is possible. Significant processes with country’s economic policies might require the support of government officials. They will need to be convinced that changing to a market economy will not deprive them of money and prestige. One incentive could be allowing those bureaucrats to work part-time in private business or setting up a bonus program dependent on tax revenues collected. Allowing the above increases the danger of developing a monopoly, but without backing for market reforms from workers within the state apparatus, the process of implementing the economic policies will be less effective (*ibid.*).

To recapitulate, solving the North Korean missile crisis cannot be achieved through military strikes or imposing harsh economic sanctions, but through making North Korea feel more secure and helping its economy to expand. Neither of those goals can be accomplished without restoring diplomacy between the United States and North Korea. The recent meetings between Kim Jong un and the leaders of China, South Korea and, most significantly, the United States give hope that resolving the North Korean crisis is possible and that diplomacy will be the key instrument in that process. It is important to emphasize that in all those cases Kim travelled abroad to meet the leaders. That fact alone showed his openness to dialogue. Another proof that he wants to come to an agreement is his unwillingness to express his opinion publicly on issues such as the US-led attack on Syria or the nomination of John Bolton, who is known for his rather harsh approach towards North Korea and belief in hard power rather than soft-power politics, as National Security Adviser. Additionally, from the moment Trump has agreed to meet, the regime has stopped calling American an "enemy" and itself a "strong nuclear power." Peter Ward, an expert on North Korea from the Seoul National University says that those behaviors are not coincidental (Słabisz 2018).

There are also sceptics who believe that Kim is not ready to abandon his nuclear program on which he has spent a lot of money, and that the diplomacy he is lately showing is nothing, but a trick. They believe that Donald Trump needs to be very careful and that he needs to pass a very difficult test, which is to guess Kim's real intentions. One of those critics is professor Lee Sung-yoon from Tufts University, who argues that Kim is playing around, luring Trump into his ambush with no intentions of giving away his nukes (ibid.). If he is right, the outcome of resolving North Korean missile crisis between Donald Trump and Kim Jong will heavily depend on leadership skills of the two, rather than on the surrounding environment, which could mean the role of other countries involved in North Korean crisis.

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## **Japan's policy towards North Korea under the Second Abe Administration**

### **Abstract**

*The aim of this chapter is to examine the efficiency of Prime Minister Abe's hard-line policy towards North Korea under his second administration. The analysis is conducted through the lenses of neoclassical realism. Apart from domestic factors (Abe's "hawkish" convictions and anti-North Korean moods among the public in Japan), external stimuli will be examined, such as the US's sudden shift towards soft-power policy vis-à-vis Pyongyang under the Trump administration and its impact on Tokyo's foreign policy. It is argued that while ideological leanings of decision makers influenced the pace and intensity of diplomatic endeavors, it is the international determinants that delineated the general course of Japan's foreign policy.*

**Keywords:** Japan, North Korea, Abe administration, foreign policy, neoclassical realism

### **1. Introduction**

Since starting his political career in the early 1990s, Abe Shinzō has put much emphasis on conducting an assertive policy towards North Korea, both regarding the nuclear armaments problem and the Japanese citizens' abductions issue. The aim of this paper is to examine the efficiency of Prime Minister Abe's hard-line approach towards Pyongyang under his second administration. The analysis is conducted through the lenses of neoclassical realism. On the one hand, due to his "hawkish" stance, Abe was unwilling to agree to any concessions towards North Korea. On the

other hand, after depleting all economic and political pressure measures on Pyongyang, he started envisaging re-initiation of dialogue with the Kim Jong-un regime. Apart from domestic factors, external stimuli will be examined, such as the US's sudden shift towards soft-power policy vis-à-vis North Korea and its impact on Tokyo's foreign policy. It is argued that while convictions of decision makers influenced the pace and intensity of diplomatic endeavors, it is the international determinants that established the general course of foreign policy.

According to neoclassical realism, the stimuli stemming from the international environment are heavily filtered by peculiar domestic circumstances in a given country before they are translated into concrete foreign policy decisions (Rose 1998, pp. 144–172). In line with this approach, the general contour of Japan's policy was delineated by the external factors, such as relations in the US–North Korea–South Korea triangle. The article focuses on the analysis of the combination of hard-power and soft-power instruments employed by the Abe administration to resolve problems in contacts with Pyongyang, their evolution, and the changes in Washington's policy towards the Kim Jong-un regime. The first section briefly describes Japan's negotiations with North Korea until 2012, while two subsequent sections are devoted respectively to pressure and persuasion applied towards Pyongyang by Prime Minister Abe. It is argued that while Abe leaned heavily towards hard-power measures, the lack of their efficiency and the sudden shift in the US's approach against Pyongyang under the Trump administration forced him to display a more accommodative posture towards North Korea. Despite these changes, the abductions issue keeps hindering a breakthrough in relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang comparable to the one achieved by Seoul and Washington.

## **2. Japan's relations with North Korea until 2012**

To this day, Japan has not established official diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). This abnormal situation stems from the controversies over indemnities from Japan for the period of colonial rule, North Korea's state-sponsored terrorism, nuclear armament program and missile tests, and the abductions issue. Japan imposed sanctions on Pyongyang after an assassination attempt by North Korean agents against South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan in 1983 or after a terrorist attack on Korean Air Flight 858 in 1987 (Shigemura 2000,

pp. 64–71). In the 1990s, in turn, it was the nuclear program and missile tests that dominated bilateral contacts. In 1993 North Korea launched Nodong-1 missiles over the Sea of Japan and threatened to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Japan participated in financing the construction of two light-water reactor power plants in North Korea when Pyongyang agreed to suspend its nuclear program according to the 1994 agreement. Nevertheless, the Taepodong-1 missile test in 1998 once again reminded of the North Korean threat.

The problem that exerted a strong influence on Abe Shinzō's political career was the abductions issue. At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, North Korean agents abducted a number of Japanese citizens, including a schoolgirl Yokota Megumi, to use them as Japanese-language teachers for spies or as spouses for foreign terrorists living in North Korea. In 1997 the families of the abducted established Association of Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (*Kitachōsen ni yoru Rachi Higaisha Kazoku Renrakukai*) that gained strong backing from the Japanese public (Hasuike [et al.] 2010, pp. 34–54). Abe became involved in solving the abductions issue as early as 1988 when he served as a personal secretary to his father, LDP Secretary General Abe Shintarō. At that time, Abe's office was visited by the parents of one of the abducted, who revealed that their daughter was allegedly living in Pyongyang. In 1997 Abe and his fellows in the LDP established the Parliamentary League for the Rescue of the Japanese Abducted by North Korea (*Kita Chōsen Rachi Giwaku Nihonjin Kyūen Giin Renmei*). He consistently demanded imposing economic sanctions on North Korea to force the Kim Jong-il regime to return the abductees. When eventually five of the missing were released to Japan in October 2002, after Prime Minister Koizumi's historic visit to Pyongyang one month earlier, it was Abe who decided not to let them return to North Korea, thus breaking an agreement with that country (Abe 2006, pp. 44–59). This decision, as well as Abe's subsequent involvement in putting pressure on Pyongyang under the Koizumi administration, contributed to the popularization of Abe's image as a strong statesperson and thus laid the ground for his election as LDP president and prime minister in September 2006 (Żakowski, Bochorodycz & Socha 2018, pp. 88–94).

Only two weeks after assuming office, Abe had to react to a crisis situation on the Korean Peninsula. On October 9, 2006, North Korea announced the success of its first nuclear test. Japan's answer was immediate. Tokyo banned all economic exchange with North Korea, denying ships from that country entry to Japanese ports. Moreover, except for those who

had residential status, all North Koreans were prohibited from entering Japan (MacAskill & Watts 2006). Together with the US, Tokyo was one of the sponsors of UN Security Council's Resolution 1718 that was unanimously adopted on October 14, 2006. The resolution condemned the nuclear test, "prohibited the provision of large-scale arms, nuclear technology and related training to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as luxury goods, calling upon all States to take cooperative action, including through inspection of cargo, in accordance with their respective national laws," and imposed "asset freeze and travel ban on persons related to the nuclear-weapon programme" (United Nations 2006).

As soon as Abe assumed the post of prime minister in September 2006, he established Headquarters for the Abduction Issue (Rachi Mondai Taisaku Honbu) in the Cabinet Secretariat, composed of all cabinet members and chaired by the prime minister himself. At the same time, the post of minister of state for the abduction issue was created, which was assumed by Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki Yasuhisa. Moreover, one of prime minister's special advisors, Nakayama Kyōko, was charged with the same issue. In addition, in November 2006 Special Committee for the Abduction Issue (Rachi Mondai Taisaku Tokumei Iinkai) was established in the LDP Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC), headed by PARC Chairperson Nakagawa Shōichi. All these institutional changes indicated how great importance Abe attached to solving the abduction problem. The new government devoted additional funds for such activities as shortwave transmissions to potential abductees in North Korea or information campaigns among Japanese citizens. During a public meeting in Tokyo's Hibiya in December 2006, Abe confirmed that normalization of relations with the DPRK would be impossible without a complete solution of the abduction issue. Despite bold declarations, apart from initiating a series of investigations against the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chōsen Sōren) that sympathized with North Korea, Abe did little to put pressure on Pyongyang regarding the abduction problem before stepping down from office in September 2007 (Hasuike [et al.] 2010, pp. 167–172).

Fukuda Yasuo, who succeeded Abe, held a completely different stance on policy towards the DPRK. Instead of putting constant pressure on Pyongyang, he wanted to persuade North Korea to re-initiate investigation on the abduction issue during a constructive dialogue on establishing official diplomatic relations with that country. Unfortunately, when this policy started bringing results, Fukuda resigned and was replaced by

Asō Tarō in September 2008. Asō generally shared Abe's stance on applying intense pressure on Pyongyang, and he reopened the meetings of the Headquarters for the Abduction Issue that had remained suspended under the Fukuda administration. This hard-line policy was not changed by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government after grasping power in September 2009. Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio even increased the budget of the Headquarters and nominated Nakai Hiroshi as minister in charge of the abduction issue, who was known for his strong anti-North Korean posture (*ibid.*, pp. 176–192). Eventually, the hard-line policy towards North Korea prevented any progress in resolving the abductions issue. During the Six-Party Talks, held from 2003 to 2009 with the participation of both Koreas, the US, China, Russia and Japan, Tokyo consistently treated further investigation on abductions as a prerequisite to any agreement regarding the normalization of diplomatic relations with Pyongyang.

### **3. Second Abe Administration's hard power policy towards North Korea**

Approach towards North Korea constituted one of the crucial directions of Japan's foreign policy after Abe's return to power in December 2012. Not only did the solution of the abduction issue remain high on the prime minister's policy agenda, but just as under his first administration, soon after assuming office Abe had to react to a severe escalation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

After Kim Jong-il's death in December 2011, his successor Kim Jong-un instituted a series of provocative acts against South Korea, Japan, and the US. In mid-December 2012, Pyongyang successfully launched satellite Kwangmyŏngsŏng-3 Unit 2 that flew over Okinawa. The crisis escalated after North Korean nuclear tests on February 15 and March 7, 2013. In the following months, Pyongyang stated it was no longer bound by the Panmunjeom armistice agreement that ended Korean War in 1953. The regime announced restarting of a reactor and uranium enrichment plant at the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center and closed the Kaesong Industrial Complex, where South Korean companies had been allowed to invest.

Japan led the international community in demanding a strong reaction to the abovementioned provocations. The Abe administration promoted Resolution 2087 that the UN Security Council unanimously adopted on

January 22, 2013. The document condemned North Korea's ballistic test from December 2012, called the DPRK to conform with previous resolutions on suspension of the missile program and nuclear armaments, as well as reaffirmed previous sanctions, including the travel ban and asset freeze against persons and institutions involved in the North Korea's nuclear program (United Nations Security Council 2013a). In addition, Resolution 2094, passed on March 7, 2013, demanded "that the DPRK immediately retract its announcement of withdrawal from the NPT" and introduced further restrictions on trade and financial operations with North Korea (United Nations Security Council 2013b).

All the time, the Japanese prime minister attached much importance to solving the abduction problem. During a speech in Washington in February 2013, Abe emphasized that a blue-ribbon pin he was wearing on his jacket reminded him every day that he had to bring back the Japanese citizens abducted by the DPRK (Stockwin & Ampiah 2017, p. 211). Minister of State for the Abduction Issue Furuya Keiji pointed to the same pin he was wearing during his speech in Washington in May 2013. As stressed by Furuya, Tokyo expected not only bringing back to Japan all of the abductees but also handing over of the perpetrators. Furuya expressed his opinion that the crisis on the Korean Peninsula should not hinder talks on solving the abduction issue for several reasons. Firstly, the new North Korean leader Kim Jong-un did not seem to have been directly involved in the kidnappings. Secondly, apart from Western powers, also China started exerting pressure on Pyongyang regarding the nuclear problem. Thirdly, high approval ratings of the Abe cabinet indicated that his administration could provide more stable political conditions for negotiations with North Korea than previous Japanese governments (Headquarters for the Abduction Issue 2013).

Japan's hard-line policy was generally consistent with the US's posture against North Korea. In response to the escalation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula, in April 2013, the Obama administration decided to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to Guam. In addition, American B-2 and B-52 heavy bombers, capable of carrying nuclear weapons, began patrolling the skies above South Korea (Muñoz 2013). During the Japan-US-Republic of Korea Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July 2013, all sides agreed to coordinate their efforts to solve the North Korean problem and to cooperate with China and Russia on that issue. They also "shared the view that they would not have a dialogue for the sake of a dialogue with North Korea, that it is important



for North Korea to take concrete and meaningful actions to demonstrate a serious intention of denuclearization, and that should North Korea take such actions a different path would be open to the improvement of relations with the three countries" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2013). Prime Minister Abe reiterated this stance at a summit meeting with President Barack Obama and President Park Geun-hye in The Hague in March 2014. He also "expressed his gratitude to the US and the ROK for their consistent understanding and cooperation on the abductions issue, one of the most important issues for Japan" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2014). Following North Korea's nuclear test on January 6, 2016, and satellite launch on February 7, 2016, Japan and the US supported UN Security Council Resolution 2270 that broadened the arms embargo on North Korea. The resolution prohibited that country from repairing and servicing weapons sold to third parties and introduced mandatory inspections on cargo from or to North Korea (United Nations Security Council 2016).

Even greater opportunities for creating a common front against North Korea with the US appeared after the election of Donald Trump as American president in November 2016. During the electoral campaign and at the beginning of his term in office, Trump emphasized the necessity of applying stronger pressure on Pyongyang regarding the nuclear armaments issue. In March 2016, he even suggested that Japan should develop its own atomic bomb to protect itself from the North Korean threat. In one of the interviews, in turn, he said that he "would get China to make [Kim Jong-un] disappear in one form or another very quickly" (Council on Foreign Relations 2016). In August 2017, President Trump used even stronger rhetoric against Pyongyang: "North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. (...) They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen" (Hamedy & Tseng 2018). Moreover, in his speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2017, among the crimes committed by "the depraved regime in North Korea," Trump mentioned the kidnapping of Yokota Megumi. He called Kim Jong-un a "Rocket Man" and admitted that if the US "is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea" (The Executive Office of the President 2017). In response, the North Korean dictator dubbed the American president "doltard" who "is uttering only what he wants to say." Trump immediately warned that "Kim Jong Un of North Korea, who is obviously a madman who doesn't mind starving or killing his people, will be tested like never before!" (Hamedy & Tseng 2018). This exchange of insults seemed

to indicate that the Japanese prime minister gained a powerful ally in applying economic, political, and even military pressure on Pyongyang.

Abe fully adhered to President Trump's initially assertive policy towards North Korea, and he invested a lot of time and effort in establishing a personal relationship with the new American leader. During the G7 summit in Italian Taormina in May 2017, Abe and Trump agreed "to put pressure on North Korea rather than to have dialogue with it" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2017a). During a summit in Mar-A-Lago in Palm Beach in mid-November 2017, in turn, Trump stressed that he stood behind Japan "100%" after the North Korean missile test in the Sea of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2017b). What strengthened the bilateral alliance were the provocative moves by Pyongyang: the first North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile test in July 2017, launching of missiles that flew over Hokkaido in August and September 2017, as well as North Korea's first hydrogen bomb test in early September 2017. During his visit to New York in September 2017, Abe thanked Trump for his strong posture against North Korea and for mentioning Yokota Megumi in the remarks to the UN General Assembly. The two leaders "confirmed that the US commitment to defend Japan through the full range of US military capabilities, both nuclear and conventional, is unwavering and that Japan and the United States are 100% together" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2017c).

When on November 28, 2017, North Korea launched another intercontinental missile that landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone, Prime Minister Abe asked the UN Security Council to convene an emergency meeting. Japan, who presided over Security Council, was one of the leading promoters of Resolution 2397 adopted on December 22, 2017. The document introduced a ban on export to the DPRK of crude oil exceeding 4 million barrels or 525,000 tons and refined fuel exceeding 500,000 barrels during the period of twelve months. The prohibition also concerned machinery, industrial equipment, metals, and transportation vehicles. In addition, North Korea was banned from exporting food and agricultural products. All member states were also instructed to repatriate to North Korea all DPRK workers within 24 months (United Nations Security Council 2017). As stressed by Abe, "North Korea's nuclear and missile development represents an unprecedented, grave and imminent threat," and the international community "must not yield to any provocative actions and must remain united to enhance pressure on North Korea to the maximum degree in order to urge it to change its policies" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2017d).

As outlined above, Prime Minister Abe consistently conducted a hard-line policy towards Pyongyang. He not only promoted subsequent sanctions against North Korea in the UN, but also decided on suspending any exchange between that country and Japan. When Donald Trump was elected US president, it seemed that Abe gained a reliable ally in forcing Pyongyang to resolve the abductions problem and denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. On the other hand, despite many years of hard-power diplomacy against the Kim Jong-un regime, there was no progress in negotiations on any of the issues that hindered the normalization of relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang.

#### **4. From the confrontation to the dialogue**

Due to the lack of results of economic sanctions and political pressure on North Korea, Abe gradually started envisaging a more constructive dialogue with Pyongyang. Initially, he was persuaded to present a milder posture by his advisor, former senior secretary to Prime Minister Koizumi, Iijima Isao. Iijima claimed that a breakthrough in bilateral contacts would be impossible through bureaucratic-level negotiations alone and that using pressure without a dialogue with North Korean decision-makers was not constructive. In May 2013, Iijima secretly visited Pyongyang, where he met with the President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea, Kim Yong-nam. Iijima suspected that the fact that he managed to gain access to such top-class politician and that he was treated as a head of the state during his visit, indicated that the abductions problem remained unsolved and there were more abductees living in North Korea (Iijima 2014, pp. 104–124).

Iijima was unable to persuade Pyongyang to make immediate concessions, but his visit prepared the ground for re-launching Japan–North Korea Intergovernmental Consultations in March 2014. Eventually, the agreement between both countries was reached in Stockholm in May 2014. Pyongyang agreed to establish Special Investigation Committee and to start an investigation on all Japanese nationals in North Korea. In exchange, Tokyo lifted part of restrictions on visits of North Koreans to Japan, on reporting money transfers to the DPRK, as well as on the entry into Japanese ports of North Korean ships for humanitarian purposes (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2015). Nevertheless, this move did not lead to any progress in solving the abduction issue. In May 2015,

the Minister of State for the Abduction Issue Yamatani Eriko took part in the International Symposium on Human Rights Violations in New York, which included the issue of Abductions by North Korea. Minister expressed her disappointment with Pyongyang's posture and warned that "North Korea will have no future unless it resolves the abduction issue" (Headquarters for the Abduction Issue 2015).

While Abe's first attempt at constructive dialogue with North Korea was initiated by the Japanese prime minister's closest entourage, his second attempt was forced upon him by President Donald Trump. As was already described, during the first year of his term in office, President Trump adhered to a strictly hard-power-like approach towards North Korea. However, in March 2018, the American president surprisingly announced that he was envisaging a summit meeting with Kim Jong-un. This sudden shift in American diplomacy, not consulted with Japan, was a severe blow to Abe's hard-line policy against Pyongyang. It seemed that South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who vigorously promoted soft-power-like measures in relations with the DPRK, replaced Abe as the leading Asian advisor to President Trump. As a result, the Japanese prime minister was placed in an awkward position. On the one hand, he did not want to abandon his stance that no agreement with North Korea would be possible without resolving the abductions issue. On the other hand, if the US and South Korea achieved a compromise with Pyongyang on the nuclear armaments, it would be difficult for Japan to refuse rapprochement with the DPRK solely on the grounds of the abductions issue.

Under these circumstances, the Japanese government had no choice but to revise its attitude towards Pyongyang. Tokyo's embarrassing shift towards a more accommodating posture vis-à-vis the DPRK was reflected in press conferences of Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide. On March 7, 2018, immediately after it was decided that a summit meeting between Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-un would take place at the end of April, Suga warned that "any response to North Korea should be fully based on the lesson that previous dialogue with North Korea has not led to denuclearization. Dialogue for the sake of dialogue is also meaningless. In order to engage in meaningful dialogue, it is of the utmost importance for North Korea to commit to abandoning its nuclear and missile programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and to demonstrate concrete actions towards denuclearization" (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet 2018a). Moreover, he was reassured by US Vice President Pence's statement "that the United States will continue to apply maximum

pressure on North Korea" (ibid.). However, only two days later, after President Trump's surprising announcement of his plan to meet Chairperson Kim, Suga reported that Prime Minister Abe appreciated Trump's policy and accepted his explanation that the summit would be a result of the "maximum pressure" applied on the DPRK by the US and Japan. During a telephone conversation with Trump, Abe could only point out "that it was necessary for North Korea to demonstrate specific actions towards denuclearization in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner," and ask the American president for his assistance in solving the abduction issue (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet 2018b). During his visit to the US in mid-April 2018, Abe tried to persuade Trump to apply further pressure on Pyongyang. Both sides agreed "that North Korea must not be given any reward for merely engaging with other countries," and Trump promised to raise the abductions issue during his meeting with the North Korean dictator (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2018a).

Sudden detente on the Korean Peninsula forced the Abe administration to display a more accommodative posture towards Pyongyang. After the Inter-Korean Summit at the end of April 2018, Japanese Foreign Minister Kōno Tarō welcomed the fact that both leaders discussed the problem of denuclearization of the peninsula "as a positive development for the comprehensive resolution of outstanding issues of concern regarding North Korea" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2018b). At the same time, he urged Pyongyang to take "concrete actions for the dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction, including biological and chemical weapons, and ballistic missiles of all ranges in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner" (ibid.). Kōno confirmed that Japan sought "to normalize its relations with North Korea through a comprehensive resolution of outstanding issues of concern, such as the abductions, nuclear and missile issues, as well as settlement of the unfortunate past in accordance with the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration" (ibid.). During Japan–China–Republic of Korea Trilateral Summit in Tokyo on May 9, 2018, the three leaders welcomed the results of the Inter-Korean Summit and expressed their hope that the upcoming meeting between Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump would "contribute to comprehensive resolution of concerns of the parties for peace and stability in the region" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2018c).

At the end of May 2018, Tokyo admitted that it was hoping for a meeting between foreign ministers of both countries – Kōno Tarō and Ri Yong-ho – in case of a successful US–DPRK summit (Verizon Digital

Media Services 2018). On June 14, 2018, Kōno met his American counterpart Mike Pompeo in Seoul, who provided detailed information on the Trump–Kim summit in Singapore two days earlier. Kōno appreciated the US–North Korean agreement and expressed his gratitude for the fact that President Trump urged Chairperson Kim to swiftly resolve the abductions issue. At the same time, Kōno and Pompeo confirmed that both countries would continue to put pressure on Pyongyang to fully implement the UN Security Council resolutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2018d). On August 3, 2018, Kōno Tarō briefly talked to Ri Yong-ho at an anteroom when attending ASEAN-related meetings in Singapore. It was believed that Japan was seeking the possibility of holding Abe–Kim summit at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in Russia in September 2018 (Kihara & Tajima 2018). During his speech at the UN General Assembly in New York on September 25, 2018, Prime Minister Abe admitted he was ready to come face to face with Chairman Kim Jong-un. On the next day, Kōno met with Ri once more at the UN Headquarters, conveying to him Tokyo’s readiness to resolve the issues of abductions and North Korean missile and nuclear programs in a comprehensive manner (Kiyomiya 2018). It is evident that Japan did not want to remain isolated over the North Korean issue, which led Abe to assume a softer stance towards Pyongyang.

## 5. Conclusions

North Korea has always been a problematic partner in diplomatic negotiations for Japan. The highly provocative behavior of Pyongyang on the international scene raised questions whether it would be more effective to approach the DPRK through political and economic pressure or rather through dialogue and persuasion. While such leaders as Koizumi Jun’ichirō leaned to the former approach, Prime Minister Abe consistently adhered to the latter. It was Abe who stood at the forefront of imposing financial sanctions on North Korea or freezing all trade with that country. Nevertheless, as projected by neoclassical realism, even he could not ignore the incentives stemming from the international environment. The inefficiency of solely applying pressure on Pyongyang compelled the Japanese prime minister to supplement hard-line policy with a more constructive dialogue through such emissaries as Iijima Isao. The real challenge, however, was a sudden turn in US policy towards North



Korea. President Donald Trump's surprising announcement of a plan of meeting Kim Jong-un forced Abe to tone down his "hawkish" posture. In line with the neoclassical realist approach, domestic-level variables, such as Japanese prime minister's convictions and his personal attachment to the abductions problem, constituted a severe obstacle in rapprochement with Pyongyang, but in the long run they were insufficient in opposing the stimuli from the international environment.

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## **The promise of neo-functionalism beyond Europe: the case of Japan–South Korea relations**

### **Abstract**

*Northeast Asia accounts for one of the most well-developed regions with the world's three largest economic powers. However, as former South Korean President Park Geun-hye described, it also constitutes a “paradox.” On one hand, states are able to successfully cooperate on the economic basis. On the other hand, there are a number of obstacles, involving primarily unresolved historical issues and security concerns, that impede further regional collaboration. The aim of the article is to analyse the process of regional integration in Northeast Asia, with particular focus on Japan – Republic of Korea relations, through the lenses of neo-functionalism. The essay seeks to determine whether this approach could lead to increasing transnational ties in the region and ultimately improve international relations on bilateral and multilateral basis. Neo-functional theory of regional integration has been mostly applied to research on the European integration process. Consequently, there have been few attempts of testing its assumptions in other regions. Nevertheless, there seems to be substantial evidence to perceive neo-functionalism as a promising theoretical approach beyond Europe. Since neo-functionalists place supranational, transnational and sub-national actors at the centre of the analysis, the article, apart from the economic dimension, will elaborate on the potential of existing international structure, namely the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat.*

**Keywords:** *Northeast Asia, Japan – South Korea Relations, Neo-functionalism, Regional integration*

## 1. Introduction

Northeast Asia constitutes one of the most dynamic political and security environments, with both advanced and vastly developing economies, growing competition and enduring division of the Korean Peninsula. In addition, the region is not immune to the transnational challenges such as terrorism or environmental changes. It seems that those circumstances should allow enhanced cooperation among the states. Yet, the region still lacks such advanced institutionalised mechanisms, and collaboration is often limited to the case to case basis, focusing mostly on the economic issues. Whereas some public officials (Park 2012) and scholars (Duus 2017, p. 11) view the region primarily in terms of historical issues and memory, others provide arguments concentrating on security threats that some states, in particular the People's Republic of China (PRC) pose to others in the region (e.g. Oros 2017), or to the complex alliance structures (Cha 2000, p. 263).

This article analyses the process of regional integration in Northeast Asia, with a particular focus on the case of Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The essay attempts to answer the questions on what are the biggest challenges for the cooperation mechanism to occur on a structured basis between the two states and subsequently how the relations between Japan and South Korea can be advanced. It is important to note, that despite recognizing the major role of other powers in the region, namely China and the United States, and their partial influence on the Japan – ROK relations, the broader context of affairs in Northeast Asia remains largely beyond the scope of this study.

Based on those research questions three hypotheses have been established. First, it is argued that neo-functional theory of regional integration can be applied outside of the European integration context, including the case of Northeast Asia. Second, the article aims to demonstrate that the controversies rooted in the historical issues still constitute one of the major obstacles in the bilateral relations between Japan and South Korea, effectively impeding advanced collaboration. It should be mentioned however, that while the essay argues for the significance of historical context and its impact on the current relations, presented arguments are based primarily on recent policy developments. Lastly, the article implies that the foundations necessary for the success of integration process, as seen through the lenses of neo-functionalism, are already present in the region. With respect to this assumption, the arguments concerning the role of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) has been examined.

At the theoretical level, the abovementioned neo-functional paradigm is preminent. In terms of specific methods, the main ones include historical analysis, document and text analysis, as well as statistical analysis. The first one was applied in the analysis of the historical issues concerning the Japanese occupation of Korean Peninsula, that still remain critically important when it comes to determining the current relationship between the two states. Document and text analysis was used in order to support the argument relating to the potential of TCS in the context of regional integration. Official reports and joint declarations issued by the organisation were assessed. The statistical analysis based on the data from the World Bank, will be applied to support argumentation relating to the economic relations between Japan and ROK.

With reference to scientific works, the article concerns three separate bodies of literature, namely on (1) neo-functional theory of regional integration, (2) Japan – Republic of Korea relations, and (3) integration efforts in Northeast Asia. Among the publications relating to the theoretical framework, the ones authored by Ernst B. Haas (2001, pp. 22–31) and Thomas Gehring (1996, pp. 225–253) provide insights to early development and evolution of neo-functional arguments. The report by Phillip C. Schmitter and Sunhyuk Kim (2005) demonstrates that the paradigm could be applied to Northeast Asia. With respect to the Japan – South Korea affairs, the body of literature is extensive. The history problem in current relations between the two states is well demonstrated in the volumes edited respectively by Daniel Chiriot, Gi-Wook Shin, Daniel Sneider (2014), Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Kazuhiko Togo (2008), and the book authored by Brad Glosserman and Scott Snyder (2015), among many others. Lastly, different aspects of integration in Northeast Asia have also been widely analysed, including the economic dimension (e.g. Aggarval & Gyo Koo 2005, pp. 189–216 & 2008, pp. 1–35; Grabowski 2015), as well as the security and politics (Pollack 2016; Wissenbach 2013, pp. 205–221).

The article has been divided into three parts. The first one provides the theoretical basis and summarizes the main assumptions of neo-functional theory of regional integration. The second part concentrates on the current state of relations between Japan and South Korea, as seen both from political and economic perspectives, including the impact of the historical issue. The last section concerns the potential of facilitating the process of integration between those two states, and in Northeast Asia region more broadly, through applying the assumptions of neo-functionalism.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Ne-functional theory of regional integration has originated and been developed mostly with regards to the European integration process, despite the initial attempts to develop the general theory of regional integration (Haas 2001, p. 23). As a consequence, it doesn't account for an obvious choice of a theoretical approach towards integration in Northeast Asia. Despite the sceptical stance of some scholars concerning the application of neo-functionalism beyond Europe, either in terms of different conditions of interdependence and economic development (Börzel 2016, p. 513), or undermining the role of the states in the process (Conzelmann 2014, p. 100), others have underlined such possibility (Rosamond 2005, pp. 245–246) or even treated the EU case as the best example for studying regionalism elsewhere due to its extensive achievements (Schmitter & Kim 2005, p. 1). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that attempts to test and apply this paradigm in other regions were strengthened by the evolution of the approach itself that occurred in 1980s. Neo-functionalism, struggling with the crisis of integration in Europe, moved away from the efforts of creating a grand theory (Strøby Jensen 2003, p. 83).

The focal point of the neo-functional research concerns the process of regional integration, and more specifically, how it is initiated and further developed. Primarily, the emphasis is placed on the non-state actors, such as political parties, non-governmental or business organizations who create and lead initial demand for undertaking integration efforts. At the same time, neo-functionalists acknowledge the key role of supranational actor, created by the states in the form of regional, international or inter-governmental organisation (Börzel 2016, p. 42). Ultimately, the core idea concerns the notion of political integration through initial economic cooperation that leads to gradual deepening of mutual interests. In that sense, the paradigm is very much progress-oriented (Gehring 1996, p. 229).

The main assumptions of neo-functionalism include the concepts of transnationalism and *spillover*, as well as the role of the secretariat of regional organisation. With respect to the first one, despite strong links to neo-functionalism, it has been identified mostly as a feature within the complex interdependence model developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (Risse 2013, p. 429). Initially, those authors also provided a definition of transnational relations as “contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of government” (Nye & Keohane 1971, p. 331). This however



equally applies to the neo-functionalism, where transnationalism constitutes a fundamental feature of the integration process. Such nature of the mechanism is essential for sub-national units to cooperate efficiently across the borders in order to initiate and uphold integration efforts, and for the people-to-people relations to be enforced.

The next of the main assumptions concerns the concept of *spillover* which refers to a mechanism of transferring integration goals – achieving the purpose within one area of cooperation gradually leads to joint initiatives and creating common interests in different ones (Strøby Jensen 2003, p. 81). The idea itself is dimensional, however, as three types of *spillover* have been distinguished within the literature, mostly referring to the process of European integration. As Thomas Conzelmann noted (2014, pp. 94–95), the “functional” *spillover* marks the initial phase as it only concerns the economic cooperation, where results can be achieved relatively quickly without a substantial political capital. The “political” one deals with the cooperation and contacts across the borders and sub-national actors gradually shifting their agenda to the supranational level. Lastly, the “cultivated” type refers to the supranational units and their potential in enhancing both economic and political integration between the states in the region.

Before the analysis moves on to the subsequent arguments, several thoughts concerning neo-functionalism and its application beyond European integration process should be noted. First, as mentioned before, throughout its development, the paradigm has been linked, and almost exclusively attributed to the European Union. Although it does not mean that its assumptions cannot be tested elsewhere. Such attempts should be made carefully, and with the inclusion of specific regional conditions. Second, neo-functionalism not only offers the foundations for analysing the initial phase of the regional integration process concentrated on economic dimensions, but also claims to provide explanations regarding more forward mechanisms, especially at the supranational level. Hence, it is important to determine whether such premises can be applied at this stage of the Japan – South Korea relations, that are still at the initial rather than advanced stage of integration in the eyes of neo-functionalists. Ultimately, this analysis aims to review the current affairs between the two states, and establish the elements of the neo-functional agenda that have the potential of leading to major shift in the relations, both between the two states, and within Northeast Asia in general.

### 3. Japan and ROK relations in the light of the “Asia’s paradox”

Despite the ongoing controversies in bilateral relations, there is no dispute that Japan and South Korea have made substantial progress in both economic, and political areas of cooperation since the formal establishment of diplomatic relations in 1965. Furthermore, the two states, along with others in Northeast Asia region, regardless of the lack of institutionalised form of integration, have managed to equalize the success of the European Union when it comes to peace and well-being of its citizens, though prioritizing their welfare (Wissenbach 2013, pp. 207, 212). With the new reality of the international system after the Cold War, the countries in the region have proposed a number of economic initiatives throughout 1990s (Aggarwal & Gyo Koo 2008, p. 11), though they have not resulted in institutionalisation of cooperation at the regional level. Furthermore, there have also been attempts to establish multilateral forums of security cooperation. For instance, the Six-Party Talks process, designed to deal with the nuclear threat from North Korea, according to Haggard and Noland (2009, pp. 120–124), could have provided a starting point for the future institutional cooperation in Northeast Asia. Then there were also ideas of South Korean presidents, including Kim Dae Jung’s Northeast Asian Security Dialogue, Roo Moo Hyun’s Northeast Asian zone of peace and prosperity (*ibid.*, p. 129), and more recently Park Geun-hye’s Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI). The latter, launched for the purpose of enhancing mutual trust and alter the hostile environment among the states in the region, was a key foreign policy proposal of the Park administration (Kim 2017, p. 4). However, NAPCI, along with the former initiatives have all proved insufficient in overcoming existing barriers. Those difficulties concern historical animosities and territorial matters that continue to impede further cooperation, in spite of common interests. This has become even more evident since 2013 with the change of political leadership in both South Korea and Japan.<sup>1</sup> In 2012, then presidential candidate Park Geun-hye coined the term “Asia’s paradox,” and called it “the single most important obstacle that has to be overcome by the region’s leaders” (Park 2012). She used the phrase to describe contemporary relations in Northeast Asia, characterised, on one

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1 Shinzō Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party won the general election in December 2012, while Park Geun-hye became president of South Korea in February 2013.

hand, by increasing interconnectedness and global economic relevance, and simultaneous tensions among the states on the other. Nevertheless, acknowledging those issues and subsequent development of NAPCI didn't lead to major breakthrough in bilateral relations between Japan and ROK, partly due to the stance of the leaders themselves. President Park's pre-existing condition of coming to terms with the past (Mukoyama 2016, p. 2) and the reaction from the Abe government of distancing itself from the politics of apology (Pollack 2016, p. 20) have not only sustained, but even deepened the impasse.

The causes explaining the lack of institutionalised form of cooperation between Japan and South Korea are rooted in disputes over territory and history, broadly speaking. With respect to the first one, the issue concerns the islets situated between the two states in the Sea of Japan,<sup>2</sup> called Dokdo in South Korea and Takeshima in Japan. The official position of the South Korean government maintains that "Dokdo is an integral part of Korean territory, historically, geographically and under international law. No territorial dispute exists regarding Dokdo, and therefore Dokdo is not a matter to be dealt with through diplomatic negotiations or judicial settlement" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea 2018). Nevertheless, despite sustaining control over the islets since 1954 (Wiegand 2015, p. 350), the Korean authorities remain fearful of the Japanese threat to this status quo, which has been demonstrated by both authorities' comments and military expenditures in ROK (Wirth 2015, p. 562). Relevant arguments with regards to this issue have been brought by Krista Wiegand (2015), who argues that the case of Dokdo constitutes a major obstacle in establishing a meaningful security cooperation mechanism between the two states. The main reasons for the lack of such agreement concern the symbolic nature of Dokdo/Takeshima dispute for the South Korean nation that illustrates their historical struggle with Japan, as well as inability of ROK's political leaders to overcome the domestic pressure (*ibid.*, p. 356).

Other historical matters that influence the nature of bilateral relationship, include Japanese prime ministers' official visits to the Yasukuni shrine (Saito 2017; Kingston 2004, pp. 237–238), contents of history textbooks (Schneider 2008), and legality of the 1910 Annexation Treaty

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2 With the conflict over the islets it is worth mentioning that the name of the sea is also being disputed by the South Korean part. Although the English translation commonly list the name as the "Sea of Japan", the Korean authorities push for the change to the "East Sea."

(Kinhide 2015). Furthermore, the issue of “comfort women” constitutes a particularly significant factor in bilateral disputes that have also gained international recognition and symbolic reaction in other states, namely the Netherlands, Canada, and the US (Jongdae 2012, p. 191). The essence of the argument refers to the lack of sincere and official apology from the Japanese government and compensation for the victims as well as to the Japanese authorities questioning the authenticity of testimonies of the surviving women and existing research confirming the role of the Japanese Imperial Army (Tanaka 2017, pp. 168–173).

Those problems seem to be reflected within the public opinion. The polls conducted jointly in 2015 by the Japanese non-governmental organisation and the South Korean think-tank, the Genron NPO and East Asia Institute respectively), concerning perceptions of other nation, support this argument. The results demonstrate that for both Japanese and South Korean responders, the issues of Dokdo/Takeshima as well as the comfort women are perceived as main factors restraining further integration. Respectively, 88.8% of Koreans and 62% of Japanese pointed to the islets problem, while the comfort women case was mentioned by 63.5% of responders in ROK and 58% in Japan (*ibid.*). It is also worth noting that “education and recognition of history” is another major obstacle in improving the bilateral relations for both sides, while one-third of the Japanese also noted the “Anti-Japanese sentiment” (*ibid.*, p. 9). Equally troubling is the fact that the interviewees from Japan and South Korea remain pessimistic when asked about further development of bilateral relations. In the same report summarizing the opinion polls, 52.5% of Koreans said that due to unresolved historical issues advancing cooperation will not be possible. While the Japanese public opinion remained more divided on the question of the future of bilateral affairs. 35.1% stated that the historical matters will remain difficult to resolve even if the relations move forward, while 27.1% echoed the majority of responders from ROK (*ibid.*, p. 16).

The significance of historical animosities should not be omitted or diminished in discourse concerning the challenges to improvement of the Japan – South Korea relations since, as the abovementioned arguments illustrate, they are still important for the respective nations. Nevertheless, a brief acknowledgment should be noted for other issues that may uphold the differences between ROK and Japan. First, the two governments maintain different positions towards China. While Tokyo has perceived Beijing as a growing threat to national security (Oros 2017), ROK’s stance has not been as unambiguous due to the China’s increasing economy

and security importance for Seoul (Mukoyama 2016, p. 1). Data from the World Bank for 2016 clearly illustrate that Beijing is the largest trading partner for South Korea with 25.1% shares in export and 21.4% in import (World Bank 2018). The numbers for the second trading partners, the U.S. in terms of export and Japan in the case of import are much smaller, with 13.4% and 11.6% respectively (World Bank 2018).

Another important factor to consider in bilateral relations of South Korea and Japan is the governments' strategy towards dealing with North Korea, especially in the light of the events since the Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang, that seemed to have initially surprised administration in Tokyo (Smith 2018). Ultimately, as Sheila Smith (*ibid.*) analyses, despite promising signals from both president Moon Jae-in and prime minister Abe Shinzō concerning negotiations with North Korea, the two leaders may not share the same vision for the security mechanism in the region, particularly in terms of the U.S. military presence in ROK in the event of peace agreement with Pyongyang.

The aim of this part of the article was to identify the barriers in further development of bilateral relations between Japan and South Korea. The main obstacles are embedded in unresolved historical past. Neither the respective positions on China nor the stance on negotiations and possible scenarios for the future security arrangements in Northeast Asia are strong enough to bring Tokyo and Seoul closer. Yet, there are several relevant factors in mutual relations that carry the potential for overcoming the abovementioned challenges, that are also coherent with the neo-functional agenda. Those will be identified and evaluated in the following section of the essay.

#### **4. Integrational factors – shifting the focus towards neo-functional aspects**

##### *The economic perspective*

When considering the neo-functional aspects, the analysis should encompass the economic data which indicate that the countries have been pursuing deeper relations under the opportunities that the interconnected international system provides. Despite the growing economic significance of China, Japan and South Korea remain important economic partners to each other. As Table 1 illustrates, the Republic of Korea is the third export

partner, and the fourth country from which Japan imports the most of goods. Respectively, as shown in Table 2, Japan is the fifth country in export, and the second in import to ROK. Nevertheless, it is important to note the gap between the top two trade partners for the two countries and the following ones. In the case of Japan, the values for export and import with China and the United States are much higher than the ones for Korea. For ROK, this is also the case in terms of exports. In the case of import, although Japan is the second largest partner, the numbers for China are almost doubled. Hence, it is worth clarifying that although Japan and ROK are still important trade partners, looking at e.g. the geographical proximity it may be somehow surprising that the values aren't even higher.

Table 1. Japan’s top economic trade partners in 2016

Export			Import		
Country	Value (million US dollar)	Share (%)	Country	Value (million US dollar)	Share (%)
United States	130.586	20.25	China	156.553	25.79
China	113.830	17.65	United States	69.222	11.41
Republic of Korea	46.235	7.17	Australia	30.433	5.01
Other Asia, nes	39.297	6.09	Republic of Korea	25.020	4.12
Hong Kong, China	33.624	5.21	Other Asia, nes	22.958	3.78

Source: World Bank 2018.

Table 2. Republic of Korea’s top economic trade partners in 2016

Export			Import		
Country	Value (million US dollar)	Share (%)	Country	Value (million US dollar)	Share (%)
1	2	3	4	5	6
China	124.433	25.12	China	86.979	21.41
United States	66.748	13.47	Japan	47.466	11.69

1	2	3	4	5	6
Hong Kong, China	32.779	6.62	United States	43.398	10.68
Vietnam	32.63	6.59	Germany	18.917	4,66
Japan	24.354	4.92	Other Asia, nes	16.403	4.04

Source: World Bank 2018.

Other relevant factors that should be noted with respect to the potential of improving bilateral relations concern foreign investment and economic agreements. The Ministry of Trade, Industry & Energy of Korea reported that Japan's foreign investment in ROK has risen sharply in 2017, reaching 57-month high in the third quarter of the year, and noting the increase of 347% in comparison with 2016 (Jung 2017). As for the free trade agreement (FTA) between the two states, despite being proposed in 1998 (Chungsoo 2001), has not been concluded, therefore leaving a significant gap in the regional integration project. Instead, the negotiations between China, Japan and South Korea are underway after being launched in 2012 on the occasion of ASEAN Summit (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2012). Since then, there has been no major breakthrough, though the leaders of three countries have recently reaffirmed their commitment to accelerate the negotiations both on the FTA as well as on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), that involves ASEAN countries, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and India (Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat 2018).

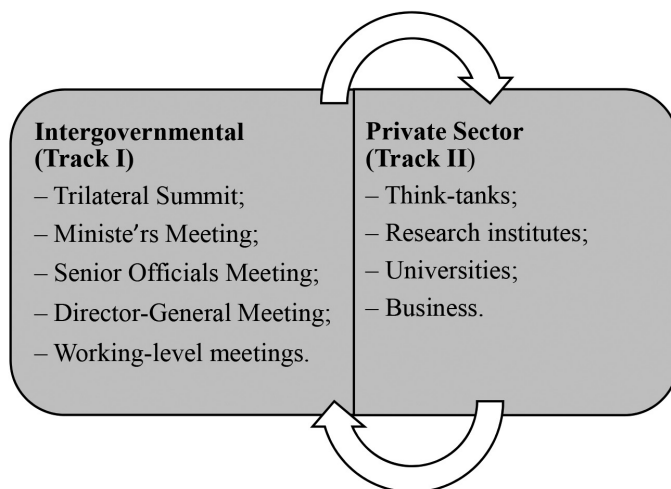
Although the governments in Japan and South Korea have not been able to deepen their economic relationship in a bilateral manner, both countries are involved in several initiatives at the regional level that, if concluded, will result in closer and more institutionalised cooperation between them. Within the joint establishments, the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) has so far encompassed the largest number of issues. Thus, the subsequent part of the article is concerned with the organisation's agenda and activities.



*Regional level of cooperation – the potential of Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat*

Recalling key assumptions of neo-functionalism, concerning the notions of transnationalism and the role of non-governmental actors in the process of integration, the TCS, to some extent, embraces these factors. Established in 2011 between China, Japan and South Korea for the purpose of promoting cooperative relations and peace, it functions as an intergovernmental regional organisation with headquarters in Seoul. The structure includes a Consultative Board composed of a Secretary General and two Deputy Secretary Generals as well as the Department that is divided into four separate units concerned with respectively: Political, Socio-Cultural, Economic and Management affairs (TCS 2017, p. 6). The most important meetings are the Trilateral Summits. Apart from that, TCS also formed a Trilateral Cooperation Mechanism that composes of Ministerial Meetings, intergovernmental meetings, cooperative projects and, what is the most important, activities undertaken by a private sector. As presented below, the three countries decided to follow a two-track path. Such structure essentially exemplifies the neo-functional understanding of how the process of regional integration develops and advances. The ongoing flow of information and proposals, as presented in the graph, allows for the Track II parties to put their agenda forward, and work on the issues that ultimately will be decided at Trilateral Summits.

The Secretariat essentially administers all the operations, conducts research and evaluation. Although its activities are restricted by the mandate (TCS 2011, p. 3), the institution itself holds the potential of accelerating integration efforts between the states involved. Some of the researchers have expressed scepticism towards the mechanism, by calling the position of the Secretariat weak (Wissenbach 2013, p. 207). Yet, the cooperation has covered a wide range of issues concerning the economy (e.g. supply chain connectivity and a project on e-commerce), intellectual property rights, agriculture, forestry, tourism, disaster management and education, among others (TCS 2017). Furthermore, perhaps the low-key profile of the organisation has allowed for the collaboration to be more efficient and pragmatic. The TCS has established over 70 consultative mechanisms so far that are contributing to reaching the consensus on different matters at a working-level, and with the inclusion of the private sector. Noticeably though, addressing historical animosities, that appears in bilateral relations between the governments, is not included within the

**Figure 1. Tracks of Trilateral Cooperation Mechanism**

Source: Assembled from Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (2018).

TCS agenda. The Secretariat therefore, aims to advance the collaboration in small steps and selectively. This, in turn, can be perceived both as an advantage, and a disadvantage. Undertaking specific initiatives have resulted in the improvement in relations between Japan, South Korea, and China closer, where possible and within a limited scope. At the same time, however, considering how relevant the historical issues are for both the Koreans and the Japanese, trilateral cooperation may face more serious challenges as it advances its agenda further.

## 5. Conclusions

Despite over 70 years since the end of the Second World War and Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula, the historical issues still linger, undermining the advancement of both bilateral and regional relations. Territorial disputes, the case of comfort women, and history education, among other problems, continue to pose a significant challenge to going beyond “functional multilateralism” (Wissenbach 2013, p. 219). Yet, there are several establishments in the region that allow for a careful optimism in terms of further developments both in terms of Japan – South Korea relations, and within Northeast Asia relations as a whole.

This essay has adopted the perspective of neo-functional theory of regional integration which concentrates on the areas of cooperation that can be advanced at a low political cost. Hence, the analysis has focused on those aspects that are already present and functioning between the two states, out of which the economic relations and the trilateral structure of the TCS, also involving China, seem to be the most promising. The mechanism includes and cooperate closely with non-governmental sector which contributes to a slow change in mutual perception. The flagship initiatives, such as youth and education exchanges, strongly support this objective. Consequently, the TCS embodies the core of neo-functional arguments in the region, concerning shifting the burden of integration efforts both on the sub-national, as well as supranational levels. However, with those improvements and advancements in mind, there are two additional conclusions that need to be noted. First, neo-functional agenda goes much further than that, ultimately evolving from economic to political integration. Clearly, ROK and Japan are not at this stage of their relations and nothing indicates that they will be in the near future. Thus, while this paradigm offers a forward-looking solution to long-term peace in the region, for now it can only be applied in a limited manner. Lastly, from its establishment, the TCS has purposefully excluded the ongoing issues of history from its agenda. Hence, the forum will most probably not contribute directly to resolving those problems. This is not to say that the TCS's role is irrelevant in that sense, or that Japan, South Korea, and China, for that matter, should not pursue efforts at coming to terms with their past. After all, the mechanism's role is to advance the relations between the states involved within other areas of common interests and that can indirectly support other objectives, that are arguably more challenging to achieve.

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## **An unfulfilled relationship: US–Burma/Myanmar political relations**

### **Abstract**

*The main goal of this article is to examine policy of the United States towards Burma from the perspective of political science. First part of analysis is dedicated to political ties between Washington and Rangoon (later: Naypyidaw) till 1988 when mass demonstrations took place in Burma. Further, article concentrates on period between 1988 and 2011, when Myanmar has been criticized by the US over violation of human rights. Author points out that situation has changed in 2011 when Washington shifted its policy towards Myanmar from isolationism to engagement under Obama's administration but Burma has been neglected once again with Trump's coming to power, when bilateral relations were overshadowed by Rohingya crisis. On the basis of these factors, Author concludes that the US-Myanmar relations will remain unfulfilled for the next years.*

**Keywords:** *Burma/Myanmar, United States, US – Burma relations*

### **1. Introduction**

US – Burma/Myanmar relations represent an example of changing, promising, yet still unfulfilled relationship between a major power and a regional middle power. Since 1945 Washington-Rangoon (later: Naypyidaw) relations experienced ups and downs. From initial désintéressment via changing cold war circumstances and ideological pressure after 1988 to much proclaimed American pivot to Myanmar after 2011. And just when it seemed that Washington and Naypyidaw were on the best way to secure a spectacular rapprochement, the Rohingya crisis and unique

leadership of Donald Trump have put this into question again. Consequently, US-Myanmar relations are an example of a fascinating but unfulfilled political relationship. This paper gives an insight into US Burma policy and examines it from the point of view of political science. It tells the history of U.S.-Burmese relations and shows that Burma has never been vital to US policymakers. This situation, however, changed after 2011, when Washington shifted its Burma policy from isolationism to engagement. However, this new policy was discontinued after Obama's two terms. With Donald Trump's coming to power Myanmar has been neglected once again. Almost all the global (and American) attention on this country has been focused on the Rohingya crisis and its consequences.

## 2. Conceptual and Theoretical Introduction

US-Burma relations are naturally asymmetrical. This asymmetry, however, does not necessarily mean that the more powerful dominate, the less powerful. There are different types of asymmetry, as using Brantly Womack's typology Maung Aung Myoe has shown. In the case of the US-Burma relation, two asymmetries apply: "distracted asymmetry" (both sides have other more important policy directions) and "normalized asymmetry" (when the relationship is not harmonious, but both sides are confident of fulfilling their basic interests and expectations of mutual benefits) (Maung Aung Myoe 2011, p. 5). This article demonstrates that US – Burma relations have moved from "distracted asymmetry" to "normalized asymmetry." Although the asymmetry of relations benefits the stronger partner, it does not necessarily mean the weaker state is helpless. Small states also play a role in the international system. When dealing with stronger states, they can adopt two general policies: to bandwagon or to balance (Waltz 1979, p. 73; Mearsheimer 2001, pp. 162–163). *The Burmese* elites have always chosen the latter one. The Burmese balance of power strategy tradition dates back to King Mindon's foreign policy (middle 19<sup>th</sup> century) and prime minister U Nu's neutralism (the 1950s). Since then, this foreign policy approach has never been seriously modified or questioned. It is in place even now.

Looking at Burma from the US point of view is more complex. US foreign policy is difficult to summarize in one sentence. Although there are some permanent features (belief in America's uniqueness, democracy, free-market economy), the means of US foreign policy do change. Since the

19<sup>th</sup> century, the United States has been trying to find a balance between isolationism and interventionism on the one hand and – since the 20<sup>th</sup> century – between idealism and realism on the other. Roughly isolationism was predominant until (and after WW I), whereas interventionism – after WWII. Idealism was mostly popular during WWI (“Wilsonism”) and after 1989, whereas realism dominated throughout most of American history, most considerably in the 1970s. After 2008 it is becoming popular again. This dichotomy, however, is not always contradictory: “just as isolationism and interventionism are in fact complementary concepts, idealism and realism can be connected with each other” (Wordliczek 2007, p. 59). They are, in other words, just tools to fulfill the national purposes of the United States. Generally speaking, where strategic national interests of the United States are at stake, their approach is usually based on rationality and traditional Realpolitik imperatives: national security and power projection as well as realist understanding of limitations and need for compromise. In areas where the US has fewer interests, export of values plays a more important role and the idealization of the world becomes dominant. As Marvit Ott’s aptly summarized: “the less national interest the United States has in a country, the more human rights loom large in policy” (quoted in Steinberg 2001, p. 302).

### **3. Between désintéressment and ambivalence: US – Burma relations until 1988**

Burma historically mattered little to the United States. There were few random encounters, like the one of Maung Shaw Loo, the first Burmese in the United States (the 1850s and 1860s, Thant Myint-U 2017). Politically, before the 1940s, Burma in Washington DC was considered an exclusive British zone of influence, except for American Baptist missionaries who, mostly in the nineteenth century, worked effectively among Burma’s ethnic minorities (most notable among Kachins and Karens). Those minorities readily responded to their new teachings (Steinberg 2006, p. 223). Before the war, Burma was visited by two US presidents – one retired and one to be. The former was Ulysses S. Grant, who called on to Rangoon as a tourist on his all-around-the-world tour. He described “gay colors” worn by the Burmese on the streets of Rangoon and noticed that “females are not shut up.” The latter was Herbert Hoover, who – twenty seven years before becoming US President – was

a successful mining engineer who called the Burmese “the only truly happy and cheerful race” (McLaughlin 2012, p. 3).

Once the Second Sino-Japanese war broke in 1937, the Western powers quickly realized that Burma offered Kuomintang government a lifeline to Europe. Thus Burma Road, a key supply route for Nationalist China, was constructed (Selth 2002, p. 44). Thanks to this road, Burma became recognized by the US public for the first time (Brooten 2005, p. 138). During the Second World War, Burma was a major theatre of operations: this country not only provided China with access to the Indian Ocean and dominated the Bay of Bengal but lay between Japan’s conquests in Southeast Asia and the Allied bastion of British India (Selth 2002, p. 44). The British firstly suffered humiliating defeat to the Japanese in 1942 (so called the “The Longest Retreat,” Carew 1969), but were able to regain it in 1945, with significant, though complementary, US contribution. After the war, however, Burma was no longer the same country. Things have changed. A new nationalistic, anti-colonial generation that would bring their country to independence emerged. Such people as Aung San, U Nu, or Ne Win “were not just students playing politics” (like before war – ML), they had guns, and they knew how to use them” (Thant Myint-U 2006, p. 240). So the victorious British faced a strong emancipation movement in Burma. The US initially supported these, as well as other Asian liberation movements. During WWII, President Roosevelt was interested in freeing the colonies from their colonial masters throughout Asia due to his ideological convictions. However, little real action took place in that regard (Steinberg 2006, p. 223). Maybe his personal dislike is to blame for that. Contrary to Hoover, he did not like the Burmese, although his prejudice was based on a single encounter with then-prime-minister U Saw, who was the only Burmese Roosevelt ever met (Taylor 2012, p. 9). But more probable is that Roosevelt soon realized that liberating Burma too soon was against US interests. American anti-imperialism moderated with prospects of peace: the Americans could not jeopardize the British and the French too much and believed that US interests would be better served by “stable” colonial governments than potentially fragile nation-states (Stockwell 2007, p. 15). That is why the US did not support the Burmese independence movement after 1945. However, once it became obvious that Burma would achieve independence, the US symbolic gestures quickly followed: the United States recognized Burma in 1947, even before the formal declaration of independence (January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948) and established the embassy in Rangoon with the first appointed ambassador, J. Klahr Huddle.

Soon after independence, Burma found herself caught in between emerging cold war rivalry. Her position, always delicate, as then-prime-minister U Nu said is his unique style: “Burma is hemmed in like a tender gourd among the cactuses,” (Butwell 1963, p. 193), resulted in the understanding that “siding with either the United States or the Soviet Union would rise greater threats to state security than abstaining from involvement”: this recognition evolved later into the neutral foreign policy of balancing powers (Taylor 2009, p. 265). For the Western world, Burma, since the beginning of her independence, was on “on the periphery of the free world” (quoted in Selth 2002, p. 45); it was a “domino” that must be kept. This is why the British backed U Nu’s government in the civil war against communistic revolt and Karen separatism that broke soon after independence. The anti-communist sentiment in the US resulted in grating Burma in 1950 US aid program to stem the perceived communist advance. Although it was not Marshall’s Plan, it nevertheless signified the beginning of US-Burma cooperation (Steinberg 2006, p. 223). Unfortunately, the cold war consideration stood in the way to develop Washington-Rangoon ties. For the US, it was China that mattered most, and after the Kuomintang humiliating defeat in 1949 CIA started covert operations of support to the twelve thousand KMT forces that retreated to the Burmese territories. The United States found Burma an ideal place for “listening posts” from which to observe developments inside China and even drew up plans to use Burma as a springboard from which to launch the southern half of a “double envelopment operation” against China (Selth 2002, p. 45). For Burma, this constituted a serious threat of Communist China retaliation. Out of the on-the-ground realities, Burmese neutrality has always been biased in favor of not irritating Beijing, so Rangoon stood firmly against US-backed KMT forces (first diplomatically and then militarily; the KMT forces were finally expelled in 1961 in a joint Burmese-Chinese communist operation). US policy confirmed the reservations of Burma’s leaders about involvement with foreign powers (ibid., p. 46). When the US covert support of KMT was brought out, Rangoon terminated the US aid program. The contacts with the US were not severed. American vice-president Richard Nixon visited Rangoon in November 1953, and while he met with anti-American sentiments, this visit was his personal success (Nixon returned to Burma once again, in 1985, long after leaving his presidential office, McLaughlin 2012, p. 9). In return for this, Burma’s prime minister U Nu paid a visit to the USA in 1955. He underlined Burma’s commitment to democracy, called Americans “brave

and generous people," and rejected joining any military alliances, quoting... George Washington's Farewell Address on the need to steer clear of entangling foreign alliances (Thant Myint-U 2006, p. 270). On the US side Burma's – as well as other non-alignment countries' neutrality was considered suspicious (as JF. Dulles infamously said: "neutrality is immoral," quoted in New York Times 1959).

This is why the bilateral contacts were clouded by mutual suspicion. Although the US assistance program (mainly foodstuff) was restarted in 1956 (Burma's dire economic situation forced her leaders to look for assistance everywhere without compromising state's independence), democratic Burma preferred assistance from third countries (India, Israel) and tried to keep, quite successfully, distance from both sides of civil war (Steinberg 2006, p. 223). As one old Burma hand summarized: "Burma was tacitly siding with one of its two largest neighbors India, without at the same time antagonizing Communist China in the way which an alliance with the United States would have done" (Taylor 2009, p. 266).

After a military coup d'état in 1962 that installed general Ne Win in power, Burma isolated itself even farther from the international system – into xenophobic autarchy. Fearful of almost all outside influences, the new military regime adopted and strengthened the former government's neutral foreign policy, shunning most international contacts, including the US (Selth 2002, p. 46). Nevertheless, Burma was still seen as an important place on the geopolitical map of Southeast Asia. Her neutrality was important for everybody – all the major players: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China, were far from neglecting Rangoon: they all competed for Burma's diplomatic support in forums like the UN General Assembly. That allowed Ne Win to conduct a wise, balanced foreign policy of accepting aid and assistance from all sides of the cold war – the USA, Soviet Union, West Germany and – most importantly – Japan (Taylor 2009, p. 346). This helped him to keep Burma away from the Second Indochina War and remains his biggest political success.

A good example of Ne Win's balancing policy is his attitude toward the USA. Upon starting his rule, he kept Washington at arm's length. He terminated the American assistance program and secured a border agreement with China. At the same time, however, he worried that his moves might be considered too far to the left, so he paid a state visit to the US in 1966. The Americans, as it turned out, needed Burma's neutrality, no matter that Ne Win policy meant domestic disaster. So they wanted to

win Ne Win over. Contrary to his former visits, which have not gone well, this time he received a “red carpet” reception at the White House from President Lyndon Johnson and had a very pleasant tour in the US where he mainly played his favorite golf (Thant Myint-U 2006, p. 302). The Americans were quite surprised that Ne Win did not ask for anything: “the American press was impressed, almost to the point of disbelief that Chairman Ne Win did not ask for American aid. He asked for nothing but to be left alone” (Taylor 2012, p. 9). Informally, however, United States proved to be cooperative with Burma, particularly in the provision of military training (*ibid.*). This came just in time – soon, Burma’s relations with China collapsed, and Beijing started a covert invasion of Burma in 1968. The Chinese-backed forces captured the frontier but – thanks to Ne Win’s army capabilities – were unable to seize “Burma proper.” Soon after Burmese forces stopped the Chinese offensive at the Salween river in 1973, the US started military assistance to Burma to stem the Communist tide (Lintner 1999, p. 315). Officially it was “for narcotics suppression purposes” because, in the 1970s and 1980s, it was narcotics that became the most important concern for the US in Burma. Heroin from the so-called Golden Triangle flooded the USA. Stopping the production and supply lines became an important goal; therefore, Washington officially supplied equipment and helicopters to carry out narcotics surveillance and interdiction. The equipment was supposed to be used solely for antinarcotics activities, but it was probably never used for this purpose. Burma Army (Tatmadaw) used it against her opponent from ethnic minorities’ guerillas, most notable Karens, who shot down one helicopter and also used to transport military officials on non-narcotics-related trips (Steinberg 2006, p. 224). Washington had more important problems elsewhere, so American leaders connive at this practices: “the Americans (...) had no objections to their being used in ordinary counterinsurgency operations, even against such rebels as Karens who were not involved in the (heroin) trade” (Lintner 1999, p. 315). The improvement of American-Burmese ties prompted Rangoon – then in a dire economic situation – to request restarting the American assistance program in 1978; Washington accepted and American help arrived in Burma. That program focused on basic human needs lasted until 1988, when it was terminated by the United States due to the massacre of protesting students (see below).

To sum it up: US primary interests in Burma before 1988 were of secondary importance: to limit communist influence (itself a primary US political goal in the cold war, but Burma has always been a marginal front,



so her importance to US policy was low) and narcotics production (within US foreign policy struggle with narcotics has always been far behind other foreign policy goals). With general US *désintéressment* towards Southeast Asia after 1975 and the global decline of communism in the 1980s, Burma became even more marginal. Washington had no national interests there and no intention to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Burmese regime. Within the Burmese military regime, the general attitude toward the USA was neutral, if not positive. The more conscious members of the military elite understood the country's economic plight and the need for reform. They hoped for doing this with US help: "what we really want is to change from being an isolated left-wing military dictatorship to a pro-American right-wing military dictatorship" said one officer in 1987 (Thant Myint-U 2006, p. 328). Unfortunately for them, their hopes failed to materialize.

#### **4. Overshadow by ideology: US – Burma/Myanmar relations 1988–2011**

The year 1988 was politically critical for Burma. Mass demonstrations that started in March forced Ne Win to resign in July and effectively toppled the government during the summer of 1988. The military reacted with the slaughter of demonstrators on August 08 and then staged another coup d'état on September 18 and conducted another slaughter. Mass repression followed. The new junta, known under the acronym SLORC (Burm. Na-Wa-Ta), restored military power. The regime, however, soon changed the tactics to a "carrot" approach: junta announced free-market reforms and democratic elections. The latter turned out to be the military's political mistake. During the campaign, the opposition managed to rebuild its strength, and a new leader emerged: Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Aung San: Burma's father of independence. Suu Kyi became enormously popular nationwide and constituted a threat to the military's dominance in the political sphere. This prompted Tatmadaw (the Burmese Army) to imprison Suu Kyi in house arrest and repressed her followers. The regime also, in a desperate move to restore legitimacy, changed the international name of the country from Burma to Myanmar (old precolonial, royal name). Despite all this, Suu Kyi's party, National League for Democracy, won the 1990 elections with a landslide. The army, however, never recognized the results. There is an unresolved controversy (Tonkin

1997) whether the 1990 elections were parliamentary elections (as NLD and majority of the Burmese claimed) or constitution assembly elections (as the Tatmadaw claimed). The majority of the population believed the former was true. Consequently, after Tatmadaw's unwillingness to share the power with the opposition, the army continued to govern without legitimization (but with force). Suu Kyi, imprisoned under house arrest for 15 years (1989–2010, with intervals), hoped to force the generals to make concessions: she pleaded with the West to introduce sanctions and isolate the regime. This was the domestic Burmese background for a new period in US–Burma relations.

The international landscape changed as well. The end of the cold war and the fall of the socialist camp contributed to the euphoric atmosphere in the West, best described by the (in) famous essay “the end of history.” According to this point of view, democracy is always beneficial, non-alternative, and unavoidable worldwide system, whereas human rights are a universal value. Both democracy and human rights, sooner or later, will be won everywhere and are the only ideology consistent with progress and prosperity. In political terms, this ephemeral intellectual epoch shifted Western policy agenda toward non-important countries like Myanmar into human rights instead of security. As Southeast Asia's geopolitical importance after 1989 fell even lower – it became even more marginal for the US and Western Europe than it used to be – it was much easier and painless to criticize Rangoon for its human rights violations and atrocities. That was bad news for the Burmese government: it suddenly turned out to be “a brutal regime,” although, in fact, it has been such one since 1962.

A separate role in influencing this policy towards Burma has been played by Aung San Suu Kyi. Suu Kyi, after decades of socializing in the West, spoke fluent English (she was married to an Englishman) and understood Western societies and media mechanisms well. And she knew how to use it all. Suu Kyi eclectically combined Buddhism with democracy and human rights, which gave her intellectual recognizability. But it was first and foremost her dramatic family story with political background (she chose to remain in Burma and lost her family) that won the hearts and minds of the Western people. Unfairly convicted for her ideas, with dramatic family tragedy, she was perceived as one of the last romantic figures in politics. She became an epitome of the universal battle of good and evil, an icon, a part of popular culture. She was also the most recognized Asian woman and – alongside the Dalai Lama – the most famous Asian dissident. For her stance and proclaimed ideas, she received a deluge of

awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. She *became* “a personalized avatar of democracy to much of the Western world” (Steinberg & Fan 2012, p. 158). She dominated the picture to such an extent that even when the junta achieved sporadic successes, like the cease-fire agreements with the ethnic minority guerillas, the West failed to notice it: “for the outside world, there was really only one story in Burma in the 1990s, the story of Aung San Suu Kyi and her struggle against the ruling generals” (Thant Myint-U 2006, p. 332).

Suu Kyi, a quick learner in the art of the possible, used foreign backing for her case. She pleaded for help (“everybody can do his bid, everybody outside Burma,” Aung San Suu Kyi 2008, p. 218) and for termination of foreign investments into the country, she backed tourism boycott and even spoke in favor of limiting humanitarian help (“no aid trade or investment”) (Levy & Scott-Clark 2001, p. 2). Suu Kyi, having a South African example in mind, believed she would be able to force generals to make concessions. Her voice, resonating through the plethora of NGOs and pro-democracy lobbyists that repeated her message, became the dominant one among US policymakers on the Burmese dimension.

The existence of this pro-democracy Burma lobby in the US was an important political factor. This lobby comprised many nongovernmental organizations and expatriate Burmese and used the new ways of communications (internet) to spread its understanding of conflict: “in just a couple of years, Internet activists have turned an obscure, backwater conflict into an international issue and helped make Rangoon one of the world’s most vilified regimes” (quoted in Houtman 1999, p. 3). This lobby have regarded the Burma cause as “one of the most clear-cut moral, political issues in the world,” reflecting the views of Aung San Suu Kyi, these activists have advocated a boycott on tourism, trade, investment, and NGO activities as providing support to and legitimating that military junta (Steinberg 2006, p. 236). There were, of course, differences on strategy tactics and of opinion, but the lobby “has managed to largely stay on message: the military government is bad, Aung San Suu Kyi is good, and the international community needs to apply pressure on Rangoon and pressure means no aid, trade sanctions, and more isolation (...)” (Thant Myint-U 2006, p. 343) This message can be best shown in the following quote from a die-hard activist Jack Healey who proclaimed in 2009: “(Suu Kyi) is the living symbol (...) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If she takes power, immediately torture disappears, 70,000 child soldiers disappear; the drug trade gets knocked off its feet for a while” (quoted in Sydney Morning Herald 2009).

It is where the US moral stance on Burma originated from. Since the US and other Western countries had little interest in Myanmar, this moral approach prevailed. With Burma as one of the lowest priorities on the complex Asian policy agenda, the West looked at this country through ideological lenses and applied moralistic attitude: “essentially, US policy from 1988 (...) was on a single track: human rights. Economic, strategic, narcotics, even humanitarian issues were not pursued” (Steinberg 2006, p. 225) The Western regard of Myanmar started being based on ideology pure and simple.

That is why it was after 1995 (the year when Suu Kyi was released from house arrest for the first time and called for sanctions), not 1988 (when the regime annihilated protesters) when the deluge of sanctions started hitting Myanmar. In 1988 Washington withdrew only antinarcotics support (heavily criticized for its ineffectiveness anyway), introduced arms embargo, and closed down the assistance program (*ibid.*, p. 226) but did not introduce sanctions. This happened only in 1997 after Suu Kyi became recognized and admired in the West. In 1996 US Congress introduced executive order no 13047 prohibiting new investments in Burma (it was signed by Bill Clinton in 1997) (*1997 Executive Order*). This bill is very interesting for one reason. Although it prohibited new investments, it did not cover older investments such as the Unocal pipeline, the most profitable US-Burmese joint-venture.<sup>1</sup> This sheds light on the real motivations of US policymakers who wanted to appease public opinion but not by harming US business interests. This was followed by withdrew of assistance by the World Bank and other Washington-controlled global financial institutions as well as aid agencies resulting in the suspension of even humanitarian aid in the 2000s. In 2003, after the Burmese government unsuccessfully tried to kill Aung San Suu Kyi, the US introduced new sanctions, restricting imports of textiles and gems into the USA and halted the activities of most financial transactions from most countries into the country (Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003). Finally, in 2007, after Burmese generals crushed the so-called saffron revolution, the US imposed personal sanctions on top dignitaries (Than Shwe, Maung Aye), froze bank accounts, and restricted the import of gems (Sanctions Against Burma 2015). Besides, the US refused to nominate an ambassador until 2012 (the US embassy has been headed by chargé d'affaires).

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1 The Yadana/Unocal pipeline was one of Burma's largest investment projects. Therefore, it never appeared on any US sanction lists on Burma.

It has been denying visas to high-ranking Burmese officials and their families and stated that the Burmese are not in compliance with US antinarcotics desiderata (Steinberg 2006, p. 229). Meanwhile, since the mid-1990s, thanks to successful PR campaigns of lobbyist groups calling for Burma boycott, many private companies (including Wal-Mart, Pepsi, Levi-Strauss, and others) who had rushed into Myanmar after economic opening in 1988, pulled out due to activists pressure. This all represented an “asphyxiation” strategy based on the conviction that isolation would force the generals to make concessions or even topple the military regime (quoted in Steinberg 2001, p. 244).

Unfortunately – and predictably – this has not led to regime change. The Burmese government “fed itself”: it survived the sanctions and boycotts. It was possible due to the trade with Asian neighbors, huge offshore natural gas fields discovered in the late 1990s, and the isolating nature of Tatmadaw’s regime. If Myanmar was a country where leaders want to engage with the wider world or have something to lose by being isolated, then sanctions would make sense. But the Burmese elites since Ne Win were accustomed to isolationism and perceived it as a value. As the regime interests were secured by external trade with China and others, the generals had then no strategic reason to seek engagement with the West. That is why the assumption that Burma’s military government couldn’t survive further isolation was incorrect: “precisely the opposite (was) true: much more than any other part of the Burmese society, the army (would) weather another forty years of isolation just fine” (Thant Myint-U 2006, p. 342).

So the sanctions failed – they weakened the country but were unable to displace the regime; sanctions hurt the normal people, the poor people: thousands of factories had to close down because their products could not be sold to the West (Osnos 2012). The direst example is given by British Burma scholar Michael Charney. He shows the impact of the ban on important exports to the US introduced in 2003. As Burmese exports to the US were dominated by textiles, the sanctions-hit textile workers – putting between 40.000 to 80.000 textile workers out of work. Since the textile industry mainly employed young women, many of these women were forced into Rangoon’s thriving sex industry (Charney 2009, p. 186).

What is really worth noting is the fact that when Western politicians introduced sanctions, they already knew them to be ineffective. Neither policymakers nor their advisers believed in the efficiency of sanctions to contribute to positive change in Myanmar (foreign trade composed around 3.5% GDP then), and the army has survived on minimal foreign

resources for decades: the impact on the sanctions on the state-qua-state was minimal and led to a further entrenchment of army power (Taylor 2009, pp. 467–468). Myanmar was never a major political issue after 1988, but when specific events occurred that highlighted human rights issues and the continuing role of the military in the management of the state, particular politicians made Myanmar a momentarily personal cause. Policymakers were forced to respond, knowing their political leaders' actions would probably be counterproductive (*ibid.*). Tom Malinowski, a Burma expert who worked in the Clinton White House when the first round of sanctions was imposed, said, "They imposed sanctions not because they genuinely believed that they would work but because they wanted to do something." (quoted in Osnos 2012). This something proved to be a smokescreen for failure. Yet this failure cost the US little, as Myanmar's significance for American strategic interests was small. This changed only after the early 2010s and prompted policy change in Washington DC.

## 5. Back to engagement: US pivot to Myanmar

Barack Obama's presidency changed US Burma policy considerably. Hoping that the window of opportunity opened for influencing a change in the country, Washington modified its policy towards Myanmar. Moralistic political idealism was modified into "pragmatic engagement," which meant a departure from the "regime change" agenda into "regime modification" (Clymer 2015, pp. 288–320). This all happened within the larger policy shift of Obama's administration: its pivot to Asia.

Until 2008 USA concentrated its global attention mostly on the Middle East, but Obama's term saw reorientation of US foreign policy away from the Middle East and back to East and Southeast Asia. This was done for good economic and strategic reasons. Economically, India, China and the countries of Southeast Asia are the most economically dynamic in the world today. With Europe in economic decline and the Middle East with constant political instability, the best regions for the development of trade and investment are in Asia-Pacific. Strategically the reason must have been China (Taylor 2012, p. 9; Lintner 2013). despite vehement rejections of the Obama administration's members who claimed that their main reason for engaging with Burma was Aung San Suu Kyi (Clymer 2015, pp. 308–311; private conversation, Burma Conference 2016, de



Kalb, Illinois). Notwithstanding the reason, “the pivot to Asia” was born and Myanmar became its hallmark.

Since it takes two to tango, the Burmese regime also wanted to adjust its policy and – despite bumpy road to rapprochement during early Obama’s years (Clymer 2015, pp. 298–300) – it did. Little noticed by outside observers the Myanmar military establishment made generation change. Ministers were “permitted to retire” and replaced, military commanders were reassigned: “rather than ‘battle-hardened’ soldiers, ‘well-educated’ commanders with knowledge of economic and political matters were given influential post” (Zöllner 2011, p. 469). The Burmese generals were no longer non-political “warfighters” (Callahan 2003). They became real politicians with a better understanding of global realities. That is why the junta officially dissolved itself in March 2011 and was replaced by a nominally civilian government headed by the former general, Thein Sein.

The post-generals understood because they were aware of the economic plight – they simply compared their situation with their neighbors. But it was first and foremost China’s dominance that made generals seek rapprochement with the West. For two decades, China served the regime’s needs for “guns, funds, and friends,” but it was not in the longer-term interest of the Burmese state (Steinberg 2001, p. 234). The nationalistic Burmese leaders did not want to become a Chinese colony: they had enough Beijing economic dominance and exploitation combined with Chinese arrogance and pride (Clymer 2015, p. 303). „US pivot to Asia” has given them a great opportunity to use the “US card” against China. Better relations with the West were essential for the generals to restore the traditional “neutralism” that had been the hallmark of Burma during the Cold War (Steinberg & Fan 2012, p. 364). Thanks to the US pivot to Asia, American and Burmese generals’ interests for the first time in two decades became convergent.

Concrete actions followed. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s visit in fall 2011, the nomination of US Ambassador in Yangon in 2012, visits of Secretary John Kerry and – most significantly – two visits of President Barack Obama in Myanmar (2012 and 2014) marked the changing US agenda. What is more, Burmese President Thein Sein paid an official visit to Washington in May 2013 – first on such level since Ne Win. He told his hosts, “my people want democracy” (BBC 2013) which showed that the Burmese regime had finally done the homework in the sphere of political rhetoric.

Although officially and rhetorically American policy was made on behalf of Aung San Suu Kyi – US policymakers claimed that she was the



major reason for engagement in Myanmar (Clymer 2015, pp. 309–311), the changed Washington DC's agenda put Aung San Suu Kyi into an uncomfortable position. Suu Kyi opposed (in vain) Obama's visit to Burma and was forced to change her stance on sanctions and engagement (Aung Zaw 2012, pp. 104–137); moreover, she realized that the Americans were happy with the Thein Sein's regime and were not going to die for her cause (Wai Yan Hpone 2015). Washington comforted her with the best American tradition: gestures. When she received Congressional Golden Medal in 2013, Senator McCain said she "can teach him a lesson or two about courage" (Courier 2012) and Barack Obama, while visiting Burma, hugged her and offered many words of comfort. Suu Kyi, realizing that what is rational is real, decided to adjust to the new reality. She played a risky game with (post)generals' terms without foreign backing. She won the by-elections in April 2012. These elections gave her and her opposition party 10% in parliament while giving the (post)generals international credibility. Moreover, she put all her cards on the 2015 general elections and won it by a landslide (78%). Since she was unable to achieve the position of president, she bypassed the limitations by establishing a new post for her – that of a "state counselor" – and since early 2016 has been ruling Myanmar in cohabitation with the army.

But that came later and was partially a consequence of US engagement (Clymer 2015, pp. 311–320). In 2012 the US government suspended sanctions and, by the end of the Obama administration, removed all of them.<sup>2</sup> After 2012 by-elections, Myanmar was flooded with grants, assistance, and loans from Washington-controlled organizations such as World Bank or Asian Development Bank. The foreign money that poured into Myanmar changed this once isolated country and contributed to an unprecedented growth level (which, however, slowed down after 2016). Myanmar finally started reforming and catching up with the globalized world.

Obama's administration proclaimed the US Burma policy a big success. In the administration, there was a sense that Burma is a risky source of pride: a successful test of President Obama's commitment to engagement and a vast new market for American business, but also a high-profile bet on men of immense moral flexibility (Osnos 2012). Obama himself said bluntly at West Point in 2013: "look at a country like Burma, which

2 After the Rohingya crisis of 2017, the US government reintroduced, a rather symbolic, personal sanctions against some military commanders.

only a few years ago was an intractable dictatorship and hostile to the United States – 40 million people (...) (in fact 52 million – M.L.) Because we took the diplomatic initiative, American leadership, we have seen political reforms opening a once closed society, a movement by Burmese leadership away from partnership with North Korea in favor of engagement with America and our allies. We're now supporting reform and badly needed national reconciliation through assistance and investment (...) if Burma succeeds we will have gained a new partner without having fired a shot" (Remarks 2014). Echoing his statement, Secretary Clinton considered Burma's transformation "the administration greatest foreign policy triumph"; even if Obama administration's boasting about their successes bordered on arrogance and was indigestible aesthetically, it is fair to admit that the US indeed, "was not insignificant in the process of change" (Clymer 2015, p. 318).

However, the real winners of the changes were neither USA nor Aung San Suu Kyi on behalf of whom the changes took place, but the Burmese generals. They "remained entrenched in business and politics, controlling key ministries responsible for the security and retaining a guaranteed quota of a quarter of parliamentary seats" (Pennington 2017). More importantly, they became legitimate global citizens, liberating themselves from the pariah status. Despite losing the 2015 elections, the army remained influential and has been able to check and balance Suu Kyi. The State Counsellor, remembering bitter lessons of the past, has not tried to undermine the privileged position of the armed forces and accepted the Tatmadaw-dominated political system. Without naming it, she has also implemented a blanket amnesty policy which left the army unaccountable for past crimes (Lubina 2018a). This all testifies to an extraordinary achievement of the Tatmadaw establishment: the generals were able to craft a system that forces their former foe, Suu Kyi, to conduct policy in accordance with their interests. Certainly, rapprochement with the USA helped them in their endeavor significantly.

## 6. Back to indifference: Trump and Rohingya

Obama administration's spectacular engagement with Myanmar came to a halt after Obama left office. His successor, Donald Trump, paid little attention to Myanmar. Malignant voices comment that Trump is yet to locate Myanmar on the map, but add that his indifference has positive

aspects as well: at least he does not tweet about Burma or any South-east Asian country (Kean 2018). Trump's ignorance on Myanmar – seen in such details as his lack of intention to talk with Aung San Suu Kyi, even by telephone – is not that bad given his campaign “to erase much of Obama's overseas legacy;” in Burma's dimension, Trump is simply doing nothing; consequently, “Myanmar's troubles involve many factors, but none involve US President Donald Trump” (Pennington 2017).

On the international level, Myanmar's trouble number 1 is the Rohingya crisis. Rohingya is a disputed and unrecognized in Myanmar Muslim ethnic minority that lived in Rakhine State and in Bangladesh (majority lived in Rakhine but was expelled in mid-2017 and before; now around 4/5 of all Rohingya live in exile in Bangladesh). Although the Rohingyas have been prosecuted and repressed for many decades (most notably in 1978, 1991, 2012, 2016 and 2017), their plight became well-known globally only in the mid-2010s, especially after the 2017 crackdown. The Rohingya are the single most hatred group in Myanmar – dislike towards them characterize almost all Burmese political actors (the army, the NLD, the society and even the former democratic dissidents), which makes supporting their case a politically suicidal attempt in Myanmar (this is precisely the reason why Suu Kyi did not back them). At the same time, Rohingya achieved global recognition and critical moral support from the West, which created an unresolved political conundrum: any Burmese politician, including Suu Kyi, cannot support Rohingya for domestic reasons, but if s/he does not support Rohingya, then s/he is exposed to Western criticism. This is precisely the fate of Suu Kyi. Her previous deification in the West now backfires, as she is being widely accused (in the West) of betraying democratic principles (more, see: Lubina 2018b, pp. 352–358). Consequently, she lost much of her moral capital, mostly in the USA, but in Burma, her popularity is still enormous. Given the fact that the Rohingya issue dominated the perception of Burma in the USA, this has complicated Suu Kyi-led Myanmar's policy in the West. Luckily for Suu Kyi, in the USA, she still finds more understanding of her position on the Rohingya issue than in Western European countries.

Donald Trump was one of the very few Western politicians who did not raise the Rohingya issue, but this is probably due to his ignorance and negligence of Myanmar. Trump's indifference to Myanmar does not mean that there is no US policy at all. On the one hand, there is a continuation of the Obama policy, if only by inertia. On the other, a more or less unified approach during Obama has been replaced by a patchwork of conflicting

agendas, such as these of Congress, State Department, NGOs and other lobbies as well as think tanks; there is a “chaos of policy formulation,” as these conflicting views struggle to take the lead of US policy on Burma at the absence of will to do so by the nominal leader, the president; they “represent a curious mix of hard-nosed pragmatism and lofty idealism” (Kean 2018). Vice-president Mike Pence should be mentioned first. He openly criticized Myanmar for the handling of the Rohingya crisis at the presence of Aung San Suu Kyi during their meeting in Singapore (Remarks 2018), which in Burmese conditions added insult to injury. Pence’s agenda is that of evangelical Christians in the White House (another one is Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo) for whom religious freedom (regardless of what religion it is) is of primary importance. Unsurprisingly, they tend to look at Myanmar through the Rohingya lenses. But evangelical Christians are not alone. They are challenged by National Security Council (e.g., Matt Pottinger, senior director for Asian affairs) straightforward geopolitical agenda: China first; for Council, Myanmar should be handled with care (that means supported politically and economically) so that it won’t gravitate further into China’s orbit (Kean 2018). NSC is also sympathetic to Myanmar due to an unexpected factor. The International Criminal Court decided to start an investigation into the Rohingya issue, even when Myanmar is not its signatory (Statement of ICC 2018). Neither US is the signatory and given the unholy American practices in their war on terror, Washington, just like Naypyidaw, has no reason to like ICC. That is probably why State Department has not called the atrocities against Rohingya a genocide (The Washington Post reported on November 15, Kean 2018), despite the fact that the view is gaining popularity in the US (see, e.g., Holocaust Memorial statement).

This pro-Rohingya view is naturally shared by a plethora of human rights organizations, supported by former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley and Kelley Currie, US representative to UN Economic and Social Council, by increasingly influential Muslim politicians in the US and by powerful media whose coverage on Rohingya crisis has made this issue the single most important one on Myanmar in the US. There are also strong voices in favor of reintroducing sanctions in the Congress, which, in the absence of the White House’s ambition to take the lead in Burma’s policy, became once again the leading policy formulating institution. At Capitol Hill, however, Suu Kyi has not lost all her allies. Among those who still believe in Suu Kyi is powerful Mitch McConnell, Senate majority leader, who blocks attempts to reintroduce state sanctions on Myanmar

and rejects criticism on Suu Kyi. Finally, there is the State Department which implemented a continuation of Obama's policy without major changes; its civil servants are pro-engagement with Myanmar and against the sanctions as they understand very well the counter productiveness of the latter (for this reason, the State Department is unwilling to use terms such as "ethnic cleansing," let alone "genocide"). Consequently, all these conflicting agendas notwithstanding, "fundamentally, the differences in policy towards Myanmar are relatively small"; US policymakers "agree on the goals – to stay engaged and to tackle Rakhine." (Kean 2018). Given Myanmar's government appreciated position on the former and unwillingness to tackle the latter, the results are mixed at best. Consequently, inertia and lack of direction lead American policy on Myanmar and are here to stay for a while. That is why despite little changes in American policy and despite the fact that the US still remains an important player in Myanmar, Washington has clearly lost the initiative in Myanmar in favor of China (Beijing is skilfully regaining its dominance in Burma), followed by Japan, Thailand and other Asian countries that chose to overlook the Rohingya issue. To make matters worse, Washington has neither ideas nor willingness to reverse the negative trend. As long as Donald Trump remains the president, this state of affairs is unlikely to change.

## 7. Conclusions: an unfulfilled relationship

The recent cooling in US-Myanmar relations is just the recent episode in this intriguing yet unfulfilled relationship. Since the beginning of American-Burmese political relations, those two nations have experienced many ups and downs. Despite some common interests during Cold War, Burma and the US stayed at arm's length, with the latter choosing neutrality and the former preferring Thailand instead. On the other hand, the distance had never been total, too. Even after 1988, when the US started heavily criticizing Myanmar over human rights abuses, the bridges have never been burned totally. When an opportunity turned out – change of US policy during Obama and a new, reform-oriented regime of Thein Sein in Myanmar – both sides jumped to mend fences successively. Years 2011–2016 experienced the best period in the US – Burma/Myanmar relationship, with two visits of the American president in Yangon and one of Burmese president in the US (plus Suu Kyi's visits in the US). The momentum, however, was not maintained after Donald Trump became

president in late 2016. Trump has been neglecting Myanmar, while the Rohingya crisis overshadowed the perception of Burma in the US and beyond. Given these circumstances, it is likely that the US-Myanmar relationship will remain unfulfilled for the next years to come.

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