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Unpacking Images of China Using Causal Layered Analysis*

Jeanne Hoffman
Macquarie University
Australia

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to use Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) to map the International Relations (IR) theories of 'China threat' and 'Peaceful rise'. The paper looks at the way in which Western and Chinese constructs and prevailing metaphors impact the debate on the 'rise' of China and what limitations each view brings to the discourse. Both theories are shown to be problematic in their own way. It is argued that China futures need to be further investigated using more complex tools such as CLA to enable more than well rehearsed patterns of the future to emerge.

Keywords: International relations theory, realism, liberalism, China threat, peaceful rise, causal layered analysis.

Introduction

The choice of China's role in the world, whether it will successfully fit into the current Western system or become a threat to it is "the greatest question of our time" according to Jim Steinberg, United States Deputy Secretary of State (Carr, 2010, p.4). China is certainly on the rise economically, culturally and politically and with it has come a dose of Spengler inspired 'declinism' in the West. Time magazine recently declared "The End of Europe" (Foroohar, online), the United States has been downgraded by Standard & Poor's and protestors are 'occupying Wall Street' around the world providing further proof that something is not quite right within the system. Adding to this impression of a changing power dynamic between China and the West is the recent popular book Unhappy China which offers 44 nationalistic essays severely criticising Western countries and advocating for Chinese leaders to follow more uncompromising and aggressive foreign policies (Xiao, 2009).

So, if China is the future, what kind of future lies ahead? Much of the 'popular' thinking in the Western media about the future of China is presented as a choice between riding on the coat tails of a rising China versus a declining United States and 'the West' in general; viewing the rise of China like some stereotypical villainous cartoon dragon using currency manipulation and unfair trade policies to destroy Western jobs, or perhaps even an entity to be 'managed' so as not to upset the current hegemonic apple cart; scenarios are often presented as black or white caricatures rather than identifying new perspectives on the push and pull toward a broader and deeper image of possible futures. China is still finding its direction and, indeed, popular images of its future include the hard nativist-realist sentiments for China to take a leading role in the world (such as those advocated in Unhappy China), as well as softer and more globalist versions of the future as offered by liberal internationalists.

This article is not about the rise of China and the decline of the West per se, but about the number of ways to see the future of China depending on the perspective of how one sees the functions of the world system. Seeing the future of China through the lens of International Relations (IR) theorists is problematic in that the theorists offer certain 'truths' about the future intentions of China; and the level of debate can be argued to be shallow, suffering from "motivated belief" and unable to provide deeper understandings on how to understand China's futures. With this in mind this article intends to deepen and widen the discussion on questions about the future of China by mapping the three most widely discussed futures of China as seen through IR theories. I will examine the discourse on the "China threat" theory as used by both Western and Chinese realists and its mirror image of "Peaceful rise" (peaceful development) used by liberalists using a futures methodology causal layered analysis (CLA) to problematise their claims and examine their underlying beliefs and drivers.

Broadly speaking these debates can arguably be described as simplistic, but since they are the most frequently occurring, I hope to offer a more nuanced understanding of the differing political perspectives. It is not possible or the intention of this article to map all IR or other types of scenarios for the futures of China due to the amount of space provided, only those that are considered to be, "colonising the future and closing off options by projecting currently dominant ideas and values into the future and assuming they will continue to dominate" (May, 1999, p.126).

Theoretical Framework

CLA, developed by Sohail Inayatullah (2004), was chosen as the methodology to map the most common images of the rise of China because it allows an opening of the present and past to create alternative futures rather than simply predicting a particular future based on a narrow empiricist viewpoint. In CLA, the way in which a problem is framed ultimately provides its solution, thus framings are not neutral, but part of the analysis. CLA does not claim or argue for any particular 'truth', but to explore how a discourse becomes privileged - that is who gains and who loses when a particular discourse becomes dominant. For this reason it is useful in examining the conclusions made by popular images of the future of China and test whether or not they have enough depth to support their conclusions. As such CLA requires the user to travel through a number of layers which ultimately question or 'undefine' the future and make the units of analysis problematic. This unique layered approach allows the user to deepen the future and unpack the unconscious stories used to

make sense of the way reality is formed. Importantly CLA explores not just the noise of litany and systems, but the deeper worldviews and myths to support these underlying layers of data.

The following is a brief summation of his concept and how it applies within this analysis across four overlapping layers: Litany, Systemic Causes, Discourse/Worldview and Myth/Metaphor.

The litany level identifies facts often presented by news or other media for political purposes and often exaggerated. These facts are not value free, and they are hard to challenge because they are presented as the 'truth' on which the system, worldview or myth rests.

The next level, systemic causes and their effects, is concerned with exploring the interrelated social, technological, economic, environmental, political and historical factors of an issue and the underlying data. The data can be questioned, but not the paradigm within which the question is framed. At this level, the government, experts from academia or someone else are expected to solve the problem. These two levels are considered 'shallow' and short term in their focus. In order to move into deeper and more complex analysis, the next two levels are necessary to uncover.

The third level concerns discourse or worldview. The key here is to recognise what deeper positions are shaping the assumptions behind the systemic and the litany views. Who are the stakeholders? How do their worldviews and nested beliefs about themselves, others, the future, time and space provide the deeper discourses which ultimately constitute the issue? This level is critical in determining how the first two levels are legitimised. Whether to include or exclude a particular discourse can ultimately privilege the issue and the scenarios which emerge. This level allows other perspectives or epistemologies to place claims on how the scenarios are framed, so whether one has a realist versus idealist worldview, a Chinese versus a macro-historical worldview or even a Chinese versus a Western worldview; will have consequences for how scenarios are constituted (Inayatullah, 2010).

The fourth level is that of unconscious myths and metaphors. Myths create a sacred image of the future which, an unconscious archetype which structures the perceptions and worldviews and hence a persons experience of the world. This level is reliant on specific cultural and civilisational assumptions about the nature of time, rationality and agency. Most importantly the ability to open up or transform the future can require unlearning particular myths or worldviews held dear so as to learn new ways of thinking about the future.

If what Polak (1973) says is correct that the future must not only be perceived, it must also be shaped, it is therefore critical to explore and deconstruct the underlying assumptions, narratives, worldviews and myths being told about the rise of China. Table 1 below outlines the three stories for the rise of China.

Table 1. *Three CLA stories for the rise of China*

(1) Western CLA – China Threat (dominant)	
Litany	China is on the rise - it is a potential hegemon.
Systemic Causes	Anarchy in international system shifting the balance of power.
Discourse	Must stop the hegemon.
Myth	China can be controlled.
(2) Chinese CLA – China Threat	
Litany	They're afraid and they're trying to stop us. They're the ones with problems, not us.
Systemic Causes	We have legitimate issues of a developing nation-state.
Discourse	Global institutions need to recognise our interests. We're not going away and things are going to change. Don't humiliate us.
Myth	We're not the threat - they are. We will bring in a new golden age.
(3) Alternative Future - Peaceful Development	
Litany	Focus on economic growth and securing comfortable life for its people.
Systemic Causes	We're trying to work in the system.
Discourse	We will regain our lost international status through peaceful means.
Myth	All neighbouring countries will live in harmony respecting China's cultural and civilisational superiority.

Setting the Scene

The narrative on the 'rise' of China and its impact on the current hegemonic state of international relations into a post hegemonic (or at least next hegemonic according to Callahan, 2008) world order is often discussed in a number of ways.

Realists in the West tend to generally focus on distribution of power in the international system; either as an economic rise or as a military threat both of which often neglect deeper social and cultural dimensions. War is the normal state of affairs when the hegemonic balance becomes disrupted. Defensive realists such as Waltz (1979) argue states have every intention of maintaining the balance of power in order to provide stability. Offensive realists such as Mearsheimer (2001) argue that China "might be far more powerful and dangerous than any of the potential hegemons that the United States confronted during the twentieth century" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.57). According to Mearsheimer, even integrating China into the world economy is 'misguided' because as it becomes wealthy it will become "aggressive...determined to achieve regional hegemony" (2001, p.58).

Realists in China are considered to be the dominant group in the discourse about China's future and they too sit within "offensive" and "defensive" camps as well as use "soft" - the power to attract and influence and "hard" - the power to coerce - concepts of power. Chinese realists also see the international environment as anarchic and unpredictable, upholding the principle of state sovereignty and thus seeing the need for a strong state to navigate through the pressures of external influences. Somewhat differently from realists in the West is a strong sense of discontent over China's historical weakness and "Century of Humiliation" (Shambaugh, 2011, p.12).

Liberal theory (liberalism) focuses on individual rights, constitutionalism, democracy and limitations on the power of the state and this can be seen in the

spread of democracy and globalisation (Burchill, 2009). Within this theory are the institutionalists who believe that if a rising power (China) is integrated into the system of international institutions, it is and will be possible to avoid future military conflict (Goldstein, 2007). In this way China becomes a 'responsible stakeholder' in the international system and will avoid conflict with the United States at all costs (Chung, 2009/2010; Lampton, 2008). This view is common to both a Western liberal and Chinese perspective.

Economic interdependence in determining the likelihood of war plays an important role in both theories. Realists believe in a mercantilist view whereby access to goods and materials must be maintained and thus creates an incentive to initiate war. Liberalists claim that interdependence increases the value of trade over aggression and thus lowers the incentive to initiate war.

Table 2. *Main considerations from IR theory*

Western Realist	Anarchy and Balance of Power War is normal Mighty states seek hegemony
Chinese Realist	Anarchy and Balance of Power States seek hegemony, but this can be done peacefully Reject globalisation
Western Liberalist	Preference for diplomatic resolution of conflict War can be avoided States seek opportunity for cooperation
Chinese Liberalist position	Beneficiary of international system Wants emergence driven by capital, technology and resources by peaceful means Seeks cooperative partnerships
Institutionalist	Integration into international institutions avoids war Responsible stakeholder
Interdependence	Realists - war possible because access to goods and materials needs to be maintained Liberalist - trade valued over aggression

Legitimacy of future images often rests upon the established and accepted ideas of the past. This is no less so for international political theory. The future cannot be predicted with any sort of accuracy, but uncovering preferred images of the future allows us to open up the future, see things more clearly and deeply and offer better or preferred solutions. As China's economic and political powers continue to grow, its security interests will certainly become more complicated. Let us now look to how China's future is constructed through the lens of realist and liberalist IR theories.

Realist Paradigm - Origin of the "China Threat Theory"

The origin of the notion that an economically rising China was a threat was first put forward in August 1990 by Tomohide Murai a professor at Japan's National Defense Academy. Murai wrote an article describing China as a potential adversary in view of its comprehensive national strength and sustained development. The

phrase itself is said to have been coined by a Chinese writer, in a Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) article titled "Put and end to 'China threat theory'" (Callahan, 2005, p.708). According to Deng (2008) another account comes from Xu Xin who claims that in August 1992 at a Heritage Foundation symposium in Washington D.C. the United States (US) Assistant Secretary of Defense blamed China for sparking an arms race in the Asia-Pacific. Also in late 1992 the confluence of Deng Xiaoping's Southern tour and consequential economic growth and the passing of the Law on the Territorial Sea which claimed sovereignty over some of the islands in the South China and East China Seas was interpreted by some in the Japanese media as a sign of China's expanding military and hegemony strategy (Ateba, 2002).

This term now captures a full range of foreign fears about China being harmful to the global order as well as Chinese fears about containment and international perception (Rabinovitch, 2008). The "China threat" theory is used not only by Western and Chinese realists to construct a version of national identity, but has been advocated by commentators in Japan, India, Taiwan and briefly by South Korea to create their own Chinese threat reputation. Having said that this paper will focus primarily on the discourse from the United States with some comment about the others. That the place of origin of the theory is so broad also gives symbolic power to the construct of 'us' vs. 'them' and this is well used by realists both within China and elsewhere to represent and frame the discourse of political intent about China and the rest of the world.

Western & Other "China Threat" Perspectives

Table 3. *Western and other realist arguments supporting 'China threat'*

Economic	Military	Ideological
Cheap labour stealing our jobs	First rate military power by 2020	Non-democratic, one party state
Currency manipulators	Push to control sea lanes	Poor human rights record
Competition for energy and resources will create shortages	Will create provinces	Unreasonable territorial claims
Relationships with SE Asia will destabilize the region	Establish regional hegemony	Revisionist power that will stop at nothing to become regional hegemon

The realist discourse outside China focuses on the link between China's increasing economic strength and political weight (Layne, 2008) and is further echoed through the hyperbole of realist pundits in the United States who claim that their cheap labour is stealing jobs, currency manipulation enhances its trade position, competition for energy and resources will create shortages and economic ties with South East Asia will destabilise the region. The pessimism about the rise in Chinese military spending is also seen by some outside the US as being quite aggressive. Shoichi Nakagawa, former policy chief of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party, said that Japan could be subject to China's strong influence in the context of China's "rising military spending". He went on to say: "If something goes awry in

Taiwan in the next 15 years, then within 20 years, Japan might become just another one of China's provinces" (as cited in Feng, p.9). Taiwan and India have also found the realist "China threat" discourse useful to achieve policy ends. India was once a leading originator of the "China threat" theory and in 1998 the Vajpayee government touted the "China threat" theory as a pretext for nuclear testing (Li, 2008, p.231; Deng, 2008, p.104). The recent 2011Taiwan Ministry of National Defense report advocates that China's growing military strength continues to target Taiwan and still poses a major threat to the country and despite increasing economic ties, China's threat to Taiwan remains "unabated" (Minnick, online).

While the preceding realist argument regarding China as a threat is an unpleasant scenario, or even in the words of Mearsheimer a "tragedy", it serves as a background to the following analysis in uncovering key underlying preconceptions, biases and assumptions.

Western Construct "China Threat" Theory Seen Through CLA

Table 4. *Western CLA - China threat*

Litany	China cannot rise peacefully - creating potential for war. Growing economy, increasing military spending, still authoritarian.
Systemic causes	Balance of power and security dilemma. Structure of international system: anarchic, building up of offensive military capability and asymmetric information about states intentions.
Discourse / worldview	Realist worldview: seeking power for power's sake, attain resources through violent means. Must contain China's growth otherwise neighboring states will become vassals.
Myth / metaphor	Clash of civilisations. Yellow Peril. China is an angry dragon, Godzilla; a 'bully'. The only way to deal with a rising China is to push or tie it down.

Litany level

The message at the litany view of the "China threat" argument is one of fear. The characteristics of this level is that it is the most superficial, appeals to mass readership and fails "to probe beneath the surface of social and cultural life" (Slaughter, 1996, p.318). The central concern here is the potential for war resulting from China's economic growth. The assumption is that the growth in economic position (although only returning to historical levels), will push China to restore its lost superpower status, expand its political influence in the region and in doing so necessitate military conflict. The pattern of China's behaviour is clear; with its growing economic clout, it will emulate the push for hegemony as attempted by Germany (1900-1918, 1933-1945) and Japan (1931-1945) and achieved by the United States in the 19th century (Mearsheimer, 2006).

We are often reminded that the growth of China's economy is "unparalleled in modern economic history" and so "poses challenges for other countries" (Pan, 2004, p.306). The litany of economic data tells us that jobs have shifted from the US to China, resource costs are being driven up and China is the world's largest creditor nation to the world's largest debtor nation, the United States. Negative images in the media reinforce a threatening image of suppression and state violence warning us of "angry Chinese hurling rocks at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing" (Gries, 1999, p.63).

Systemic causes level

Mearsheimer (2006) envisages a system where fear and brute strength are the driving factors for states concerned about their security in the international system. Once this zero sum paradigm is created; the anarchy, buildup of military capability and uncertainty of other's intentions, the data to fit within this paradigm must be maintained. Denny Roy fans these flames when he argues that, "China's military modernization has included weapons systems that can boost the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) capability to project power beyond China's shores" (1996, p.759). He further states that, "Many observers infer from all this that China intends to build itself into a military superpower by early next century." And for added effect he then goes to say, "presumably to enforce a regional hegemony" (1996, p.759).

Worldview/discourse level

The realist worldview here frames an image of China that is seen to be quite limited and ultimately bleak. The foundational definition of the paradigm is that "the mightiest of states attempt to establish hegemony in their region of the world while making sure that no rival great power dominates another region" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.160). Thus, China will always be an aggressor, bent on threatening the Western way of life in its relentless pursuit of power and historical redemption. The problematic of this worldview is how reductionist it is in its conclusions; indeed, no matter what action is taken by China, it will be seen to be a threat. Based on this paradigm any policies of engagement are doomed to fail because the great powers continually have to seek power if they want to maximize their odds of survival (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Metaphor/myth level

I now intend to provide a picture of the worldview under inquiry so that it "can be refined or rejected as part of an unlearning process that is necessary for envisioning more authentic desired futures" (Kelly, 2004, p.478). For as Kelly has argued "Metaphors serve the discourse and support the litany" (Kelly, 2004, p.478). Because the only solutions to a rising China from a realist point of view are to maintain US military presence in Asia to contain and enmesh China, the myths supporting these solutions reinforces the Eurocentric, linear historical and cultural Great Power paradigm. The metaphors and myths of "China threat" are discussed below.

Yellow Peril

Samuel Huntington provides us with a new enemy: the "ideal enemy for America would be ideologically hostile, racially and culturally different, and militarily strong enough to pose a credible threat to American security", and believes China fits this bill (Huntington, 2004, p.266). This clash of civilisations parallels images of a "Yellow Peril" or "Yellow Terror" where Chinese swoop down like Mongolian conquerors with their cheap workers, authoritarian rule and development model and uncompromising attitude threatening Western 'values' and reclaiming their past glory. For Huntington, China is undergoing sustained expansion of its military

power citing evidence of it testing a one-megaton nuclear device, development of aircraft carriers and a new form of arms competition. For these reasons, he argues that the expansion of Chinese military power needs to be contained. There is a clear anti-Chinese fear of the other, the Chinese cannot represent themselves and as Edward Said detailed - an assumption around the myth of "the inherent superiority of the former (the West) to the later (the East)" (Said, 1978, p.43).

Mearsheimer argues that due to its size and growing economic clout that China will attempt to establish regional hegemony while making sure the United States looses its advantage and dominance (hegemony) in Northeast Asia. China should be expected to develop a kind of Monroe Doctrine to support its claims and make it clear that "American interference in Asia is unacceptable" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.57; Garrett, 2003). Mearsheimer further claims that "the United States has a profound interest in seeing Chinese economic growth slow considerably in the years ahead" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.57). Realism and the offensive realism of Mearsheimer in particular holds that China is a 'revisionist power' and as such needs to be contained and prevented from becoming a regional hegemon at all costs. Simply put, China is a non-democratic, one party controlled state pursuing military modernization. The consequences of these values are absolute in realist terms. Roy states, "Beijing has long generated bad feeling among many outside nations with its poor human rights record, its resistance to multilateral discussion of expansive Chinese claims in the South China Sea, and its persistent threats to use force against Taiwan" (1996, p.760). It is therefore a simple linear argument that the only way China can return to the past glory of China as the dominant power in the region is through military and economic dominance. Because China is a "bully" that if not contained will threaten war, "growing too big and too strong for the continent it finds itself on" with the subtext that they are coming after yours (Krauthammer, 1995, p.72).

Angry dragon

"We have an image of China as an awakening dragon...It is non-European, non-democratic and avowedly the last communist stronghold in the world" (Klintworth as cited in Roy, 1996, p. 760). In China the symbol of the dragon is one of power, strength, and good luck, but in the West it is one of malice, greed and destruction. "It is better to be Godzilla than Bambi", claims Mearsheimer (2006, p.162). And so there is only one solution, "For a declining hegemon, "strangling the baby in the crib" by attacking a rising challenger preventively - that is while the hegemon still holds the upper hand militarily - has always been an attractive strategic option" (Layne, 2008, p.16). A peer competitor cannot be tolerated and so the dragon must be 'tied down' and strangled (Mearsheimer, 2005, p.48; Roy, 1996, p.766).

Charles Krauthammer (1995) promoted the view of China as a "bully" that needed to be contained going as far to suggest that if it is not contained, China could be the instigator of the next world war. Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro (1997) wrote in, The Coming Conflict with America that China sees the United States as the 'chief obstacle' to its strategic ambitions in Asia. Bernstein and Munro further paint a picture of a China that is "driven by nationalist sentiment, a yearning to redeem the humiliations of the past and the simple urge for international power" (p.17). They further claim that any vision of an 'unthreatening' China becoming more like the West as a country that is "non-ideological, pragmatic, materialistic and progressively

freer in its culture and politics" was obsolete (1997, p.18).

More recently, Western pundits are calling China's behaviour "aggressive, assertive, hard-line, obstructionist, deliberately insulting, tough and confrontational" (Swaine, 2010). India and China have been squabbling about border disputes and the Dalai Lama, a stronger stance on south-east Asian issues has been concerning those in the region, trade difficulties in Latin America and the arrest and jailing of executives from Rio Tinto-Chinalco has strained relations with Australia. (Shambaugh, 2010). For realists in the West and elsewhere this provides 'evidence' of China's true colours, with articles titled, "The Chinese tiger shows its claws" and statements such as "China is behaving exactly as one would expect a great power to behave" (Shambaugh, 2010; Kagan and Blumenthal, 2009).

This discourse ultimately appears bounded by its own definitions and cannot see China as anything other than as a rival to the United States and the West. Joseph Nye (2006) has argued that war is caused by the fear engendered in one power from another and that belief in the inevitability of conflict is a self fulfilling prophecy. At all of these levels, the only solution offered is to contain China through balancing, undermining and inevitably war.

Chinese "China Threat" Perspectives

From the Chinese perspective it is perhaps unsurprising that the "China threat" theory is viewed as a way for the United States and its regional allies to "denigrate the Chinese political system, overstate China's strengths and assigns irresponsible, destabilizing motives to Chinese external behaviours" (Deng, 2008, p.105). In this way the realist discourse in China views the "China threat" theory as being about international perception and quality of treatment abroad and ultimately simply concocted by hostile forces seeking to threaten China and attributing these views to racist "Yellow Peril" conjecture (Deng, 2008, p.106).

Chinese Construct "China Threat" Theory Seen Through CLA

Table 5. *Chinese CLA - China threat*

Litany	West is trying to contain or impede the rise of China. Fear gripping the West.
Systemic causes	A way to deny China's rightful place at the table of global institutions. Threatening to China's core interests.
Discourse/ worldview	Use the "China threat" theory to reshape the international environment. Useful for identity construction. "China threat" aims to tie China down.
Myth / metaphor	It's a trap - US trying to surround China. Sense of victimization from historical wrongs. China is different - will not be a hegemon.

Litany

The litany for realists in China is that China is a natural competitor to the United States, but this relationship can be managed without clashes that threaten the global order (Yan, 2011). There is an "unjustified fear gripping the West" and that "China is just regaining its long lost right to have its say in world affairs" according to Lui Xiaoying (Li, China Daily, August 2, 2010). The recent realist "China threat"

narrative focuses on three factors according to Rozman (2011, p.4). First is the failing of other countries, especially as a result of the recent global financial crisis casting doubt on the current capitalist model and the rising appeal of the "China model". Secondly, the assumption that China will be expansionist as Western realist paradigm predicates. Third, there is an identity crisis in Western countries, especially the United States where continued ascendancy is not assured and so China must be demonized while it is still relatively 'weak'. From a Chinese perspective, "China's supposedly more activist, assertive foreign policy stance reflects intense anxiety over the gradual loss of American political, military and economic power and influence globally, as well as an effort to make China into a scapegoat for the failings of the West" (Swaine, 2010, p.6).

Systemic causes level

"China now wants a seat at the head of the table" and "its leaders expect to be among the key architects of global institutions" according to Cheng Li, director of research at the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institute (Foroohar and Liu, 2010, p.36). The "China threat" theory is seen as a way to deny China's rightful place at the table. Ultimately Chinese realists are pessimistic about China's external environment, cross-strait relationships, and especially the United States. Concepts such as transnational challenges, globalization and global governance are rejected (Shambaugh, 2010).

The "China threat" theory is then seen as threatening to Chinese "core interests" and related "national security" issues including challenging the need for U.S. military activity near China, arms sales to Taiwan, disputed territories in the South China Seas and other incidents. Yan holds that realists in China "actively participate in international affairs, open itself up to the greater world, and enlarge international cooperation; however, all of these should be in favour of China's national interests" (2001, p.35).

Worldview/discourse level

The dominant discourse is not to "put an end to the China threat theory", but to use it to reshape the international environment.

Official Chinese publications often refer to the "China threat" theory and so can be seen to be a useful tool for identity construction whereby anything considered hostile to the interests of China is lumped in with the "China threat" theory. A common response then becomes that America is the real threat, or Taiwan, or Japan, or India or whomever depending on the needs of the security matter at hand (Callahan, 2005, p.709, 711). This discourse is politically useful to the ears of a domestic audience who have historical sensitivities to foreign invasion and other external threats and the ensuing internal uprisings. No doubt a strategy that aims to keep China weak, contain its rise by militarily encircling the Chinese mainland and slow economic growth through currency and trade wars for no other reason than preventing it from emerging as a peer competitor is open to moral criticism (Wang, 2011).

Carlson (2011) sees the Chinese worldview as evolving into two contrasting, contested and more fluid shapes. On the one hand, China accepts the bedrock of the international system, tempered by a realistic acceptance of US hegemony and a

degree of the diminution of states rights and questions of multilateral intervention. On the other hand, there is a renewed interest in a version of the vision of Tianxia ("all under Heaven" this will be developed further in the "Peaceful rise" construct) argued by Zhao Tingyang with particular interpretations about Chinese history and the normative principles underlying the current international order. Zhao cautions that we are currently facing the prospect of a 'failed' world in which the "American empire as "winner takes all" will not lead to something of a cheerful "end of history" but rather to the death of the world" (Zhao as cited in Carlson, p.97). Zhao (2006) argues that the only way to prevent such an outcome is to create a grand narrative of three elements: a view of the world as a global geographical entity or 'Oneness of the world', a commonly agreed institutionally ordered world/society as the highest political order rather than one of nation/states and somehow legitimised by most of the people (but not democratic).

Metaphor/myth level

It's a dangerous trap or "encircled"

The People's Republic of China has countered the "China threat" theories by equating them with a cold war mentality, ill will and a bias against China. There is a fear of China being surrounded by the US and jeopardising China's national interests. Chinese realists argue that "Western attempts to enlist greater Chinese involvement in global management and governance is a dangerous trap aimed at tying China down, burning up its resources, and retarding its growth" (Shambaugh, 2011, p.13). "If China does not oppose the US, the US will abuse China's interests and China will become America's puppet", says Zhang Ruizhang (as cited in Shambaugh, 2010, p.13). According to Dai Xu in response to an agreement between South Korea and the United States to construct a naval base to protect Seoul from attack, he states that Beijing "cannot always put up with American provocations" and that China "must draw a clear red line against American attempts to surround it". (Global Times, online). Dai Xu further states that the US is trying to create a kind of "Asian NATO" with the purpose to "create a global empire, and China will be the first to be threatened, because this undercover Asian NATO will be distributed along China's soft underbelly similar to the "encirclement" seen during the Cold War" (Global Times, online).

Any slight to national pride and sovereignty adds fuel to the historic sense of victimization. From a Chinese perspective, the threat comes from a United States along with other Western powers, Japan, India and Taiwan that is hostile to China's political values and wants to contain its rise by supporting Taiwan's separation from mainland China, sympathy for Dalai Lama and Uighur separatists, US military alliances perceived to encircle the Chinese mainland and the sustained argument that China should slow its growth. The unrest that has erupted; in Tibet in 2008 Xinjiang in 2009 and the awarding of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to Lui Xiabo are all evidence of "foreign hostile forces" and Westerners' "ill intentions" (Wang, 2011, p.69).

This time it's different

This time it's different. China's expansion will be different from the "imperialism and hegemony of the United States and 'the West' because it is aimed at restoring justice in an unjust world order" (Hughes, 2011, p.605). Realists such as Yan Xuetong offer a moral argument about China's rise. Yan claims that China is only concerned with national rejuvenation and regaining their "lost international status rather than obtaining something new." He believes that by dismantling the unipolar configuration of the world, China will make the Asia-Pacific region more peaceful, the world more civilized, bring about a booming world economy and contribute to scientific progress (Yan, 2001). Not to be misunderstood, Yan advocates that "Peaceful rise" is a dangerous theory which impedes China's ability to act forcefully to protect its national sovereignty and interests, especially with regards to Taiwan. This is echoed the more nationalistic writings of Senior Colonel Liu Mingfu who argues in his book, China's Dream that "Chinese cultural and racial superiority will allow it to outpace the United States economically" and bring in an "era of 'Yellow Fortune'" (Saunders, 2010, p.9; Hughes, 2011, p.606).

Peaceful Rise (Peaceful Development) Construct

That China will rise peacefully, without threatening the current world order is a policy produced as a direct response to China threat theories and discourses. At the 2007 17th Party Congress held every five years, President Hu Jintao reiterated that China's foreign policy will follow the path of peaceful development and pursue a win-win international strategy (Wu, 2008, p.15). The concept of a "peaceful rise" was first discussed in 1998 by Yan Xuetong with three other researchers at the China Institute for International Relations (CICIR) (Narayanan, 2007). Zheng Bijian, the then Vice Principal of the Central Party School articulated the concept of a "peaceful rise" of China during the 2003 Boao Forum for Asia. Wen Jiabao (2003) at a speech at Harvard University introduced this concept by declaring "We are determined to secure a peaceful international environment and a stable domestic environment in which to concentrate on our own development, and with it to help promote world peace and development." Hu Jintao officially launched this argument as a strategic choice for China in December 2003. By mid 2004, the phrase had changed to "peaceful development" and by 2006 Hu Jintao declared that China's principle objective was to build a "harmonious world" (Rabonovitch, 2008, p.41).

Peaceful rise (from now referred to as "peaceful development") is about the "soft power" aspects of participating in the globalized economy and lifting the Chinese population's standard of living into a middle income bracket. Importantly for liberalists, the "peaceful development" theory holds that China will not seek hegemony and attempt to destabilize the international order. Peaceful development is echoed in the liberalist view that states with high economic interdependence are prone to foster peace as this is more profitable than war. States therefore must choose between being a 'trading' state, concerned with gaining wealth through commerce or a 'territorial' state, obsessed with military expansion (Copeland, 1996).

Table 6. *Liberalist arguments supporting 'Peaceful development'*

Economic	Military	Ideological
Continued economic and political reforms	Military spending is considered routine, moderate and long-overdue	Harmonious society will be created if all act according to the 'rules'
Plans for a 'well-off' society	No recent military incursions	Competing social interests are balanced
Working within current world system	Security sought through institutions, cooperation and interdependence	Broad social support
Deepening economic ties make conflict unlikely		Cooperative internationalism

"Peaceful Development" Theory Seen Through CLA

Table 7. *Alternative future - peaceful development*

Litany	Focus on economic growth and securing comfortable life for its people.
Systemic causes	Internal security environment and economic growth important to maintain power.
Discourse / worldview	Liberalist international relations worldview. Rejuvenation of China to regain its lost status. Restoration of fairness as a recognised power rather than through military or territorial gains.
Myth / metaphor	Tianxia or Grand Harmony. Tribute system where all neighbouring countries lived in harmony respecting China's cultural and civilisational superiority.

Litany

The message at this level is one of stability, development and cooperation. The central image that China wants to create is that of a "Harmonious Society" which President Hu Jintao described in 2006 as "one that development in a comprehensive way, which gives full play to modern ideas like democracy, rule of the law, fairness, justice, vitality, stability, orderliness and harmonious co-existence between the humankind and nature" (People's Daily, online). In order to do this China will behave in a way that respects the current international order while pursuing a higher standard of living for its people and more active role in the international community.

There is a strong narrative link between the litany level and all other levels, where the messages reinforce each other and support a simple view that "most Chinese people merely hope that their nation can grow to be as rich as the United States and can secure proper respect in the international community" (Yan, 2001, p.36).

Systemic causes level

It is generally accepted that China is working within the current world system and as such is regarded as a status quo state. "What separates China from other

states, and indeed previous global powers, is that not only is it 'growing up' within a milieu of international institutions far more developed than ever before, but more importantly, it is doing so while making active use of these institutions to promote the country's development of global power status"(Lanteigne as cited by Ikenberry, 2008, p.24). The number of international institutions China is a member of is no small matter; is one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council with veto power and is the largest contributor of peace keeping personnel among the five members, a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 2001, a member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank with a growing voice, and an active participant in a number of regional organisations including the ASEAN-China dialogue, ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan, S. Korea), ASEAN Regional Forum, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), East Asia Summit, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Asia Europe Meeting (Li and Worm, 2011). It has joined well over 1,000 international institutions and organizations which seek to both uphold the international order as well as reform the international order to balance its interests. China has gained a great deal of material accumulation by working within this system and the trend is clearly towards continued integration.

The problems concerning the Chinese leadership at this level are economic growth and gaining acceptance as a great power (Brzeninski & Mearsheimer, 2005). The Chinese government appears to be well aware of challenges facing these interrelated factors and as a result have committed itself to further structural reforms in the 12th five-year plan (2011-2015) delivered by Premier Wen Jiabao in March 2011. So the solutions offered at this level are about continuing to grow the economy within the current world system but one that also contributes to sustainable environmental outcomes.

Worldview/discourse level

There are a number of elements to the liberalist worldview that are important here. Perhaps the most important is the rejection of the realist worldview that states are "trapped in a struggle for power and security" (Burchill, 2009, p.58). The diplomatic philosophy is to maintain a strong, united and independent China so that it can continue to pursue its goal of economic development. If there are times where in pursuing these goals, China appears aggressive as "China threat" proponents charge, it is because of a "Chinese Cult of Defense", a combination of two strands of culture - Confucian/Sun Tzu element and the Realpolitik element. The Confucian/Sun Tzu element promotes a primarily pacifistic, non-expansionist view while the Realpolitik is predisposed to deploy force when confronted (Johnson, 2009, p.10).

The 'liberal internationalists' group of Chinese thinkers including Zheng Bijan, Qin Yaqing and Shi Yinhong believe that China is and must continue to be a peaceful and responsible member of the international order (Leonard, 2008). The overriding narrative of the Chinese worldview is that China has sought to join the institutions that support the current system of international rules. In working within the market system and established institutions it has been able to achieve massive economic benefits and will ultimately be able to increase its power and influence within these already established systems. This is a world where China is a successful trading nation, on a path to prosperity and increasingly sharing 'certain basic values with the US' which include a commitment to the free market (Jia & Rosecrance, 2010, p.78). The tone of repeated and consistent messages around 'peace, development

and cooperation' is reassuring. Premier, Wen Jiabao's message that "The Chinese government and people are willing to work with the international community to respond to risks and challenges, share in development opportunities, and make new contributions to humanity's lofty causes of peace and development" requires some consideration (Wen, March 5, 2011, p.39).

Metaphor/myth level

As an ancient culture, China has a number of deep narratives from which to draw the underlying stories as to what the future should look like. The roots of the "Peaceful development" concept can be found in the Chinese philosophies of Confucianism and Daoism.

Tianxia - all under heaven

This vision of a utopian world where all things were in balance sits as both a worldview and a myth. Tianxia originally "was shaped only by the Chinese experience" which "embodied the idea of universalism and a superior moral authority that guided behaviour in a civilised world" (Wang, 2006). The concept in recent times has been more broadly applied to a universal utopian system and is consistent in message to those in the West who desire 'world peace' or 'world governance'. There is clearly a desire to return to the time before China's interaction with the West, when China was the centre of the region's political, cultural and economic system - indeed it thought itself to be the centre of the world. It is well known what happened from there; what followed for the Chinese is known as the 'Century of Humiliation' and often used as an argument to substantiate the need for a return to the utopian Sinocentric world order with its guiding Confucian moral superiority.

Tianxia is seen as a way to give priority to mutual benefit where the global public interest doesn't strive for interstate competition with winners and losers as seen in the Westphalian system (Zhao, 2008). At a policy level, Tianxia claims the grand strategy for the future of China will be won by concepts of peace, development and cooperation - all key elements of China's stated foreign policy (Wu, 2008). Understanding Tianxia and the repeated use of Confucian concepts disparaging the use of force does offer some assurances that China does not seek conflict and perhaps even opens some room for greater understanding of cultural factors shaping China's decision making.

As a non-democratic, authoritarian state in a region with democratic societies who's regional security relies on the large liberal democracy of the United States, China faces challenges in its capacity to establish the legitimacy of this discourse without seeing it as "a hunger for nationalistic solutions to global issues" (Callahan, 2008, p.759). Blame is often placed on stereotypical thinking in the West for not fully embracing this concept (Wu, 2008). This myth also embraces a cure for the growing social economic inequality in China but is unclear on how an essentially Confucian ideology will prove as a model for an already established world order.

Conclusion

China is finding itself. We have a new will to build a certain kind of society (and) this is irreversible. (Pocha, 2005)

The transformation of China in the last thirty years has changed the world, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. If China's leaders and citizens do not engage in creating a positive preferred future and the rest of the world does not respond in a constructive and creative way, the future of the international order and perhaps the planet could be threatened. Each of the futures presented in this article is seen to be the 'disowned self' of the other, whereby it disowns or pushes away its opposite (Inayatullah, 2007). As long as the opposite future pushes away its alternative, we cannot discover or develop alternative scenarios that sit outside our discursive frames. By viewing the future of China through the narrow lens of IR theory, without examining the deeper myths and worldviews held by those interest groups claiming expertise, it is not possible to move to a future beyond the planned. IR theory in the West is considered a general theory and as such may be resistant to incorporating futures thinking and methodologies into constructing policy analysis. This is a mistake. I argue that because the future cannot be predicted with any sort of accuracy, it is important to challenge the conclusions made by IR theory and make use of broader and deeper perspectives in order to move toward preferred images of the future. Only in this way, by broadening the research agenda to explore the deeper layers of the way strategic identity is formed, can we move away from continued limited and potentially dangerous thinking and allow a new story of transformation to occur.

Correspondence

Jeanne Hoffman
Macquarie University, Sydney
77 Jackson Street, Hamilton QLD 4007, Australia
Email: jeannehoffman@optusnet.com.au

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