



## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates how a Chinese perspective on International Relations, as well as the theoretical paradigm of the English School, can contribute to understand China's increased activity in regional multilateral organizations. Three case studies, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), are selected in order to analyse China's decision to join and participate in these organizations. It is argued that international governance in Asia, with China's membership, has its own characteristics. Supranational elements are kept to a minimum. China is willing to cooperate but does not want to compromise on its sovereignty. However, in several cases membership is essential to safeguard domestic policy interests, mainly safeguarding territorial integrity and participation in international trade. Moreover, membership in international organizations guarantees an effective representation of its interests versus other great powers that are active in institutional environment in the region. Overall, using a Chinese historical and political perspective increases understanding of its behaviour in multilateral organizations in Asia. However, the strict application of Westphalian sovereignty by the Chinese leadership makes that Chinese behaviour in regional multilateral organizations can well be understood with the help of the English School paradigm.

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## List of abbreviations

US	United States
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India and China
PRC	People's Republic of China
IMP	Master in International Public Management
EU	European Union
UN	United Nations
SC	Security Council (United Nations)
PIF	Pacific Island Forum
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
WTO	World Trade Organization
IR	International Relations
ES	English School
GA	General Assembly (United Nations)
UK	United Kingdom
G8/G9/G20	Group of Eight, Nine, Twenty - Major Economies
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum
PTA	Preferential Trade Agreement
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
AMF	Asian Monetary Fund
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
PLA	People's Liberation Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PECC	Pacific Economic Cooperation Council

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

A rare consensus in international politics today is that the rise of China has a tremendous impact on the world. The speed and continuity of growth in the ancient country provokes a sense of urgency among citizens, scholars and politicians alike. Watching global data, this growing tendency to look east is largely justified. In many respects, China has already gained a prominent place on the world stage. Demographically, it is – and has been so for a long time – the most populated nation in the world. In 2011, the country surpassed Japan being the second economy in the world.<sup>1</sup> Due to the recent financial and economic crises, the relatively strong financial position of Beijing has given it a bigger say in world politics. Militarily, the recent reorientation of United States on Asia shows that the superpower from the West is aware of the strategic aspects of the growing Chinese material power. China is now the second largest military spender in the world.<sup>2</sup> Even though all the attention seems sometimes overdone, these numbers are indeed impressive; ‘the record of China’s growth over the past two decades has proved pessimists wrong and optimists not optimistic enough’.<sup>3</sup> An important question is what implications a strong China has for the relations in its region and the world. Will the state in the future behave like a panda or a dragon?

### China’s Rise

This discussion is well reflected in an often cited phrase: ‘China’s rise’. It stands for China’s path towards major global power status. Different rhetorical use of the term illustrates the gap between Western and Chinese communities in assessing the growth of Chinese power.

Remarkably, Chinese writers often add the word ‘peaceful’ to the concept, whereas in Western scholarship this is not usual. The term ‘peaceful rise’ (*heping jueqi*) is used Chinese scholars and officials use to describe China’s foreign policy approach in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. A main goal in that policy is to counter international fears about Beijing’s growing economic and political might. At a speech at the Boao Forum – the Chinese counterpart of the Davos World Economic Forum – the concept was introduced by a long-time advisor to Chinese leadership, Zheng Bijan.<sup>4</sup> It refers to the view that China has adopted a diplomatic and peaceful foreign policy in the 1990s and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, as opposed to the period of the 1970s and 1980s, in which the country was more willing to use force. In an article in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Zheng presented his vision to the wider world. He points out that ‘some emerging powers in modern history have plundered other countries’ resources through invasion, colonization, expansion, or even large-scale wars of aggression. China’s emergence thus far has been driven by capital, technology, and resources acquired through peaceful means’.<sup>5</sup> ‘The strategy is to transcend the traditional ways for great powers to emerge, as well as the Cold War mentality that defined international relations along ideological lines. China will not follow the path of Germany leading up to World War I or those of Germany and Japan leading up to World War II, when these countries violently plundered resources and pursued hegemony. Neither will China follow the path of the great powers vying for global domination during the Cold War. Instead, China will

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<sup>1</sup> (BBC, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> (Sköns, 2011, p. 6)

<sup>3</sup> (Minxin, 2006, p. 3)

<sup>4</sup> (Zhu, 2010, p. 11)

<sup>5</sup> (Zheng B., 2005, p. 21)

transcend ideological differences to strive for peace, development, and cooperation with all countries of the world.<sup>6</sup> Overall, Zheng stresses that China does not want choose this path of development because it is aware that its continuous development relies on world peace.

Although the term peaceful rise fits easily into Beijing's charm offensive, some leaders wanted to highlight the rejection of the use of force more explicitly. At the same occasion one year later, the Boao forum of 2004, President Hu Jintao used the term 'peaceful development' instead of 'peaceful rise', which is now the preferred term by Chinese officials and scholars.<sup>7</sup> This is because 'rise' would imply that China imposes a threat to the established international order. The concept stresses the growing importance of power resources of non-military nature. Economic, cultural and diplomatic efforts should lead to results that are most likely win for all outcomes.

In contrast to the Chinese rhetoric of 'peaceful rise', Western observers tend to use the concept of 'responsible stakeholder', when it comes to the development of China towards great power status. It was U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick who called for China to become a "responsible stakeholder" on the international stage.<sup>8</sup> Regarding the publicity around Zoellick's speech, it is an important reaction to Zheng's point of view. Zoellick's story was seen as an invitation to join the international system, and to help shape it. Therefore, China would need to endorse a larger interpretation of national interest, in order to care for the health of the international system. As Henry Kissinger wittily notes, a speech to encourage China to be a responsible stakeholder might have been perceived as a comment that Beijing did not behave responsibly at that time.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it was argued that now that China is fully involved in the international arena as it was shaped by the US after WWII, it needs to proceed to internal liberalization and external responsibility with the intention of contributing to the long-term maintenance of the existing international system.

### **International institutions**

In many respects, the East Asian region is a forerunner for Beijing's future behaviour on the world stage. In China's own backyard, the consequences of its rise are already observable in the most far-reaching ways. As China's position in Asia can already be considered dominant, the way in which China handles its growing power in the East Asian region will be a very important indicator of how it is likely to behave as a global power.<sup>10</sup> In this respect, two developments happening in East Asia now are particularly interesting.

First, the manner in which Beijing embraces regional organizations tells something about its attitude towards the current world order. Looking at the various shifts in foreign policy since the 90's, the turn towards favouring regional multilateral institutions is among the most remarkable. Before its shift to a more open and outward looking policy in the 90's, China refused to be part of almost any organization in the region. Nowadays, it is an active member in most of them, even taking up a leading role in various cases. Given this growing engagement coincided with China's process of becoming the major power in the region, it is interesting to see in what way Beijing tends to accept or alter international structures in which it is 'growing up'. Since it is

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<sup>6</sup> (Zheng B. , 2005, p. 23)

<sup>7</sup> (Zhiqun Zhu p. 12)

<sup>8</sup> (Zoellick, 2005, p. 1)

<sup>9</sup> (Kissinger, 2011, p. 499)

<sup>10</sup> (Jaques, 2009, p. 273)

the first time that a new major power emerges within an international system dominated by international organizations and institutions, the interaction between these could bring new insights in the in great power-growth in the post-cold war system.<sup>11</sup>

Second, Asia has become an increasingly important region in international politics. The changes occurring in the configuration of power are likely to be reflected on the global stage. Since 1945, the United States has taken up a leading role in the region keeping close relations with regional big power Japan. Now that both Japan and the US are not able to follow the pace of China's development, China's power is growing relatively. Moreover, the People's Republic of China (PRC) borders two BRIC-countries – India and Russia – which are considered major players in tomorrow's world economy. It is therefore not surprising that the United States, eager to keep its sole big power status, has recently announced a strategy in which it will concentrate more on Asia. The US seeks engagement in the multilateral organizations it is member of, but does not succeed to join all of them.

Multilateral activities are an important facet of Beijing's foreign policy that is not yet fully understood. An explorative study of Asian international organizations provides an alternative view as opposed to the power and interest-based studies that have been dominant concerning China's rise. Focussing only on China's military or economy leads to conclusions representing a simplified view on the country's development. They predict either that China's growing economic power makes it a dangerous military superpower on the long term that threatens global international stability, or China is seen as a 'peaceful giant' that does not have any realistic desires or possibilities towards world dominance. Looking at institutional relations, this study tries to seek answers beyond a simplified material analysis.

Clearly, China's rise in East Asia has multidisciplinary character. The country is now much more an economic than a military superpower, but in the longer run, these two dimensions are closely interrelated. In a highly institutionalized world, an important part of a country's international relations is exercised in political or economic institutions. A country cannot rely only on a strong military anymore, as high and low politics become interrelated. Moreover, an increase in personal contacts between citizens in different countries has brought international society a more societal character. Even though states remain the primary actors in official international institutions, communities and relations shaped by the people within them obviously play a role as well. Through these lenses, this research attempts to understand China's rise in regional multilateral organizations.

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<sup>11</sup> (Lanteigne, 2009, p. 32)



## Chapter 2: Research design

### 2.1 Aim

The aim of this research project is twofold. Not only does it attempt to answer the question why China is active in regional multilateral institutions, it also tries to provide a multi perspective view on China's activities in the Asian region and beyond.

As described in the introduction, developing powers in the world are likely to attempt to gain a more prominent place in the institutions that regulate today's international relations. A better understanding of the process that informs China's activities in international organizations will be helpful when global and regional power structures are changing. Recent publications in the field of International Organizations note how useful non-Western perspectives can be in understanding current developments in global governance.<sup>12</sup> In this study, the reader will become more familiar with Asian structures of international organization by looking at three organizations from a Western as well as a Chinese perspective.

The approach in this research differs from the traditional methods in the field of study of Public Administration. However, as International Relations theories formed a considerable part of this master in International Public Management, the used methodology was acknowledged in the program. Moreover, I think that influence of China will have a profound impact on the long term future of international Public Administration, which makes researching the foundation of Chinese policies even more justified.

### 2.2 Outline

Research question: *Why is China engaged in regional multilateral organizations?*

This thesis consists of two parts. The first part is a qualitative analysis of relevant literature on Chinese foreign policy and International Relations theory. Assuming the reader is unfamiliar with the history of China in the international system, the analysis begins in chapter three with an outline of the historical events that have shaped its current foreign policy. A relatively large historical overview is required for two elements of this thesis. First, I want to discover in which way the Chinese engagement in regional multilateral organizations differs from previous experiences with other great powers. Second, a goal of the research is to illustrate how this development can contribute to the development on theories on multilateral governance in the East Asian region, and in a broader context, the rise of China in the world. Both questions deal with identity, which is probably created by a distinct history. Therefore, the roots of the contemporary Chinese civilisation, state and its international relations will be described. The first part proceeds with a consideration of how certain concepts in Chinese political theory can function as a paradigm in International Relations. As a clear Chinese 'school' of theory is yet to emerge<sup>13</sup>, the fifth chapter on Chinese theory is limited to a description of concepts about the practise of Chinese foreign affairs. These will be put together as opposed to their Western counterparts, to which the fourth chapter is dedicated. Altogether, the first part aims to provide a description of the development of the Chinese as well as the Western traditions of foreign policy.

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<sup>12</sup> (Ringmar, 2012; Kang, 2010)

<sup>13</sup> (Qin, 2010, p. 28)

The second part of the thesis consists of an explorative case study and analysis. In chapter six, three regional international organizations in which China is active are investigated and compared. Every case study starts with a clear description of the organization: its membership, purpose and relevance. Then, the focus is specifically on China's behaviour within the organization. I try to observe if the hypothetical growing engagement in the past period can indeed be observed and in what way it has changed over time. Finally, on every case study the theoretical framework will be superimposed to see if they can explain the described behaviour. In fact, this is a test to see whether the models are appropriate in the specific cases.

Consequently, after exploring both the theoretical and the practical issues regarding Chinese behaviour in regional organizations, it is possible to explain the meaning of what is found in the previous chapters. In other words, the last part of each case study, will focus on the 'why-question', and provide a deeper understanding of the topic of this thesis. This will be done in the form of a comparative analysis. The comparison of the cases should lead to a viable interpretation of the case studies. Based on this interpretation, an assessment of the theoretical material can be made, which possibly leads to suggestions for theoretical development.

Moreover, I will use the opportunity of this broad overview to write down considerations on the future the rise of China within the international system. This will be beneficial to anyone with an interest in China's position in the world, such as foreign policymakers, scholars, defence leadership and – less directly - civil society.

## **2.3 Methodology**

### **2.3.1 Theoretical approach**

Some extra explanation is needed for the theoretical approach. Instead of selecting one paradigm to analyse the topic, this thesis aims to bring together theory from two different worldviews. This approach has been chosen based on a growing amount of literature criticizing the Eurocentric approach in debates on the international order. Scholars are in fact increasingly aware that 'every international society has a set of rules or norms that states formulate to solve the collaboration and coordination problems associated with coexistence under anarchy'.<sup>14</sup> A Eurocentric approach could possibly lead to a biased view when it comes to analysing transitions in the international hierarchy, because events could be informed by processes different from our own European tradition. For a good assessment of China's current foreign policy, it is important to know how the legacy of its past continues to influence today's foreign policy in the current international society.

A quote by contemporary English School Scholar Barry Buzan provides a good explanation on the theoretical relevance of this thesis.

"First, why connect IR to world history? Unless you have some understanding of how thinking about IR sits with world history, you are in a sort of Westphalian box which you can't get out of. How has this grown? Most IR theory presupposes the particular conditions of Westphalia, that is, the world is divided in its entirety into sovereign and autonomous boxes named 'states'. How we understand current international relations through that statist lens is simply not supported by much of world history, neither when you go back in European history nor if you look at other places in the world. So by confronting IR

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<sup>14</sup> (Krasner, 2001, p. 173)

with world history, we can re-think many of the limitations of the theoretical underpinnings that now structure our understanding of the world.”<sup>15</sup>

As Ringmar and Qin point out, even when other worldviews are included in comparisons, there is still the risk that the Westphalian system is taken as the standard by which other international systems are measured.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, this research attempts to apply a balanced approach. Through the use of two separated chapters it is made sure that both paradigms are equally introduced, after which they are brought together in the second part of the thesis. A certain degree of bias is nevertheless hard to overcome, but being aware of the ‘Westphalian straitjacket’ can be a step in the good direction of making research more balanced.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.3.2 Data collection

Yin describes how the use of multiple sources will benefit case studies. When more types of evidence are used, the researcher develops *converging lines of inquiry*, which means that a conclusion using one type of evidence can reinforce another.<sup>18</sup>

Concerning the collection of raw data, the case studies in this thesis will mostly rely on written sources. In every case the goal is to incorporate a good amount of original documents that confirm Chinese activities. However, there are a couple of issues that make it hard to rely mainly on original documentation. First, as will be explained later, the nature of Asian international politics is not as open and regulated as its European counterpart. Second, as far as Chinese internal primary sources are available, the analysis of them needs such a high command of the Chinese language and culture that it becomes often impossible for the individual student in international politics to analyse them. Third, due to the restricted freedom of the press in China, the events related to multilateral policies are not so widely covered in national newspapers. One cannot speak of a pluralistic view in media records, as is for example the case in Europe towards the EU.

I attempt to solve this weakness in data collection by adding other forms of evidence. Notably the use of multiple perspectives will help in making the study more convincing. Multiple perspectives on the same facts can *triangulate* the data.<sup>19</sup> Chapters four and five, on Western and Chinese theory, will provide this triangulation.

### 2.3.2 Case selection

Because of the enormous scope of Beijing’s foreign policy and the limited size of this thesis, it is necessary to make a selection of cases to be studied. Breaking with China’s isolationist position has led to an ever increasing amount of memberships in International organizations. These vary from China’s permanent seat in the Security Council of the UN to the status of Dialogue Partner in the Pacific Island Forum. Out of this diverse group, three cases are selected to be included in this study.

A first choice was to reduce the geographic scope of the research. This means that only organizations from the Asian continent will qualify. This is done mainly for reasons related to

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<sup>15</sup> (Buzan, 2009)

<sup>16</sup> (Ringmar, 2012), (Qin, 2011)

<sup>17</sup> (Suzuki, 2009, p. xiv)

<sup>18</sup> (Yin, 2003, p. 98)

<sup>19</sup> (Yin, 2003, p. 99)

the theories used. The majority of the theoretical material is related to international outcomes in regional settings. This is certainly so when their historic foundations are taken into account, which is the case in this study. Furthermore, as explained in the introduction, Chinese engagement in international organizations on the Asian continent has in some ways developed deeper than on the global scale. Certainly when one wants to analyse China's leading role within an international society, studying Chinese behaviour in regional organizations is particularly interesting.

Out of this geographically reduced group, a random selection of cases would induce the risk that the objects of study would be irrelevant. Indeed, an analysis of China's behaviour in a marginal organization would not lead to better predictions about China's position in the future world order. Therefore, the regional organizations were selected based on their relevance and activities. They now illustrate China's economic as well as strategic policies within the Asian region. Moreover, they represent a different degree of mandates, norms and levels of formality. A final expectation is that the engagement and leadership of Beijing within the organization varies. A further explanation of the relevance of each case study is provided in the corresponding chapter.

### **2.3.3 Time frame**

Concerning the case studies, the research focuses on the time when China's engagement in international organizations started to grow. This involves a time span of approximately 25 years, from the end of the 1980's until the present. There is no time scope for the first part of the thesis, as it attempts to analyse the historical fundamentals of foreign policy. A time scope would only lead to a bias in that case.

## Chapter 3: Historical overview of Chinese foreign policy

Recently, Wang Qishan, a Chinese Vice-Premier, was quoted when he stated that Americans were between “simple” and “innocent” and have trouble understanding China, “because it’s an ancient civilization, and we are of Oriental culture”.<sup>20</sup> Now that China has become an active member on the international stage, it is indeed tempting to analyze its foreign policy with the use of Western standards and concepts. However, for a very long time, China has lived a distinct history in international affairs. Since no other country can claim more powerful links to its ancient past and classical principles, any attempt to understand China's future world role must begin with thoughts on its long history, as it could have impact on the position Beijing takes nowadays in the international environment and especially within multilateral organizations. In this chapter, illustrative events of Chinese foreign policy will be highlighted. Since China is built upon a long history of civilization different from the West, attention will be paid first to important elements from the period before interference of Western powers. Then, I will continue by analyzing the period thereafter, in which China became a member of the modern international system. The goal of this section is not to give an exhaustive overview of Chinese international history, but to discover constant and changing factors in Chinese foreign policy. Thus, to understand China’s role in the international and regional order, it is important to see how various events in history have shaped the Chinese view on international relations.

### The dynasties

Early Chinese history is often described in periods of consecutive dynasties. Major historical developments are described in relation to the dynastic period in which they took place.<sup>21</sup> For example, a person's birth date, date of a publication or accomplishment, or date of death might be given as the “16th year of the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing Dynasty.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, changes in Chinese foreign policy can be detected best by following the line of the various dynasties.

More than 3000 years ago, the Shang were the first people on Chinese soil to create the institutions of a state, after they had defeated the Xia, of whom few details are known.<sup>23</sup> The Shang identified the borders of their territory, which consisted of the entire civilized world. Those who were not part of that lived outside the borders and were called ‘barbarians’. Peoples in the periphery could choose between becoming part of the state or resisting by using force. A strong form of rule had been established over north-east China, but the Shang were eventually overthrown by another group, the Zhou.

At that time, the state was home to around 60 million people. Step by step, peoples from border regions joined the ‘Middle Kingdom’ and became an ingredient in the mix of Chinese culture. The Chinese state gradually became a more powerful entity, but that could not prevent the Zhou from being succeeded by a new ruler. After a period of 800 years, and an expansion of the land to what is approximately a quarter of modern China, the Zhou were overthrown entirely by Qin Shi Huang, who became the first emperor of a unified China.<sup>24</sup> He headed north as well as south

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<sup>20</sup> (Economist, 2011)

<sup>21</sup> (Buckley Ebrey, 2010, p. 183)

<sup>22</sup> (Cohen, 2009, p. 22)

<sup>23</sup> (Cohen, 2009, p. 23)

<sup>24</sup> (Li, 2012, p. 316)

while colonizing those regions by driving out the natives. An excessive military expansion led to a large increase in power.<sup>25</sup>

The following emperors were from the Han dynasty. They came into power because Qin Shi's regime was weakened by large military expenses. The Hans reigned over one of the great powers in the world at that time (202 BC – 220 AD), next to Rome, India and the Parthians from Iran.<sup>26</sup> Peoples living in East Asia had to reckon with China, either by paying it tributes or by organizing their defence against Chinese influence. Besides, China's presence in the international environment became apparent by the diplomatic contacts that were established with other parts of the civilized world such as Egypt and Rome. Negotiations took place in the areas of trade and warfare.<sup>27</sup>

In the following centuries, Chinese power fluctuated and was passed to the Tang dynasty. Its huge standing army started to have conflict with the emperor in the Imperial Court. Disputes within the Chinese state consequently led to the end of the Tang rule. The following Song rulers diminished the size of the army in order not to fall into the same trap as their predecessors. Also the territory over which they ruled shrank. However, this was compensated somehow by the cultural dominance of China in the region, a phenomenon that would nowadays be called soft power. The adoption of Chinese practises, cultural as well as political, by neighbours that were outside the direct rule of the Chinese empire, had become a valuable source of power that had already started under the Tang. The Mongols, under the leadership of Kublai Khan, were able to conquer China and to expand its territory to an area that even touched Eastern Europe, but again constant warfare caused great financial troubles. In the chaos that emerged, new leaders were able to come into power in frontier regions.

It were the Ming who knew to establish a united China again in the 14th century. China even became a hegemon in the region.<sup>28</sup> A remarkable development in that era are the naval expeditions of Zheng He, whose explorations with his impressive fleet of 317 ships carrying 27,000 men reached to the Persian Gulf and Eastern Africa.<sup>29</sup> The journeys were unprecedented in the world and deviant in Chinese history. Compared to European civilisation, the Chinese has had less interest in exploring the outside world. But again, the price to preserve the imperial power of China was high. High costs to defend the frontiers of the empire gave the Qing dynasty from Manchuria the chance to take over the power. From 1644 to 1912, this was the last Chinese dynasty under the Mandate of Heaven. It was the first empire that had to deal with major foreign interference. However, during its first 150 ruling years, it continued and preserved the old tributary system of the old Middle Kingdom.<sup>30</sup>

## **Interference**

A direct effect of the tributary system, with its periphery that consisted of a zone far outside the Chinese mainland, was that the centre of Chinese power was not endangered by outside powers. In fact, the system was a comprehensive strategy of the Qing to safeguard their territory.<sup>31</sup> The success of this strategy is illustrated by the fact that China was living a long history of

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<sup>25</sup> (Bol, 2011)

<sup>26</sup> (Ter Haar, 2009, p. 67)

<sup>27</sup> (Bol, 2011)

<sup>28</sup> (Yuan-Kang, 2012, p. 8)

<sup>29</sup> (Tamura, 1997, p. 70)

<sup>30</sup> (Cohen, 2009, p. 26)

<sup>31</sup> (Van der Putten F. P., 2008, p. 167)

independence. At the end of the eighteenth century, China was still a regional hegemon that exercised authority from Mongolia to Burma.<sup>32</sup>

However, developments on the world stage caused a severe degradation of the Chinese state. Industrialization led to a large increase of capabilities of the big European powers, the US and Japan. Especially the British were active in Asia, and their merchants became irritated by the conditions of trade that were imposed on them, resulting in the Opium War. A dispute over access to the Chinese market erupted after the Chinese destroyed a British opium stock, which was followed by military and maritime operation by the UK.<sup>33</sup> The British were dominant in the battle, and they imposed their conditions upon China in the treaty of Nanjing in 1842. The UK gained control over Hong Kong, and British merchants needed to be given the rights of foreigners from other nationalities, according to the principle of Most Favoured Nation (MFN). Moreover, the British imposed a tariff structure according to their preferences. Other nations, such as France and the United States, made use of the MFN-principle and arranged similar treaties for themselves.<sup>34</sup> These unequal treaties were perceived as a big humiliation of Chinese dignity.<sup>35</sup> The discontent would be an important source for patriots within the country later on. Above all, it became apparent that China had to cope with international power relations and the need to defend its sovereignty.

However, the renewed self-consciousness did not immediately lead to a strong modern state. Internal weaknesses evolved into costly internal and outside wars and the lack of organization resulted in the defeat against Japan in 1895. This defeat marks the end of a long period of Chinese dominance in the region.<sup>36</sup> Russia and the United Kingdom were now considered the dominant powers in the region, joined by Japan after their victory in the war against Russia of 1905. Continuing internal battles made that China could not speak with one voice in external affairs; it was more occupied with itself. Attempts to reunite the country in order create resistance against foreign interference followed each other quickly. Nevertheless, British, French Russians and even Germans profited from China's weaknesses and established their zones of influence.

### **The emergence of the PRC**

In the decades of chaos, several attempts to create a strong power base were not successful but created internal conflicts with many casualties instead. During the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, a group of agitated Chinese nationalists united using force against the Western powers, but they were eventually defeated by the more modern armies of eight different nations. It was feared that China would cease to exist when the powers would divide the country among them. However, the big powers that had been active in the fighting did not trust each other enough to divide the land officially. Instead, they endorsed an American initiative to preserve the existing territorial and administrative entity of China.<sup>37</sup> The fact that foreign nations from outside the traditional 'Sinic zone' – consisting of China and its periphery - could decide over the future of

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<sup>32</sup> (Zhang Xiaomin, 2007, p. 411)

<sup>33</sup> (Cohen, 2009, p. 26)

<sup>34</sup> (Kissinger, 2011, p. 54)

<sup>35</sup> (Callahan, 2004, p. 213)

<sup>36</sup> (Paine, 2003, p. 23)

<sup>37</sup> (Cohen, 2009, p. 28)

Chinese territory is an important break with the past period of Chinese civilization.<sup>38</sup> Chinese historians often talk in terms of ‘the century of humiliation’, which lasts from the First Opium War around 1840 to the events during WWII.<sup>39</sup> Historiography qualifies this period as a major degradation of Chinese sovereignty and integrity. Consequently, it has become a pillar of Chinese nationalism.<sup>40</sup>

During the so called events of humiliation, it became apparent that the ‘Mandate of Heaven’, on which power in China had been based for centuries, had come to an end.<sup>41</sup> There was not an institute of uncontested power anymore that ruled as one entity over China. The country had to wait until the Second World War to see the outside powers lose influence. Germany and Japan lost the war, and it was the plan of the allied nations Great Britain, the US and the SU to establish their own spheres of influence in Asia with China, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek, in the middle. However, the allied nations were not as powerful as they thought and independent states emerged all over the continent. Also, the attempt to get Chiang Kai-Shek into power did not really succeed, as he was driven out to Taiwan by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949 after a civil war. Instead of the Chinese nationalists, it was Mao who brought a different political system and stability within China. This was against the hope of the Western powers, who had hoped that a non-communist leader would bring it.<sup>42</sup> On the other side of the power balance, the Soviet Union was satisfied to see the effect of its help which led to the emergence of another big communist state.

## **Mao**

After the Nationalist movement had fled and retreated itself on the island of Taiwan, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) obtained control over the Chinese mainland. The power balance in the world at that time was dominated by the capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union, and it was for Mao to choose a side. Not surprisingly, he leaned more to international communism, and in 1950 he travelled to Moscow to agree with Stalin on a Sino-Soviet alliance.<sup>43</sup> The Asian region was divided in two spheres of influence. This became apparent during the Korean War of 1950. Troops of American support faced a confrontation with Communist forces, starting under the lead of the SU and later with large support of China. After this war resulted in a division of the Korean peninsula in 1953, the power balance in the region was based on deterrence, but more stable than it ever was during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup>

An important outcome of the war was that China had shown that it had the power and the means to defend against threats within its sphere of influence. Also, the internal situation in China contributed to stability in the region. It had turned out that the CCP, under the leadership of Mao Zedong, was able to maintain order within the country and preserve its territorial integrity. For what concerns the international system, Mao did not agree with its rules. An illustrative example of this is the seat of Taiwan in the Security Council of the United Nations. For ideological reasons, China declared that it was against the status quo that had emerged in international institutions

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<sup>38</sup> (Wang, 1999, p. 291)

<sup>39</sup> (Callahan, 2004, p. 204)

<sup>40</sup> (Ibid., p. 202)

<sup>41</sup> (Ter Haar, 2009, p. 529)

<sup>42</sup> (Van der Putten F. P., 2008, p. 166)

<sup>43</sup> (Cohen, 2009, p. 29)

<sup>44</sup> (Van der Putten F. P., 2008, p. 166)



after the Second World War. Mao did not want to follow the established rules of that system, but sought to realize revolution instead. The foreign policy that emerged from this attitude can be characterized by the use of bombastic language, close association with developing nations, diplomatic isolation and economic autarky.<sup>45</sup> This resulted in a stubborn and uncooperative attitude towards multilateral institutions.

Although China was an important actor in the Cold War, functioning as a balancer in the triangular relationship with the US and the SU, the Chinese diplomacy under Mao was merely isolationist. Even though rhetoric in the Mao era was aggressive, China was not engaged in any war outside its border regions during his rule. Moreover, Beijing recalled all but one ambassador (to Egypt) in the years of the Cultural Revolution; a clear illustration of China's aversion of diplomatic practises in those years.<sup>46</sup> But despite the isolationism, the country was constantly aware of strategic issues.

Two developments will make this clear. First, in 1964, China succeeded to explode its first nuclear device. Acquiring this symbol of great power status led to a certain pride within the party, especially because it constructed with minimal outside assistance.<sup>47</sup> Although the nuclear capacity was much smaller compared to that of the two superpowers, other nations had to cope strategically with the danger of a Chinese nuclear attack. Second, strategic considerations brought Mao to start a détente and rapprochement towards the United States. The relations with the Soviet Union were deteriorated to such an extent that border clashes took place regularly. By agreeing with the ping pong diplomacy proposed by Kissinger and Nixon, Mao made a strategic decision to start restoring ties with the US. China succeeded again to make use of its heavy counterweight between the two superpowers. This had an impact on multilateral politics too. Because of US support after the start of the ping pong diplomacy, Beijing could claim of the seat of Taiwan in the Security Council of the UN in 1971. It also became a member of numerous other international organizations and restored contacts with Western European nations.

All these developments on the international level cannot be interpreted rightly without mentioning the intensive domestic campaigns launched by the CCP. The vast share of attention was paid to establishing a Chinese society according to the vision of the leader. This primary goal of Mao evolved into major socio-economic and cultural campaigns under the names of Hundred Flowers (1956) and the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), with the intention to change the methods and habits of the Chinese people. Confucianism was banned and intellectuals were a 'stinking category' who were either purged or had their work heavily edited for political "purity".<sup>48</sup> The result was a standstill of the economy and a deadly famine.<sup>49</sup> The Cultural Revolution that followed (1966-1976) showed Mao in his most authoritarian form. Critical mind opposing the government were often killed. This last campaign ended after Mao died in September 1976.

## **Opening up**

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<sup>45</sup> (Medeiros & Fravel, 2003, p. 26)

<sup>46</sup> (Worden, 1987, p. 72)

<sup>47</sup> (Shambaugh, 2004, p. 92)

<sup>48</sup> (Worden, 1987, p. 72)

<sup>49</sup> (Ter Haar, 2009, p. 542)

In the power vacuum that emerged following Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping succeeded to win the two year lasting battle for leadership over the CCP.<sup>50</sup> His arrival as leader of China marks a change in international politics. He had survived many internal struggles in the Party and especially in the PLA. On the way, he had learned how to make ideological arguments serve political purposes. According to Kissinger, Deng's speeches during this period were a masterpiece of ideological flexibility and political ambiguity.<sup>51</sup> The ideological politics of Mao were now replaced by pragmatism.

Most important for this research are Deng's activities on the international stage. After having settled his power in the early 80's, became clear that China was on the track of long term development again. The policy of 'opening up' started to be fruitful both diplomatically and economically. Even though it was not known yet that the Soviet empire would collapse, it became apparent that it had to cope with internal weaknesses which were not easy to overcome. Gradually, the United States were considered to be the only superpower left. Therefore, the Chinese leadership argued that a unipolar world would be the future configuration of the international system.<sup>52</sup>

However, within China there was a growing believe that US power would start declining relatively after the Cold War, at the cost of regional powers, including China.<sup>53</sup> In 1990, Deng Xiaoping even expected that Western Europe and Japan could join the countries of the 'strategic triangle', Washington, Beijing and Moscow. China's view on the power configuration became multipolar, in which regions would play an important role.<sup>54</sup> In 1992, the new leader of the CCP, Jiang Zemin, stated that "the current world is undergoing dramatic historical changes. The bipolar structure has ended, different forces have started to re-divide and re-emerge, and the world has been moving toward a multipolar direction."<sup>55</sup> Reflecting the renewed confidence of the Chinese leadership, China would be one of the poles in this new power configuration. However, this development was hampered after students demonstrating for political rights were violently cleared from Beijing's Tiananmen square in June 1989. The actions were condemned internationally and led to economic sanctions from most Western countries, whereas reactions from Asian governments were less straightforward and some countries silently supported the CCP.<sup>56</sup> Notwithstanding the widespread negative reactions, bilateral relations with most countries were not harmed significantly for a long time, as China's diplomatic strategy in the following years was to show its friendly face, also named the 'good neighbour policy'.<sup>57</sup>

The characterization of the power configuration in the world as being multipolar implies three things. First, the return of China as one of the stakeholders in the international system was seen as natural. Gaining the status of a 'pole' was not seen as something new, but as a return to the old situation.<sup>58</sup> Second, there was the view that the "long-term trend of America's economic decline is irreversible". Third, based on Mao's Three Worlds Theory' there was attention for the developing countries, who would preferably get an equal voice in the new international

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<sup>50</sup> (Ibid., p. 544)

<sup>51</sup> (Kissinger, 2011, p. 311)

<sup>52</sup> (Pillsbury, 2000, p. 7)

<sup>53</sup> (He, 2009, p. 17)

<sup>54</sup> (Deng, 1997, p. 378)

<sup>55</sup> (He, 2009, p. 18)

<sup>56</sup> (Ba, 2003, p. 630)

<sup>57</sup> (Ibid., p. 631)

<sup>58</sup> (Jisi, 1997, p. 4)

economic order.<sup>59</sup> These three statements illustrate the growing Chinese confidence and its new attitude towards in the international system in at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Reconsideration**

However, the events in the late 1990's had an influence on Beijing's worldview. On May 7 1999, The US Air Force bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in Serbia. An American-led report on the bombing concluded that it had happened by mistake, because wrong coordinates had been passed to the pilots. The intended target was a building of the Ministry of Defence, of which the exact location was not known.<sup>60</sup> Suspicions that the real target was a radio connection between Belgrade and Kosovo, hosted by the embassy, have never been proved officially. However, the director of the CIA testified later that the bombing had been the only target assigned by his organisation, during the operations on the Balkan.<sup>61</sup> Public opinion in China was frustrated by the bombings, and massive protests took place in front of the American embassy in Beijing. Reports write that busses of protesters were arranged by the Chinese leadership, in order to highlight the popular protest.<sup>62</sup> Besides, there was something else that influenced the worldview of the Chinese leadership during the Kosovo War. It was expected by Beijing that Russia would be involved in a stronger way. However, it turned out that the United States found little resistance from it, which left China alone in its anti-American position.<sup>63</sup> Even more remarkable was that America could bypass the United Nations when it undertook its 'humanitarian intervention'.

These events led to a reconsideration of Chinese foreign policy. As it had turned out, America was still the leading and uncontested nation, at least regarding military power. The optimistic worldview of a multipolar world had to be changed into a new position, as the expected revival of Russia, Japan and Europe did not fully take place, and China was not strong enough to balance against the US on its own. Therefore, the first years in the new millennium can be described as a period in which US-Chinese relations deteriorated, while China realized that a unipolar world would still be the configuration of power.<sup>64</sup> Apart from strategic considerations on the world scale, it should be noted that during this period, the situation in the region was more stable than before as there were no military threats alongside the borders.

The question was how to deal with the American hegemony, as long as China was not able to contest the military power of the US. The strategy applied by Beijing was to strengthen its economic relations in the world and the Asia Pacific region, so that cooperation would be mutually beneficial for itself and partners in the world. After long preparations and negotiations, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001; an important step in its development as an internationally trading nation. In the shifted strategy of Chinese leadership, economic performance plays an important role. Since the power of the CCP is largely dependent on economic development of the country, the main goal for the survival of the Chinese state is to secure its economic relations. This interdependent world is now the playing field of Chinese foreign policy. Especially the engagement to regional multilateral institutions will be dealt with in this thesis, though not in this historical overview but in the following chapters.

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<sup>59</sup> (He, 2009, pp. 18-19)

<sup>60</sup> (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 1999)

<sup>61</sup> (New York Times, 1999)

<sup>62</sup> (NRC, 1999)

<sup>63</sup> (He, 2009, p. 19)

<sup>64</sup> (Friedberg, 2005, p. 46)

## **Chapter 4: Western IR Theory**

In this chapter, I analyse some important concepts in International Relations theory related to the subject of the thesis. They will be helpful later while explaining Beijing's behaviour in regional organizations. Until here, the focus of this study has largely been on Chinese history and perspectives. The Western or European view on multilateralism in international society will now be set out. The goal of this is twofold. First, it makes clear how 'Western' IR theory is conceived in this research. This is an important task as the great variety in theoretic schools could make the scope of the research endless. Second, a clarification of the theoretical concepts makes it possible to compare and weigh them against the Chinese point of view.

The field of International Relations has historically been dominated by communities of scholars from both the Northern American and the European continent. There are some different accents in the theoretical traditions, but there is definitely a common understanding of what constitutes the international world order and all debates have are contested as well as supported on both sides of the ocean. Therefore, in this thesis no differentiation will be made between the terms Western, European and American IR theory.

Because international organizations are a central theme in this thesis, the overview will be focused on how the theory related to this subject developed. By doing so, one becomes more aware of the fundamental principles on which the current Western world order is built. As Ringmar points out, the legacy of earlier international system continues to influence foreign policy decision making in today's world.<sup>65</sup> Therefore it is useful to compare the interpretations of the international system with each other, to see how rules can help and constrain the actions of actors within them.

Drawing upon a historical narrative and with an emphasis on international society and institutions, this description of the concepts of the Western international society in this thesis can be seen in the tradition of the English School. However, this is not an attempt to redefine what that paradigm is. The viewpoint of the English school is only used to be able to make a clear cut comparison between a Western thought-tradition and the Chinese tradition. The English school provides a well-defined set of concepts based on a sound amount of literature. On top of that, the English School is considered to be historic oriented, Eurocentric and pluralist, which makes it an ideal paradigm for comparison with Chinese and Oriental models.

### **Foundations of International Relations theory**

Even though the field of International Relations can build upon a large tradition of academic works, the elements that make up the current world order are still heavily discussed. Nevertheless, there is a high degree of agreement that there are some institutions – in the broader sense of the world – that structure the anarchic world. Similar to the case of China, the Western paradigm is partly derived from a historical narrative. The Peace of Westphalia has a central place in this narrative, as it marks the beginning of the European sovereign state system.

After a long period of territorial and religious wars, the European powers, besides signing peace to end several conflicts, agreed that the state had a primary institutional function in a system of interstate relations. The role of any external agents was excluded. This meant that only the state

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<sup>65</sup> (Ringmar, 2012, p. 1)

was competent to rule over its territory and to undertake action affecting the relations with other states. Throughout the following centuries, international lawyers wrote extensively of what was named the Westphalian sovereign state system.<sup>66</sup> As the works were both of descriptive and normative character, the sovereignty of states gradually became the foundation of modern European relations. Most important aspects of this were equality between states, and the principle of non-intervention of one state in the internal events of the other.

The emerging nationalism that spread over the continent in the following centuries legitimized the central role of the state to a great extent. The major powers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, France and Britain - were two truly sovereign powers and therefore helped shaping the system according to these new principles, although not overnight. As Bellamy points out, up until 1917, much of Europe was ruled along imperial and neomedieval lines through the complex structures of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, rather than by sovereign states.<sup>67</sup> However, this did not prevent that the most prominent powers on the continent helped to shape a distinctive European order, of which the norms and rules were known by all participants.

### **The English school – towards a society of states**

Even though the three principles of the Westphalian state system remain an important foundation of the international system, they have never been a static concept. Because there was not a higher authority enforcing the stability among states, various distributions of capabilities or power among states have always remained possible. In eighteenth century Europe, the balance of power was a fundamental institution and states were in their right to prevent other states to disturb it.<sup>68</sup> In short, the balance of power is a mechanism which operates to prevent the dominance of any one state in the international system.<sup>69</sup> This mechanism of balance can be reached naturally or it can be a condition pursued by a state. Since the ultimate goal of a state is considered to be its survival, it will constantly try to be on the right side of the balance, mostly by forming alliances. Thinking in terms of 'balance of power' has thus dominated Western international relations for a long time, the Realist school being most closely associated with it.

However, this interpretation of a continuous power struggle has become an issue of debate among theorists. Even though the political order in Europe was highly decentralized, its actors (states) interacted with each other in a regular and regulated fashion.<sup>70</sup> Some practices developed into institutions through which the powers were able to find mitigation for conflicts and were sometimes even able to resolve them. In economic relations, conflicts were dealt with through the logic of markets. Military conflicts were structured through alliances and sometimes prevented by means of balance of power. On the political level, states started to regulate their relations with a system of diplomatic representation.<sup>71</sup> In fact, when analysing the behaviour of states within the Westphalian system, it becomes clear that one cannot speak of pure anarchy. The English school, notably one of its founders Hedley Bull, described this structure as *the society of states*:

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<sup>66</sup> (Osiander, 2001, p. 281)

<sup>67</sup> (Bellamy, 2005, p. 8)

<sup>68</sup> (Sheehan, 1996, p. 99)

<sup>69</sup> (Steans & Pettiford, 2005, p. 58)

<sup>70</sup> (Bull, 1977, pp. 51-53)

<sup>71</sup> (Ringmar, 2012, p. 6)

'A society of states exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.'<sup>72</sup>

This approach of the *international society* combines elements of both conflict and cooperation in world politics. It provides valuable insight in how states regulate their relations, even though this regulation is not necessarily directly observable, meaning that the definition does not dictate that the rules need to be negotiated or written down. Thus, the methodology of the English school is interpretative. The only way to discover whether states find themselves bound by a set of rules is to interpret their actions. Through actions and language one needs to derive a pattern that proves the existence of an international society.

### **Sovereignty and multilateralism**

The assumption that states are bound by a common set of rules has some implications for their sovereignty. As described earlier, the word sovereignty was introduced in international relations to describe the exclusive right to self-government. It provided a clear basis for legal equality despite differences in power among the units.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, it meant that states were bound by the principle of non-intervention, as interfering in another state would violate that state's sovereignty.

But if states start to form common institutions, as they do in a society of states, their sovereignty becomes less absolute. In fact, the absoluteness of state sovereignty has always been questionable, which becomes clear in a thought experiment by Barry Buzan when he asked himself the question: 'is all interaction intervention?'.<sup>74</sup> From a philosophical point of view, this question is hard to answer. The term *international relations*, reveals this too: as soon as states enter a relation, one can speak of interaction, through which the one state influences the other and vice versa.

Therefore, it is not surprising that within the ambiguity of sovereignty, structures started to emerge to regulate the behaviour between states. According to English school theory, such regulation can develop in two ways. First, there can be a hegemonic power dictating other states its will. Such a relationship is often characterized as *coercive power*, 'the ability to use force or other pressures to prompt an actor to do something they would normally not do'.<sup>75</sup>

Second, there is the possibility of a peaceful expansion of cooperation. While units – states – become more numerous and powerful, they will more often cross paths. When such interaction takes place, for example through trade, it will inevitably transmit ideas. For trade to function smoothly, a set of rules is consequently needed to protect the parties and make the relationship more predictable and secure. Accordingly, the trading states form a *society* governed by a common set of rules. As we have seen in the case of Westphalia, such rules can eventually take on the form of guiding principles. If a state can shape the directions of any form of organizational structure, it possesses *structural power*. This power is more of social nature. Cooperation

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<sup>72</sup> (Bull, 1977, p. 13)

<sup>73</sup> (Buzan, 1993, p. 346)

<sup>74</sup> (Buzan, 1993, p. 346)

<sup>75</sup> (Barnett & Duvall, 2002, p. 16)

cannot be enforced through the use of force, and therefore a power need to have the ability to convince another actor, which is a social act.<sup>76</sup>

In the European context, it can be well observed how ‘common values’ and ‘sharing in the working of common institutions’ can lead to a deep integration of states, in which they give up part of their sovereignty. Even though the European international society experienced many periods of war until 1945, it managed to build a remarkable organization to secure the relations among countries. The European Union is a project *sui generis*, an outstanding and unique example of how countries can exchange their sovereignty for a safer environment, both in economic and security terms. Nevertheless it is worth noting that the experience of the European Union has gained such a prominent place in the thinking of institutions that it colours perception when looking at other regions in the world. It could be argued that without the EU, the institutional structure of Asia had looked more impressive.

Thus, empirical evidence has shown that countries with overlapping norms and values can form a society of states, at the cost of a part of their sovereignty. A last relevant question is whether such a system can encompass the entire world or that will remain on the regional level. This distinction is essential if we want to know if the current institutional development in the East Asian region is just a step towards a new regional structure, or a forerunner of a new global order.<sup>77</sup> This has been discussed in English School literature.<sup>78</sup> Looking at the different viewpoints from leading scholars such as Bull, Watson and Wight, it seems that the European example is so powerful that it colours the perception of the way towards world society. Therefore, it is hard to define a way through which world society could become equally possible in other regions. According to Buzan, a defining boundary between international system and society is when units not only recognize each other as being the same type of entity, but are also prepared to accord each other equal legal status on that basis.<sup>79</sup> A group of scholars in the English School, known as the Stanford group, made a valuable contribution to this, stating that a world society of states can certainly exist, but this does not imply that it makes states weak actors. Merely, a world society *tames* national actors.<sup>80</sup>

Suzuki made an interesting attempt to describe the incorporation of China into the European International Society in at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>81</sup> The study concentrates on the socialization of China (and Japan) with the existing European structure, during the imperialist time, when the different societies inevitably met. In the introduction, he describes in a scheme how the expansion of the existing European International Society is traditionally perceived among Western scholars from the English School.

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<sup>76</sup> (Lanteigne, 2009, p. 58)

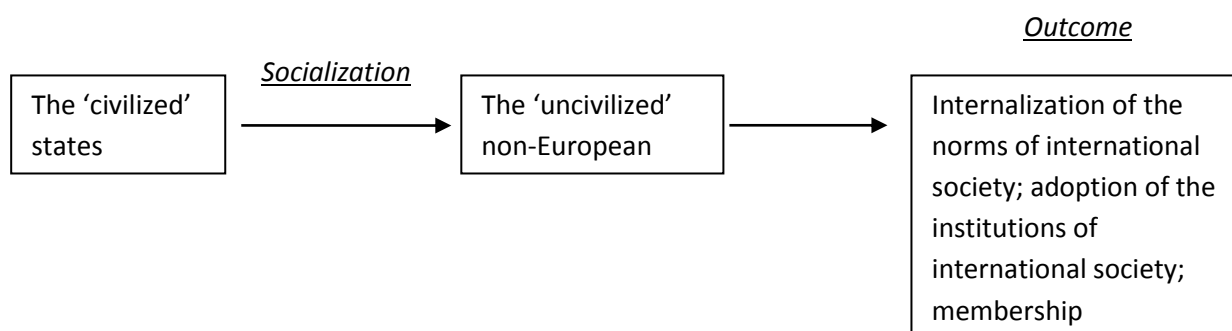
<sup>77</sup> (Jaques, 2009, p. 243)

<sup>78</sup> (Brown, 2001, p. 423)

<sup>79</sup> (Buzan, 1993, p. 345)

<sup>80</sup> (Brown, 2001, p. 433)

<sup>81</sup> (Suzuki, 2009)



He concludes that recognition is a necessary factor for two international societies to merge. Later on, some valuable contributions to add an East Asian perspective to this socialization are made. For this section, the scheme provides a clear image of expansion of international society in the framework of the English school.<sup>82</sup>

### **Multilateralism**

As described before, international society is the foundation under multilateralist policies from the point of view of the English School. As the theory will be applied in a practical way to the selected cases, it is useful to give a clear definition. In fact, multilateralism can be seen as the practical application of the idea of a society of states. The English School considers it a *secondary institution* of the society of states.<sup>83</sup> Secondary institutions are recent, instrumental expressions of the underlying social structure of modern international relations. That social structure consists of the *primary institutions*, such as sovereignty and non-intervention.

Multilateralism is usually defined as the “practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through ad hoc arrangements or by means of institutions”.<sup>84</sup> This definition makes clear that multilateralism can only be called as such if there is *de facto* influence on national policies, whether the coordination happens in an institutionalized way or not. Thus, where the theory of *society of states* describes the *process* of states working together to regulate their acts, *multilateralism* describes the actual *performance* of states doing that.

Altogether, the theories of the English school provide means to see China ‘growing up’ within the international from a perspective based on European history. It is worth noting that the uniqueness of China’s development, compared to other important power shifts in history, is that the country has to deal with a world that is already highly institutionalized. In English School terms, one could argue that in some respects, China is growing up in an international society instead of an international system, the former being much more developed than the latter.

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<sup>82</sup> (Suzuki, 2009, p. 179)

<sup>83</sup> (Buzan, 2010, p. 6)

<sup>84</sup> (Wu & Lansdowne, 2008, p. 5)



## Chapter 5: The Chinese perspective

A first continuous factor in early Chinese foreign policy is the idea of the 'Mandate of Heaven'. Through this concept, the Chinese emperors were seen as the representation of the heaven on earth. All power could be traced back to heaven as the ultimate source of authority. The mandate applied for everything under the heaven, so in theory, the entire earth could be subject to Chinese power. Everyone open to the power of the Chinese emperor could be bound to the empire. Those who did not support the Mandate were automatically called barbarians, even if they lived within the established zone of influence.<sup>85</sup>

Reflecting China's turbulent history, the Mandate did not have eternal status. As illustrated in the historical overview, dynasties were usually overthrown after a few centuries. Discontent emerged mostly because of multiple smaller and bigger problems, through which it became apparent that the emperor could not survive. Thereafter, a successful restoration of order, after a coup on the weak ruler, was enough to receive the Mandate.<sup>86</sup> But a transfer of the Mandate did not mean that the entire society changed in a revolutionary way. The structure and bureaucracy of the previous dynasties were normally taken over by the new. Eventually, the commitment to Chinese values led to an adaptation of the ruler, a process called Sinification.<sup>87</sup> In this way, governance in China did not change radically until the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when China eventually became a member of the Westphalian state system.

Consequently, China's worldview was different from its Western counterpart. According to Qin, what characterized the Chinese worldview until the early 1800s is the lack of 'internationalness'.<sup>88</sup> The world was built around centre (the emperor in his Imperial Court) and a gradually diminishing periphery. The imperial court exercised power over the surrounding states. It had an important role in guaranteeing peace, trade, and other public goods. The concept of sovereignty was not used to define the boundaries of the area. The form of organization was called a tributary system, in which there was no clear separation of the status of the core and the surrounding areas. In the words of Alexander Wendt, there was no identification of an 'I', and the Other.<sup>89</sup> The relations within the 'Middle Kingdom' consisted of a so called 'internal relation'. This kind of relations is essential for the being of the entity. For example, a slave cannot exist without a master.<sup>90</sup> In the same way, the core of Chinese power, the emperor in the Imperial Court, could not exist without the tributary states. External relations, on the other hand, are not necessary for the existence of an entity. A state that is not engaged in war or signing peace treaties with other states can still be a state.<sup>91</sup> It can be concluded from the historical overview that politics in ancient China were dominated by *internal* relations. The fact that Chinese rulers did not seem to stress external relations explains the lack of 'internationalness'.

Consequently, this can be related to the Confucian understanding of the state, in which the parts of the system are seen as a whole. A comparison can be made with a family, which is a central

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<sup>85</sup> (Stuart Olson, 1998, p. 95)

<sup>86</sup> (Kissinger, 2011, p. 91)

<sup>87</sup> (Kissinger, 2011, p. 91)

<sup>88</sup> (Qin, 2010, p. 36)

<sup>89</sup> (Wendt, 1987, p. 346)

<sup>90</sup> (Wendt, 1987, p. 346)

<sup>91</sup> (Wendt, 1987, p. 346)

concept in Confucian thinking.<sup>92</sup> If a family enlarges itself through the birth of children, it is still a family. Although the content changes, the status of the whole stays the same. The same can be said for the state. It can be enlarged with tributary states; the parts together are still seen as China, even if the parts that belong to the area are of different importance and at further distance from the centre. During the ruling of the dynasties described before, Chinese influence stretched over contemporary East Asia.

Thus, the concept of sovereignty in the East Asian region has not been as deeply rooted as it is in Europe. Today it seems obvious what internationalness means. People trade and travel between countries and heads of state negotiate in meetings, keeping the assumption that there is an equal relation between the nation states. In China, during the period before substantial Western influence, there was not such an idea of equal relations between states in the region, because everything was seen as part of the whole. Therefore, as Qin points out, it was not necessary to develop a theory of *international relations*.<sup>93</sup>

However, as becomes clear in the historical overview, China eventually had to cope with the characteristics of the international system, even though it was convinced of the superiority of its own. At the time of negotiations with the Western powers after the Opium Wars, it acknowledged that compliance with some Western norms was necessary because China was under pressure. However, contrary to the belief of the Western powers, the conclusion of treaties was considered only a temporary concession to barbarian force. Once the empire was strong enough again, the imposed laws would be undone and China would return to the system of its preference. For the West, the treaties were a first step on the way to an entire adaptation of China. The country would eventually be drawn into Western norms of political and economic exchange.<sup>94</sup> It was logical to think that way, since many areas in the world were incorporated in the Western system after the interference of European nations, usually through colonization. However, throughout its long history of civilization, China had created a strong consciousness of self-rule, which prevented the country from such a conquest.

Nevertheless, relations with the outside world became necessary, and gradually foreign policy ideas were formed accordingly. These ideas matched better with Western language, but were still of distinctive nature. That was especially the case concerning sovereignty. According to Barry Buzan, there is a much stronger norm in East Asia of non-intervention and sovereignty than you would find in the West.<sup>95</sup> He stresses that the West cannot be taken as a global construction anymore, because it becomes clear that the specific geographical and cultural factors are less universal than once thought. That could be a reason why sovereignty is a problematic principle when it comes to China. During the dynasty period there was no clearly defined sovereignty concerning the influence and the borders of China. The disputes over Tibet, the South China Sea and Taiwan, to name a few, fit into this picture of the regional giant who tries to define its own territory unilaterally. On the other hand, China has developed into one of the fiercest advocates of traditional Westphalian sovereignty, after the Western powers had violated its territorial integrity during the century of humiliation. An example of this is the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, of which territorial integrity and non-interference are two

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<sup>92</sup> (Bol, 2008, p. 237)

<sup>93</sup> (Qin, 2010, p. 37)

<sup>94</sup> (Kissinger, 2011, p. 64)

<sup>95</sup> (Buzan, 2009)

main pillars. Altogether, it can be concluded that sovereignty is indeed important in the regional relations of Asia, although China tends to apply it in a pragmatic way.

Another pattern that can be derived from history is that China has always been active in establishing spheres of influence outside its main territory. Often, it is claimed that China is not engaged in aggressive politics and that instead it has been subject to the imperialist politics of foreign countries. While the last claim may indeed be true, history shows that in fact, China has interfered in other countries. For example, national and strategic interests led to China's intervention in Vietnam in 1979.<sup>96</sup> The extensive assistance in the Korean War was another strategic move to preserve Chinese power in the region. So, there is not a one-sided picture when it comes to international action.

The many influential schools of thought make it difficult to classify China on the dimension of *realpolitik* and *idealpolitik*. In fact, these two paradigms have always coexisted. Confucian learning promotes morality and benevolence, but other traditions have had their impact as well. An important counter tradition, for example, is legalism, which emphasizes power and punishment. The concept of Sinocentrism provides a valuable combination. During the powerful periods in Chinese history, this was dominant system of International Relations in East-Asia. As the expression implies, Sinocentrism is about the Chinese dominance of relations within the region. The concept was developed by John King Fairbank in the 1960's in his book *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*.<sup>97</sup> He organised a panel of historians and specialists that undertook a set of case studies on ancient China from which some general principles were derived. In the introduction, Fairbank describes the periods in which Chinese rulers considered themselves to be the centre of the known world and superior over it. Since trade was an important manner of establishing relations, the areas around the Chinese centre had to pay tributes to the Chinese court, in the form of local products.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, 'the Chinese tended to think of their foreign relations as giving expression externally to the same principles of social and political order that were manifested internally within the Chinese state and society. China's foreign relations were accordingly hierarchic and non-egalitarian, like Chinese society itself'.<sup>99</sup> Rebellion in the peripheral regions could easily provoke dissatisfaction at the centre of the empire, so the two spheres were always interconnected. An even more interesting and daring conclusion of the discussions was that 'modern China's difficulty of adjustment to the international order of nation states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has come partly from the great tradition of the Chinese world order. This tradition is of more than historical interest and bears upon Chinese political thinking today'.<sup>100</sup>

Due to the impact these new insights had in the Western academic world, the attention for Sinocentrism is sometimes overstated. The uniqueness of the history of the Middle Kingdom does not automatically make Western concepts invalid. For example, security is as important for Beijing as it is in the Western world. However, some valuable lessons can be learned from Sinocentrism and the tributary system.

First, the interdependency between domestic and international politics is very present. The several empires that have ruled over the Chinese mainland from the beginning of its civilization

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<sup>96</sup> (Chen, 1987, p. 3)

<sup>97</sup> (Fairbank, 1973)

<sup>98</sup> (Zhang, p. 20)

<sup>99</sup> (Fairbank, 1973, p. 2)

<sup>100</sup> (Fairbank, 1973, p. 4)

have certainly influenced the design of 'interstate relations' in the region. China has always been a giant among its neighbours and its domestic decisions will continue to influence the politics within the region. Second, history and tradition affect political thinking. For example, Chinese leaders are often quoted phrases such as 'the harmonious world', which is based on older Chinese values of which Confucianism is an important source. Third, caring about China's rise is about caring how China perceives itself. Its identity is strongly related to its future role in the region. To put it simply, if China believes it is a nation rooted in a peaceful tradition, it is more likely to be a peaceful neighbour.<sup>101</sup>

Now that the Chinese perception of the international system has been analysed, it is time to focus on the multilateral aspects of it. Each nation actively engaged in international politics has a strategy how to approach these forums and so is that for Beijing. Wu and Lansdowne point out that China's experiences in the UN Security Council were important for the positioning of the country within the multilateral system.<sup>102</sup> Since China's admission to the Security Council happened when the reforms under Deng Xiaoping were being implemented, the experience within the Council has had a large impact on China's multilateral policy. Regarding its political system, China is a stranger in the midst of the SC. Among the US, Russia, the UK and France, it is the only permanent power that is not a democracy, noting that the quality of any of these democracies, especially the Russian, is not to be measured here. It neither has the European heritage that characterizes all the other permanent members. And the position of being the only developing country among the permanent members illustrates the distinctiveness of China probably best.

But regardless the minority position of China within the SC, it is equal to the other permanent members from a legal point of view. The veto right is obviously the most important feature of this. The combination of the minority position and the legal rights makes the position of China stronger. That is because in the General Assembly, in which all nations of the UN are represented, China does not belong to the minority but to a majority; the group of developing states. Through China, these countries can try to influence decisions that need to pass the Security Council in order to be incorporated in the UN system. The veto power can be used as an instrument to block international regulations that constrain the block of developing states. This is what makes China's multilateral experience so distinctive. It already possessed the legal rights of a great power even before it was considered one. It is growing up in an international system that has institutionalized the position of the victorious countries after WWII, and it has largely profited from it.

Wu and Lansdowne argue that the favourable position for China in the UN SC cannot be applied to other multilateral forums because it cannot enjoy the same legal rights there.<sup>103</sup> But in those other organizations it has become clear that the power balance has changed in a relatively short time. Many studies on China's multilateral policy were written before 2008, before the implications of the financial crisis became apparent. At that time it was easy to imagine that if the G8 were to become the G9, China would not enjoy the same benefits as those in the SC. That is because the so-called G-meetings operate by consensus and do not have open membership similar to the UN. However, the position of China has strengthened during the (financial) events from 2008 until now. In general, it was considered necessary by everyone to include more

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<sup>101</sup> (Gungwu & Yongnian, 2008, p. 7)

<sup>102</sup> (Wu & Lansdowne, 2008, p. 6)

<sup>103</sup> (Wu & Lansdowne, 2008, p. 18)

developing and upcoming nations into the framework in order to reflect interests better. Now, the assumption that “China would feel uneasy among the industrialized, democratic, European-American powers” seems already out-dated. China now naturally wants to see its economic power reflected in political institutions.<sup>104</sup>

As we see in the case of the G-summits, the multilateral policy of China is much about membership. Given the pragmatism of Beijing’s politics, multilateralism must be seen as a means, not an end in itself. The activity or engagement within organizations is driven by the wish to be one of the poles in the multipolar world, or at least to prevent the unipolarity of the US. Scholars agree that a multipolar system of world politics could accord China greater leverage and influence.<sup>105</sup> Frans Paul van der Putten, China specialist at the Clingendael Institute in The Hague, states that China cannot afford to miss the strategic opportunities within international organizations or dialogues, because that will always be advantageous to other, participating powers.<sup>106</sup> Thus, China is constantly looking to make friends by convincing other countries of its benign intentions. Such a friendship can be beneficial for countries, certainly from an economic point of view. But it is also noted that once a country has entered the club of friends, it becomes harder to be politically critical on China.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> (Economist, 2011)

<sup>105</sup> (Wu & Lansdowne, 2008, p. 7)

<sup>106</sup> (Van Der Putten, 2011)

<sup>107</sup> (Kissinger, 2011, p. 244)

## Chapter 6: Case studies

### Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

#### Introduction

The Association of South East Asian Nations is among the oldest multilateral initiatives on the Asian continent. The member states are situated in China's backyard, historically forming an important area in Chinese foreign policy. The Southeast Asian maritime gateways have been a vital route for contact and trade with the West and relations with Southeast Asian states go back as far as the times of the imperial courts.<sup>108</sup> In 1967, the structural decolonization in the region resulted in several independent sovereign states in Southeast Asia. By signing the Bangkok declaration, The Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore decided to 'accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region', and to 'promote regional peace and stability'.<sup>109</sup> Through the years, membership has expanded with Brunei (1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos and Myanmar (1997) and Cambodia (1999), while East Timor is now preparing a request for admission. When looking at numbers, the ASEAN can be considered one of the most important regional organizations on a world scale, comprising 600 million people, 8.8% of world population. As a single entity, ASEAN would count as the ninth economy in the world. This is for example reflected in ASEAN receiving an invitation to the G-20 summits in 2010 in Canada and South-Korea where it was represented by Vietnam. Its activities have extended to a wide range of areas. Ministerial meetings take place in domains such as law, tourism and financial cooperation. It is more than technocratic cooperation on paper. During visits to Southeast Asia the author was confronted with several signs of the presence of ASEAN in Southeast Asian daily life. When the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN leaders' summit took place in early 2009, the ASEAN anthem was broadcasted every day on Thai television. Media coverage of ASEAN meetings is quite intensive and regular.<sup>110</sup> Another example is the constant proud remarks by young people in Luang Prabang, Laos, that their country had hosted the ASEAN games, a major sports event within the region, in December 2009. Thus, compared to other regional forums playing a role only in the minds of policy makers, ASEAN is a regional organization that has established recognition among the citizens of its member states.

The outreach of ASEAN is not limited to Southeast Asia itself. As this thesis concentrates mainly on relations of China with organizations within the region, it is interesting to look at ASEAN's ties with its big northern neighbour. Through the status of dialogue partner, issues with third countries in the wider Asian region could come to the table. China joined talks for the first time in 1991 as an observer and became a full dialogue partner in 1996.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, with help from China, ASEAN established ASEAN+3, bringing together Southeast Asia with South Korea, Japan and China. During the years, this forum has developed into an extensive body for negotiations. 65 mechanisms on different levels coordinate ASEAN+3 cooperation in political security, finance and economy, and socio-cultural affairs.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> (Zheng & Tok, 2008, p. 185)

<sup>109</sup> (ASEAN, 1967)

<sup>110</sup> (Wisnu, 2012)

<sup>111</sup> (Van der Putten & Egberink, 2011, p. 20)

<sup>112</sup> (ASEAN, 2011)

## China and ASEAN

### Rapprochement

From the Chinese perspective, the foundation of ASEAN in 1967 was seen as an imperialist attempt of the United States to bring the participating states under its influence. The weak role formulation in the organization's declaration could not prevent that the foundation of ASEAN was usually seen as an act against a Communist bloc in the region. Both within and outside the borders of the founding countries, there was a constant 'threat' that socialist revolutions would take place. The domino theory provided a clear explanation for this fear. For the first time formulated by the American president Dwight Eisenhower in 1954, dominos were a metaphor for countries vulnerable for a turn to communism. "You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences."<sup>113</sup>

Indeed, the battle between communism and capitalism has always been the major issue in and among the countries of Southeast Asia. Especially during the Vietnam War, it dominated the organization. After that, the withdrawal of the US out of Vietnam was a reason for the ASEAN states to fear a Communist intervention. However, the main interest of the relatively newly founded states was not to combat communism, but to care for a stable environment within the region that had been exposed to violent events for decades. China was absent on the ASEAN stage during its first twenty years of existence, due to the isolationist politics of Mao. Furthermore, the logic of the Cold War made cooperation between the China and the organization practically impossible.

As described in the historical overview, the Tiananmen Incident isolated Beijing in international affairs. The fact that the Eastern European states made their transition to capitalist democracies a little later, contributed even more to the image of an international pariah.<sup>114</sup> However, the opening up strategy under Deng was now strongly rooted in Chinese foreign policy and China knew to overcome this challenging moment by investing heavily in relations with ASEAN. It gained observer status in 1992. In 1994 it joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) - a regional forum for security dialogue including Western members such as the US, the EU and Australia - from its inception. It became a full dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1996 and participated in the first ASEAN+3 meeting. This even led to an official ASEAN-China summit in 1997. Now there even is a yearly summit on Chinese-ASEAN relations only, often referred to as ASEAN+1. The ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+1 meetings are not restricted in areas for cooperation, which vary from energy security to counter terrorism. Thus, through intensive politics around the organization and its member states, Beijing established an institutional relation to the ASEAN multilateral initiative. Compared to the decades that were characterised by China's isolation and the Cold War paradigm, the development described above is a major shift in the power configuration in the region. As Ba states, the changing global context has brought many opportunities, of which China has profited most in terms of its relations with Southeast Asia.<sup>115</sup>

Clearly, the rapprochement with Southeast Asia is a break with history. The traditional state of affairs was that China was dominant over the southern regions. This was most apparent in the

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<sup>113</sup> Cited in: (Watson, 2002, p. 162)

<sup>114</sup> (Zheng & Tok, p.186)

<sup>115</sup> (Ba, 2003, p. 623)

tributary system of the Middle Kingdom, and for centuries from Tang to Mao, the country had regarded its neighbours with a sense of superiority and indifference.<sup>116</sup> The current relation with ASEAN has a different structure. Even though China is still in a dominant position, it does not use its power in a coercive way. As reflected by the extensive structure of the ASEAN framework, there is a large dialogue going on in many areas. This happens in principle on equal terms, at least on paper.

Can this remarkable change in the relation be described with the help of the concept of international society? According to the cited definition of Hedley Bull, the first indications of an international society are common interests and common values. Indeed, the interests of China and Southeast Asia have been converging since they both became active parts in the globalized world. Notably through the Asian financial crisis in 1997, in which China behaved as a responsible stakeholder for the region when it refrained from devaluating the renminbi, it became clear that China and ASEAN are likeminded partners in the world economy. Also in other areas that affect upcoming developing countries, China and ASEAN have similar interests on the global stage, such as addressing climate change, the monetary system and global imbalances. A practical result from these shared interests is ASEAN+3. Building upon earlier proposals to establish an East Asian Economic Caucus, ASEAN+3 represents the interests of Asian countries only, trying to offset the negative effects of the Western-dominated international economic order.<sup>117</sup> Even though it is still difficult for the participating countries to develop clear policies, the trend of increasing shared interests has 'led to the idea of 'East Asia' becoming firmly embedded in the thinking and discourse of governments and opinion leaders around the region.'<sup>118</sup> When it comes to common values, the countries have similar preferences in conducting foreign policy, as will be explained later in this chapter.

### **South China Sea**

An important case for the ASEAN today is the geopolitical situation in the South Chinese Sea. In short, the surrounding countries have shown a tremendous interest in this area since there have been reports about large energy resources under Spratly and Paracel island groups. Moreover, the sea is a very important route for international trade. Even though the majority of the islands are not within the 200 nautical miles from its coast line, which normally defines a sea territory of a country, China claims the area on historical grounds, arguing it has exercised control over it during 2000 years. Taiwan mirrors this claim as it considers itself the rightful authority over all Chinese territory. The Philippines's, Vietnam, Brunei and Malaysia claim part of the island groups, Vietnam expressing the heaviest claims.

In this case, China shows a combination of power politics and multilateral tactics. On the one hand, Beijing has often expressed in bold statements that it exercises 'undisputable sovereignty' over the entire territory.<sup>119</sup> Such a formulation leaves little room for negotiation; any action contrary to Beijing's interests is regarded an infringement on its sovereignty. On the other hand, the forum of ASEAN is often used to bring the parties together. In 2002, this resulted in the 'Code of conduct on the parties in the South China Sea'. The countries agree to 'resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force,

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<sup>116</sup> (Jaques, 2009, p. 278)

<sup>117</sup> (Stubbs, 2002, p. 453)

<sup>118</sup> (Stubbs, 2002, p. 454)

<sup>119</sup> (Kupta, 2011)



through friendly consultations and negotiations'.<sup>120</sup> It seems that China wants to assure its neighbours about its peaceful intentions while it is rising. However, it simultaneously shows that questions of sovereignty are of primary interest to it, and thus cannot be negotiated. From ASEAN's side, it can be argued that it deals pragmatically with this situation as well. The member states are aware of their less powerful status in their relation with China. However, it is in their interest to prevent an outbreak of war in which they would be the weaker parties. This view is mostly shared in the literature on the topic.<sup>121</sup>

Altogether, the conflict in the South China Sea is an important example of China's behaviour in the region regarding the regional system. It is clear that China is by far the most powerful state in the conflict. According to English School writer Clark, such a hegemonic role can be divided into two characteristics.<sup>122</sup> One aspect of the hegemonic power is materialistic. Indeed, a growing asymmetry of naval power in the South China Sea to the advantage of China has been observed in recent years.<sup>123</sup> It is estimated that the country will soon be able to realize the territorial claims and extend its sovereignty to the heart of Southeast Asia. The other aspect of hegemonic power is defined in terms of behaviour and influence. In this regard, the material rise of China cannot be tamed by the ASEAN institutional framework. This is because of the lack of a supranational character of ASEAN. The rules and decisions of ASEAN are not binding and there is no court to enforce them.

In the case of the South Chinese Sea, the involved countries have adopted a strict notion of sovereignty. Using the scheme of Suzuki from the chapter on Western IR theory, a strong socialization has taken place within the 'uncivilized' non-western states. Sovereignty, formerly a European institution, has been adopted by China as a corner stone of foreign policy. While before the 'century of humiliation' the concept of sovereignty - the Western definition of it - did not exist in China, it has now become a nearly insolvable issue in the conflict. Probably because of the events during the 'century of humiliation', China has learned about the importance of sovereignty in international affairs and now refuses to compromise on it. This means that no negotiation or flexibility is possible when it comes to territorial issues. Concerning the South China Sea, Beijing has indeed stated several times that 'its sovereignty is inviolable'.<sup>124</sup>

On the other hand, it is ironic that China makes a claim on the South China Sea based on historic arguments. Historic claims on the area even refer back to imperial times under the Qin (221-206 BC) and Han (206 BC-AD 220) dynasties, when China discovered the islands, as well as the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), during which the territorial claims were made.<sup>125</sup> However, sovereignty was not yet rooted in Chinese foreign policy yet during those eras. Hence China's behaviour towards the ASEAN countries in the South China Sea dispute is informed by principles of both Western and Chinese origin. It uses multilateral forums to prevent escalation of the conflict, while at the same time it strongly opposes any form of international authority to seek a solution for the conflict.

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<sup>120</sup> (ASEAN, 2002)

<sup>121</sup> (Odgaard, 2003, p. 20)

<sup>122</sup> (Clarke, 2009, p. 206)

<sup>123</sup> (Emmers, 2010, p. 127)

<sup>124</sup> (Gang, 2012)

<sup>125</sup> (Ching, 2011)

## **Asian values**

During the years of Chinese engagement towards ASEAN, a certain pattern can be observed in the relation. Gradually, bandwagoning of the ASEAN states with China has led to an approval of some common principles that are now described as 'Asian values'. They make governance in the multilateral setting in Southeast Asia different from its European and global counterpart.

A first principle is non-interference in internal affairs, which is considered a corner stone of the mutual opinion on the conduct in foreign policy. For example, the countries in the region disagree with Western political pressure regarding human rights abuses. In the Bangkok Summit Declaration of 1995, the parties wrote down their 'respect for each other's different socio-economic, historical and cultural background' and affirmed the principle of 'non-interference' in this context. In the West, this attitude is often criticized because human rights are considered universal and need to be defended accordingly. Following from this, international norms are considered stronger than domestic sovereignty. This vision is not shared in the ASEAN region. Even though disrespect for 'universal rights' might result in a rude image abroad, the practice to not interfere in another country's internal affairs is seen as a higher good. In general, the presentation and affirmation of 'Asian values' within the ASEAN structure are a showcase for China's benign intentions towards the outside world. It shows that it is willing to cooperate with states in its sphere of influence, while at the same time letting them choose their own path of development.

Even though the common values are effective in creating a sense of community, they can harm the cooperation between the states as well. For example, the principle of non-intervention influences the degree of institutionalization within the organization. ASEAN, (including ASEAN+3) is not able to develop into a supranational body with a coherent policy.<sup>126</sup> Binding rules created by an independent supranational body would harm the sovereignty of the participating countries.

There are two ways of looking at this. On the one hand, there is a view that stresses the particular effectiveness of the 'ASEAN-way'. The loose style of governance in the organization is seen as a strength rather than a weakness. By being engaged in regular, informal talks, the participating countries have developed a framework of roles and norm conceptions. These include engagement of outside great powers (such as China), quest for regional autonomy and peaceful management of disputes.<sup>127</sup> In that way, tangible results matter less than the actual act of being engaged in international cooperation. The open and informal setting ensures that the member states are able to stay out of conflict with each other. This form of engagement in international relations can be traced back to the ideas described in the chapter on the Chinese perspective. China takes part in the discussions, simply because it would harm the country if it would stay away from it. It has chosen to be part of the East-Asian community rather than refraining from it. The latter option could result in grouping of countries in the periphery that would act against China's interest. In short, process is regarded more important than progress.<sup>128</sup>

On the other hand, this does not mean however that China will endorse far reaching measures to make ASEAN an effective body. There is strong evidence that the agreements under ASEAN

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<sup>126</sup> (Jones, 2007, p. 184)

<sup>127</sup> (Acharya, 2009, p. 494)

<sup>128</sup> (Jones & Smith, 2007, p. 148)

should be looked at with suspicion. Due to their open and non-binding nature, the results from these charters and agreements are often not proven. This is for example the case with multilateral trade agreements prepared within ASEAN. According to the majority of experts, they actually mask a widespread practice of bilateral agreements that sustain a still fragmented market.<sup>129</sup> Thus, it is important to pay attention to the actual results of cooperation, instead of paying attention only to the rhetoric in ASEAN declarations.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, the lack of enforceable rules results in a power structure that is mainly based on material capabilities. China is by far the most powerful nation in the ASEAN and ASEAN+3 grouping and will be so even more in the future. In the current structure, there are no checks and balances to restrict China's behaviour if it will act against the interest of the weaker member states. So the 'ASEAN-way' will in the end always be to the advantage of the most powerful state.

Whether the ASEAN-way is positive for Southeast Asian community building or not, it can be argued that China has had a stimulating role in developing the ASEAN-way. The way in which the organization operates reflects Beijing's preference for an open regional environment that prevents the forming of alliances. Through ASEAN, China has found a way to manoeuvre itself in the Southeast Asian region in a multilateral setting. It manages to reassure its neighbours about its benign intentions, while at the same time defending its interests.

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<sup>129</sup> (Acharya, 2009, p. 494)

<sup>130</sup> (Jones, 2007, p. 158)

## Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC)

### Introduction

In pace with the general movement towards a growing support for international institutions, Beijing's involvement in international trade regulation has grown over the last three decades. Since the economic 'opening up' of China, directed under Deng Xiaoping, a strategy of liberalization on the national level has reinforced a pragmatic attitude in international trade issues.

The foreign competition resulting from liberalized international trade was used as a means to speed up internal economic reform.<sup>131</sup> Through the ever present pressure of being out-marketed by foreign competition, the Chinese leaders introduced an important incentive to reduce bureaucracy and corruption in the domestic economy. China's admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO) was an institutional landmark in opening up towards the world economy. On 11 December 2001, the admission was made official, after a tough multilateral and bilateral negotiation process of sixteen years. It gave Beijing a much greater voice in the developing international trade regime, benefitting its growing economic power.

Even though the accession to the WTO is not taken as a case study in this research, it is an essential chapter in China's activities in other international economic institutions. The WTO currently functions as an umbrella above a dense network of regional Preferential Trade Agreements. Its goal is to establish a global standard for lowering trade barriers on the long term, but regional trade agreements are still very common. Such agreements were designed to address more localized trading and regional trading issues. In the Pacific region, the number of Preferential Trade Agreements (PTA) has actually increased since 1995.<sup>132</sup> The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum is both in scope and importance among the most notable PTA's in the Pacific region. Founded in 1989, it was the first attempt to bring together the countries in the wider Pacific area. The term 'Asia-Pacific' was introduced to the vocabulary of international politics.<sup>133</sup> The APEC currently consists of 21 member economies.<sup>134</sup> The term *member economies* was used instead of member states to prevent disputes over the status of Hong Kong and Taiwan (Chinese Taipei).

The organization's goal is 'to support sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region'. Its mission statement speaks of championing free and open trade and investment, promoting and accelerating regional economic integration, encouraging economic and technical cooperation, enhancing human security, and facilitating a favourable and sustainable business environment.<sup>135</sup> This must ultimately lead to the creation of a free trade regime in the Pacific by 2020.

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<sup>131</sup> (Chow, 2001, p. 3).

<sup>132</sup> (Lanteigne, 2005, p. 61).

<sup>133</sup> (Ravenhill, 2002, p. 6).

<sup>134</sup> The 21 member economies of APEC are: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, the U.S. and Vietnam. Three multilateral bodies have observer status: ASEAN, PECC and PIF.

<sup>135</sup> (Ravenhill, 2002, p. 6)

Institutionalization in APEC is weak. Decision making is by consensus, and there are no binding commitments or enforcement mechanisms.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless, APEC has shaped Asia-Pacific trade relations. Regarding geographical scope, it remains the most impressive multilateral trade project in the region. In 2011, the 21 members of APEC accounted for about 54 per cent of the world's economic output and 44 per cent of global trade.<sup>137</sup> However, the organization does certainly not have a monopoly on trade regulation. Bilateral as well as several multilateral initiative have spread over East Asia, which made some writers ironically name it the 'noodle bowl'.<sup>138</sup> In 2008, governments had concluded more than 40 PTA's and a similar number was under negotiation.<sup>139</sup>

## **China and APEC**

### **Rapprochement – The Taiwan issue**

At the time APEC was established in Canberra, Beijing was not invited. Apart from the fact that China's new multilateral diplomacy had not yet fully taken off at that time, the country was not invited because of domestic political reasons. The violent crackdown of the demonstrations on Beijing's Tiananmen Square, a few months earlier, had put the government in isolation. The nine countries that did join the starting negotiations had traditionally been on the side of the US during the Cold War, which probably influenced their decision to agree with the Washington's line of sanctioning China diplomatically for the Tiananmen incidents. However, the member economies came to realize soon that participation of China would increase the effectiveness of the organization strongly, as the trading ties of China rapidly opening economy had a core function in the region. Both China and the bigger economies of the APEC – with the exception of some ASEAN member states who feared too much of a leading role for Beijing – agreed that the organization would be incomplete without addressing the emerging Chinese market.

After China expressed openly that it would welcome the opportunity to become a member, the obstacles for membership were sorted out at the Seoul Summit of 1991. At the same time, Hong Kong and Taiwan joined the organization, which was a difficult but necessary compromise from China's side. The Chinese leadership has historically been fierce on the Taiwan issue, and every form of recognition of Taiwan as an independent territory would be vetoed. So, the question why Beijing accepted separate membership of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong in an intergovernmental organization is a challenging one. The move implied indeed that Beijing accepted the notion that Taiwan (which is regarded Chinese territory by the CCP) could function as an independent entity in international affairs. As we have observed earlier, questions of sovereignty are regarded naturally of 'indisputable nature'. That attitude is in line with the centralist tradition of the Chinese state.

An analysis of the accession process shows that the Taiwanese accession was indeed against China's will.<sup>140</sup> But in the admission process the three territories were planned to join APEC at the same time, a strategy from Taiwan and its trading partners.<sup>141</sup> China, as an acceding member, could not yet influence the decision making on the accession of other new members. If the

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<sup>136</sup> (Chiang, 2000, p. 178)

<sup>137</sup> (Reuters, 2011)

<sup>138</sup> (Kawai & Wignaraja, 2009)

<sup>139</sup> (Ravenhill, 2010, p. 182)

<sup>140</sup> (Chu, 2000, p. 9)

<sup>141</sup> (Chu, 2000, p. 11)

country were to block Taiwan, it would be denied membership itself as well. As Beijing regarded the costs of exclusion out of the multilateral trading initiative too high, it compromised over the issue. China did not want to be left out of the APEC-process, which was seen as “an important step to greater regional economic cooperation and development,” a Chinese official was quoted.<sup>142</sup> As a favour to Beijing, it was agreed that Taiwan could not be represented by the level of Head of State or for Foreign Minister amidst APEC. Moreover, the solution of using the term member *economy*, instead of member *state*, was considered acceptable. In fact, China has never had a problem with the different economic systems on the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan. For example the preservation of Hong Kong as a territory with a different economic system within the Chinese state has proven to be very successful, reflecting the pragmatic attitude of China’s leaders when it comes to economic issues.

What remains notable though is that in this case, Beijing’s engagement in multilateralism has led to a need to compromise on its own side. Apparently, in the early 90’s, its position was not yet strong enough to reject the bids for membership of Taiwan and Hong Kong. It can thus be concluded that in the economic domain China has been constrained in its behaviour by multilateral organizations. Because Beijing has sought large benefits from the membership of the international trading system, it had to make compromises. The Taiwanese membership of APEC is the only case investigated in this thesis in which China has been willing to compromise on its territorial sovereignty. It should be noted that Taiwan also succeeded to become member of the WTO thereafter. A plausible explanation for this is related to the idea of Peaceful Rise. One of the three core principles of this concept, put forward by Zheng Bijan in a speech at the 2003 Boao forum, is that China must develop institutional international relations in the economic domain. ‘China must unswervingly advance economic and political reforms centring on the promotion of socialist market economy (...) to ensure an institutional guarantee in its peaceful rise.’<sup>143</sup> The act of joining APEC together with Taiwan can be seen in this light. Even though it meant that Taiwan would be recognized as an independent economic entity, Beijing accepted this. The economic issues that are dealt with in economic organizations are not of vital interest for the survival of the state. In fact, specialists predict that if China and Taiwan were to reunite once, it would probably continue to function under different economic systems, similar to the Hong Kong case.<sup>144</sup> In practise, the dual membership within APEC already seems to have a modest positive effect on cross-strait relations. ‘Even though the relation between Taiwan and China amidst the APEC has been far from cordial, the forum has provided an atmosphere in which the two entities were prevented from perturbing each other.’<sup>145</sup>

### **Open regionalism**

The expansion of the APEC went surprisingly fast and was an important step for the organization. The fact that China was determined to show the world its new open attitude in economic relations was certainly helpful in this process. In turn, China – together with other Asian partners - advocated for limited institutionalization of the organization. In accordance with the preference for open governance, Beijing has positioned itself as one of the more

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<sup>142</sup> (Klintworth, 1995, p. 221)

<sup>143</sup> (Glaser & Medeiros, 2007, p. 294)

<sup>144</sup> (Narayan Das, 2011)

<sup>145</sup> (Lanteigne, 2005, p. 62)

conservative members, wanting to move slowly, voluntarily and flexibly.<sup>146</sup> In an interview in 1993, President Jiang Zemin noted that 'APEC should be an open, flexible and pragmatic forum for economic cooperation and a consultation mechanism rather than a closed, institutionalized economic bloc.<sup>147</sup> The leadership even managed to bring these operational preferences into a declaration following the Seoul Summit. The member economies committed themselves to 'the principle of mutual benefit, taking into account the differences in the stages of economic development and in the socio-political systems, and giving due consideration to the needs of developing economies; and a commitment to open dialogue and consensus-building, with equal respect for the views of all participants.'<sup>148</sup>

From the various declarations of the following yearly summits, Chinese influence can be observed. Members retain the right to override issues before they are added to the forum's agenda. So states can never be forced to implement an agreement they oppose, making consensus necessary. The official APEC web page on China's contributions within the organization, states that "China stresses the principles of voluntarism, flexibility and consensus-building".<sup>149</sup> Moreover, under China's influence the APEC tends to be more open to diversity. Countries do not need to change their domestic systems for any measure coming from APEC, as they are free to reach APEC goals in a gradual way according to their own preferences. Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichen stressed the APEC should not be exclusive in nature, and that protectionist measures towards non-members should be avoided.<sup>150</sup> Partly under Beijing's influence, APEC has become a forum that stipulates directions for countries to operate together in trade matters. Accordingly, the organization has limited implications for the sovereignty of its subjects.

The Chinese leadership has thus used many opportunities to stress that APEC should be designed according to Beijing's preferred governance. The US, the other heavyweight partner in the organization, preferred to apply a set of hard rules and agreements, but nevertheless agreed with the Chinese model of international governance. The latter was strongly supported by the ASEAN countries.<sup>151</sup> However, it must be noted that China has supported APEC proposals on trade and investment liberalization. As with other proposals, support for these APEC-regulations can be traced back to a domestic perspective. International regulations perform as a motor for liberalization of the internal economy, as the regulations strengthen the position of economic reformers within the country.

From the scarce sources available on China's future intentions within APEC, it can be derived that Beijing is not interested in developing the organization further. Contemporary evidence shows that in the new century, Beijing has become less active. Even though the member economies have agreed to establish a free trade zone by 2020, real progress towards this goal has not been made. In contrast, the metaphor of the noodle bowl has become more applicable. For example, during the most recent APEC Summit – Honolulu November 2011 - a group of APEC-members has set up the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement to realize more ambitious trade goals. China complained that it was not invited to join the talks, but in fact it never showed

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<sup>146</sup> (Harris, 1997, p. 9)

<sup>147</sup> (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1993)

<sup>148</sup> (APEC, 1991)

<sup>149</sup> (APEC, 2009)

<sup>150</sup> (Lanteigne, 2005, p. 66)

<sup>151</sup> (Lanteigne, 2005, p. 85)

interest to participate. At the same time, bilateral trade agreements are being concluded with individual and grouped members of APEC, such as Chile, New Zealand and ASEAN. It thus seems that while Beijing continues to support the main goal of APEC –reducing trade barriers – it prefers to remain in the driver’s seat, where it does not have to compromise with other countries.

### **Stepping stone**

Having noted that China has limited its engagement to APEC, one can wonder why Beijing was eager to join the forum before. The linkage with WTO membership is a probable explanation for the desire to join APEC. Only three years after accession to APEC, Beijing revealed to the other member economies that it desired to enter the global trading system by becoming GATT/WTO member. APEC forums provided occasions and opportunities for promoting the entry.<sup>152</sup> China’s main goal during APEC summits from 1994 until 1999 was to lobby for access into the GATT/WTO global trading system. Officials used the opportunity of the summits to operate in bilateral talks, both on a lower-official level as well as on the ministerial level. For example, one of its efforts was a meeting of Chinese Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, Wu Yi, with Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto in 1995.<sup>153</sup> On that same informal APEC-summit in Osaka, a declaration that indirectly supported China’s GATT/WTO membership was released, emphasizing the members’ ‘resolute opposition to an inward-looking trading bloc that would pert from the pursuit of global free trade.’ ‘We commit ourselves to firmly maintaining open regional cooperation. We reaffirm our determination to see APEC take the lead in strengthening the open multilateral trading system. We trust that enlarged participation by APEC economies in the WTO would facilitate greater regional cooperation.’<sup>154</sup> WTO accession would mean an important final step towards membership of the economic international community. Eventually, China succeeded to enter the WTO in September 2001, after a long process of negotiations, mainly with APEC partners.

These diplomatic successes were not just achieved because the goodwill of other member economies towards China. From the moment of its accession, China brought several ‘carrots’ in play in order to create a positive view among its APEC partners. A first important step was the creation of a convertible currency in 1994, making it suitable for international trade. Furthermore, reforms in the tax system and the rules for inward Foreign Direct Investment were made, in order to please countries that saw opportunities in the Chinese market. Tariffs on more than 4000 items were cut at once in 1994.<sup>155</sup> The positive attitude towards Southeast Asian countries in the currency crisis of 1997 also created support among many members; China chose not to devaluate the Renminbi, which would have been beneficial to China’s exports but would be of great harm to the distressed economies.<sup>156</sup> It also extended aid and interest-free loans during the crisis.<sup>157</sup> In this light, China came to be seen as partner instead of a possible enemy to be looked at with suspicion.

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<sup>152</sup> (Nakatsuji, 2001, p. 19)

<sup>153</sup> (Nakatsuji, 2001, p. 20)

<sup>154</sup> (APEC, 1995)

<sup>155</sup> (Lanteigne, 2005, p. 68)

<sup>156</sup> (Jaques, 2009, p. 278)

<sup>157</sup> (Wang Zhengyi, 2000, p. 542)



Using the English School perspective from the fourth chapter, China's engagement within APEC provides several insights. First, Beijing's desire to become part of international society is clearly reflected in this case. Internal changes made that the country opened up for the world economy. As US secretary of state Colin Powell stated in 2000, 'China is no longer an enemy of capitalism'.<sup>158</sup> The trading system of the world economy had become institutionalized in the WTO framework and membership of it became an essential condition for joining the 'society of states' in that domain. Moreover, adapting to the norms of this 'society of states' was essential in order to become part of the global economic system. APEC and WTO were normative frameworks to which China could adapt.

As explained above, APEC membership can be considered an intermediate step towards this bigger goal. The shift from an isolationist policy towards a participating one was informed by internal politics. After the CCP promoted a system of 'capitalism with Chinese characteristics', the legitimacy of the party has depended mainly on economic growth. The Chinese leadership often stresses that development ambitions cannot be achieved without an outward looking and trade-oriented approach. Apparently, the importance of that mission makes it necessary for the leadership to compromise on key issues, even on the hyper sensitive issue of Taiwan.

Other factors play a role as well when it comes to Beijing's engagement in the organization. Once membership of the international trade community was acquainted, APEC became less relevant to achieve policy goals. At the same time, an increasingly powerful China has had more opportunities to advance its own distinctive worldviews on international affairs in the system.<sup>159</sup> When China become aware of its major power status within Asia, the influence from the US related to its APEC membership became to be seen as less desirable. A strong indicator for this statement is the birth of several other trade regional economic initiatives, such as ASEAN+3 and the Asian Monetary Fund (AMF), which all excluded the United States.<sup>160</sup> Within APEC, endorsing 'open regionalism' was a strategy to limit US influence in the region. While one cannot equal this situation with the Sinocentrism that existed in the days of imperial China, it is a fact that the new powerful status of China within Asia is a return to a long lasting situation. Looking at Beijing's activities in this case study, this needed to be reflected in institutional relations as well.

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<sup>158</sup> (Johnston, 2008, p. 43)

<sup>159</sup> (Zhang, 2009, p. 32)

<sup>160</sup> (Yu, 2003, pp. 283-284)

## Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

### Introduction

During the long history of the Chinese empire, its western borders have often been subject to conflict. The nomad people that lived in this region were considered barbarians under the Tribute System, and therefore could not enjoy the same diplomatic stability as the Confucianist-like states at China's eastern and southern periphery.<sup>161</sup> After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the relations with the western part of its periphery were characterized by border clashes for decades. Today, some 60 years later, tensions between the former Communist states in Central Asia have eased significantly. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an important institutional factor in the regulation of relations in this region. Comprising both the world's largest (Russia) and most populated country (China), the organization provides a framework for regional security, economic and cultural cooperation. China has played a key role in the development of this multilateral institution that established a constructive partnership with neighbouring post-Soviet Republics and 'the best relations with Russia China has ever seen.'<sup>162</sup> Because China is a driving force behind the organization, the SCO is "an essential test case for measuring current Chinese approaches to international-level security organizations".<sup>163</sup>

After the emergence of the new Central Asian states, Chinese leaders were eager to develop good relations with the new countries before these countries would establish relations with Taiwan.<sup>164</sup> A high delegation headed by China's minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, Li Lanqing, visited the capitals of these nations to sign agreements that formed the base of bilateral relations.<sup>165</sup> Subsequently, government delegations were invited to Beijing and close contacts between leaders began to emerge, even though the heritage from the constant disagreements between the two Communist blocks of the Soviet Union and China was still present. During the Cold War, they had fought border disputes almost on a daily base. Now, a new era in international relations brought the two countries to new strategic priorities. Therefore, they wanted to resolve the issue around the 7000 kilometre Sino-Russian border.

Thus, the SCO originated as an entity to resolve border disputes. In 1996, the presidents of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed a treaty in Shanghai consisting of measures meant to reduce military tensions around the border regions. To give the cooperation a more structural character, the Shanghai Five mechanism was established, the secretariat was assigned a permanent building in Shanghai and it was decided that the five countries would come together on a yearly basis.<sup>166</sup> In 2001, the organization was officially named Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Over the years, a number of countries have established official relations with it. India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan have been granted observer status, while Belarus and Sri Lanka are dialogue partners. Incorporating a large variety of political systems, the SCO is one of the few organizations not influenced or promoted by countries from the West, which is usually the case with multilateral bodies.

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<sup>161</sup> (Kang, 2010, p. 593)

<sup>162</sup> (Pan, 2008, p. 237)

<sup>163</sup> (Aris, 2009, p. 153)

<sup>164</sup> (Gungwu & Yongnian, 2008, p. 238)

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> (Jaques, 2009, p. 277)

## China and SCO

### **Rapprochement: promoting cooperation in Central Asia**

A remarkable difference with China's participation in other multilateral initiatives is that it has joined the SCO from its inception. Unlike other security organizations such as the ARF, in which China has been largely content to play the role of observer rather than shaper, Beijing has consistently been at the forefront of the SCO and has worked to extent the focus of the organization from border related issues to anti-terrorism and greater political and economic ties.<sup>167</sup>

The organization stresses fiercely that all countries have different internal systems and histories, which should not prevent them from cooperating in areas where that is possible. In the Charter of the SCO it is officially stated that the member states: '[p]roceed from the spirit of mutual trust, mutual advantage, equality, mutual consultations, respect for cultural variety and aspiration for joint development.'<sup>168</sup> Even though such rhetoric is easy to agree upon during an international summit, the words reflect a pattern in Chinese foreign policy in which international organizations are a tool to harmonize relations gradually. As noted before, coming a long way from the unstable relations in the region during the Cold War, this is a remarkable paradigm shift.

The process of dialogue and consultation within the organization has been labelled 'Shanghai Spirit'. Beijing speaks of 'a new type of multilateral institution in the post-Cold War environment'. 'The SCO is not a military alliance directed against third parties, but a process of dialogue and consultation on an equal basis, and a mechanism for enhancing regional cooperation in political and economic spheres.' Russian officials have confirmed to share this view.<sup>169</sup> In order to come to a more comprehensive framework that will eventually contribute to the larger goal of peace, stability and prosperity, Beijing has sought more institutionalization to promote closer cooperation. This has also led to more practical forms of cooperation. An important example is an agreement signed by the Ministers of Defence in 2007 that arranges joint military exercises on a yearly basis.<sup>170</sup> The most recent joint military exercise to combat terrorism and separatism took place in Xinjiang on May 6, 2011.<sup>171</sup>

Looking at the cooperative attitude of the other nations, the structural power of the Chinese leadership in the organization is quite large. Even though the smaller nations have quite something to lose when they cooperate with a dominant neighbour, they have generally been cooperative. Why exactly these small states are willing to play a constructive role within the SCO is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the 'carrots' that China could offer them have certainly helped. A good example of this is the construction of an extensive railroad through China, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, enhancing economic development of the region.<sup>172</sup> Besides, the countries are offered loans or investments, which make good relations with China more attractive. It can be concluded that China is dedicated to let the organization function according to its preferences, and therefore is willing to use its power in non-military means, usually of economic nature. With this generous leadership, it hopes to create support for a longer lasting

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<sup>167</sup> (Gungwu & Yongnian, 2008, pp. 246-249)

<sup>168</sup> (SCO, 2009)

<sup>169</sup> (Yuan, 2010, p. 862)

<sup>170</sup> (HRIC, 2010)

<sup>171</sup> (Rose, 2011)

<sup>172</sup> (Eurasia Monitor, 2010)

relationship with the Central Asian countries which will in turn be beneficial for stability in the region.

### **The three evils**

The environment in which the SCO operates is different from the ASEAN and the APEC. Central Asia is sometimes called the 'second Middle East', and indeed, the regions share similarities.<sup>173</sup> First, the vast reserves of gas and oil are attractive resources for energy-hungry countries. A stable energy supply is essential for the development of the Chinese economy. Certainly after the US invasion in Iraq had wiped out China's earlier oil deals with the Saddam government. "To a great extent, the Iraq war was a turning point in China's new energy strategy. China realized that it was too risky to rely on a single region for its critical energy import, especially a region with chronic instability".<sup>174</sup>

Second, the population in Central Asia is predominantly Muslim. This is of extra importance to China because it wants to control the minority group of the Uighur in the province of Xinjiang. 15 to 20 million Chinese Muslims live in this region, and the authorities in Beijing have growing concerns that separatist aspirations will jeopardize the territorial integrity<sup>175</sup>. For example, fears have been expressed that Uighurs and Kyrgyzstani would try to connect with like-minded groupings such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. In turn, this organization is being linked to fundamentalist groupings in Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda.<sup>176</sup> Because of this, the organization experienced momentum after the terrorist attacks of September 11. Islamic fundamentalism and the War on Terror joined energy security as one of the most important themes in international politics.

Beijing has put forward in an early stage that the SCO should be used against the dangers coming from these non-traditional security issues. The so-called 'three evils' are important in this respect: terrorism, separatism and extremism. Those dangers evolve from the contentious environment in Central Asia in which the Muslim minorities play an important role. Even though the opening up of China has eased many foreign policy issues, the territorial integrity of China has remained an area in which Beijing has not wanted to make concessions. Accordingly, it has taken up a leading role within the SCO to stimulate measures safeguarding its territories on the Western border.<sup>177</sup> As the other member states also feared uprisings from groupings in the area, agreements to combat these problems in the border regions were made easily. Most important in this case is the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, signed in 2001 at the same date as the official establishment of the SCO.<sup>178</sup>

### **Security Regionalism**

As security issues in the Central Asian region are of non-traditional nature, one needs to look into the dynamics of this region to understand what drives the SCO. Compared to China's stable security relations on its Eastern border, the Western areas have always been subject to rivalry among various groups over the territory. As Kang notes, these areas lived in a different international society. The Confucian, 'Sinicized' states lived in a system under a different set of

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<sup>173</sup> (Zhu, 2010, p. 112)

<sup>174</sup> (Zhu, 2010, p. 114)

<sup>175</sup> (De Haas, 2011)

<sup>176</sup> (De Haas & Van der Putten, 2007, p. 210)

<sup>177</sup> (Yuan, 2010, p. 861)

<sup>178</sup> (De Haas & Van der Putten, 2007, p. 8)

rules enjoying far more stable and peaceful relations with China. The other system regulated the relations with the 'uncivilized', nomadic world, in the west and north.<sup>179</sup>

Even though the modern security situation in the western regions of China incorporates different aspects, the different identities still exist. Beijing has a policy of uniformity in the country. There is for example only one official language while China is in fact linguistically quite diverse. In more areas, uniformity is not always reality. The borders of the state in the western provinces do not coincide with the peoples living there. Hence a tension between the modern conception of Westphalian sovereignty and the traditional 'lack of internationalness' can be observed. For territorial integrity, one needs a clear defined border. But that border can be problematic if it has historically not developed as a differentiating line between one area and another. As described in the historical overview, the status of the nomadic people in western China varied constantly from barbarians to acknowledged subjects in the Tribute System. Never were they given the same status as the Sinicized states in the Tribute System, such as Korea.<sup>180</sup> In the Westphalian state system that China has adopted so convincingly after the century of humiliation, states are considered entirely separate units. There is no space for a somewhat vague range from one 'state' to another, as it was the case under the old situation with its 'lack of internationalness'. However, looking at the separatist movements in the area, China has realized that border issues are not solved by insisting on the absolute status of the border.

Multilateralist regionalization provides a solution here. By consulting each other, the countries can develop ways to control issues that are beyond the reach of their borders. The joint military exercises are an example of this. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has now trained to combat separatist terrorism in cooperation with neighbouring nations outside its own territory. Without regionalization, part of the defence of China's territorial integrity would be in the hands of neighbours, as the separatist movements not limit themselves to just one state.

As Safiullin states, 'security in Central Asia should be understood in the context of interactions between the states of the region indicating that the member states of the SCO are considered primary actors in addressing any regional security problems.'<sup>181</sup> As security concerns on the domestic, regional and extra-regional levels are highly interlinked, the interface of these connections is particularly important for understanding security practices of certain countries.

This can be observed in the security structure of SCO. Although the units are strictly sovereign, they nevertheless seek to find common solutions for regional problems. For the leaders of the member states, sovereignty is a feature of national identity. It also characterizes their approach to political power more generally, which helps to explain their reluctance to cooperate deeply on a regional basis. As Allison states, 'these leaderships maintain centralized state institutions and focus on political control rather than on political negotiation.'<sup>182</sup> In other words, the leaders prefer a levelled playing field with equal sovereign entities, instead of a hierarchical organization that has direct influence over the member states.

Accordingly, it is unlikely that the SCO will develop as a powerful block under Chinese leadership in the global arena. Comparing it with a collective defence structure like NATO, it does not possess the capability to wage conventional wars against non-member countries.

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<sup>179</sup> (Kang, 2010, p. 595)

<sup>180</sup> (Kang, 2010, p. 618)

<sup>181</sup> (Safiullin, 2010, p. 52)

<sup>182</sup> (Allison, 2008)

Neither is there a declaration similar to article 5 the NATO charter, which states that an attack against one member is considered an attack against all.<sup>183</sup> The organization lacks dedicated military forces, an integrated command structure, or a combined planning staff.<sup>184</sup> It is more likely that China, as a leader in SCO, will continue to encourage regional development in order to reduce tensions and enhance security. In terms of the discussion on peaceful rise and responsible stakeholder, China's engagement within the SCO is a well-directed effort to take up a more responsible role. To repeat the words of Robert Zoellick, China would need to endorse a larger interpretation of national interest, in order to care for the functioning of the international system. Although the member states of the SCO do not have the best international reputation concerning political rights, the cooperative attitude in the forum helps to shape an image of a China that is willing to think about long term international interests.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization can thus be seen as the international tool of Beijing to ensure its territorial integrity in the western areas. The increased dangers of extremism, separatism and terrorism in the Central Asia have led to an intensified interest of Beijing to the Central Asian region. Taking up a leading role, China has managed to shape the organization to its preferences. A more proactive role than usual has led to a probably durable relationship which is set on Beijing's terms. Even though the institutionalization of the SCO remains rather weak, China now has taken the first steps towards establishing a like-minded community in its backyard.

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<sup>183</sup> (NATO, 1949)

<sup>184</sup> (Weitz, 2011)

## Conclusion

China's contemporary rise is taking place in an institutionalized international order. Since Deng Xiaoping came into power in 1979 and initiated the strategy of opening up the country and its economy, China has become an active member of it. In the 80's by giving up its strictly isolationist position, in the 90's by adapting to fit into the institutions of the global order, and in the beginning of this century by showing an increased confidence on the international stage. During the same time, a surprisingly large number of multilateral initiatives have emerged in Asia. As one writer wittily notes: 'For more than a decade, creating multilateral forums has rivalled badminton as the leading indoor sport of Asian academics, think tanks and governments.'<sup>185</sup> The case studies in this research are products of that development. They are an important pillar in China's renewed foreign policy, which makes the country more connected to world and a leader in the region.

Comparing the findings from the case studies, it becomes clear that multilateral organizations in Asia are state centred. That is, supranational elements are generally kept to the minimum. Apparently, the participating states see the benefits of cooperation, but do not want to be bound by rules coming from a structure above them. The concept of sovereignty is thus strictly applied. The fact that China normally does not compromise on sovereignty characterizes multilateral relations in Asia.

The very limited application of supranational elements makes that the influence of the respective organizations is rather weak. None of the organizations is capable of deciding by majority or qualified majority. Such is against the preference of most participating nations. However, Chinese officials continue to stress that these loose relations are in fact beneficial for cooperation. 'Since East Asia does not have the strong legalistic foundation as Europe and does not have a clear power structure as North America, East Asian multilateral regionalism is primarily a process-oriented one: More often than not, keeping the process going is the most important work. We must remember that the process itself is of great significance, for the process of building an East Asian Community is valuable for confidence building and suspicion reduction, for norm making and learning, and for expansion of common interests and convergence of expectations'.<sup>186</sup>

In the case studies, that loose form of governance was labelled with three different terms: 'the ASEAN-way', 'open regionalism' (for APEC) and 'the Shanghai Spirit'. Basically, there is no real difference between them, as they all involve consensus building decision making with evolving multilateralism. So, agreement of all participating member states is necessary while the institutionalization and scope of the organizations tends to increase over time. Only for APEC it was observed that Beijing showed a reduced enthusiasm for extending its activities.

Apart from the reluctance against supranational elements, another aspect of sovereignty is important in this respect: territorial integrity. In all the case studies, the scope of Chinese jurisdiction is an issue. For ASEAN, it is the conflict in the South China Sea, for APEC, it is the status of Taiwan and the SCO deals with border issues in western China. Remarkably, in all these cases the organizations are at the same time a cause and a solution for the territorial questions.

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<sup>185</sup> (Feigenbaum, 2011)

<sup>186</sup> (Qin Y., 2007)

For example, APEC and WTO membership of both Taiwan and China have caused a lot of discussion, but at the same time the organizations now function as a forum to regulate cross-strait economic relations. This provides part of an answer why China is active in regional multilateral organizations. The nations in the region still need to sort out several territorial issues. Now that economic development is considered goal number one of the CCP, a conflict is regarded against its interest. The organizations are an effective tool to harmonize and develop peaceful relations while the claims do not need to be given up.

The limited notion of multilateralism does not prevent the development of regional organizations in Asia. In all the three case studies, the member states share interests that they try to promote with the help of the organization. There is an inevitably increasing *interdependence*, caused by China's policy to be involved in relationships with the outside world. However, this development always conflicts with the emphasis on *independence*. China, together with most nations in Asia, highly values its rights as an independent entity within the international system. This is probably informed by a recent history of foreign influence, notably the century of humiliation.

Therefore, only part of the shared interests of the participating nations in multilateral activities lead to real policies. The observations from the case studies make clear that this is mainly the case in specific areas. For example, the military exercises under the SCO framework are a specific means for the specific issue of the separatist movements in western China. For the other two organizations, ASEAN and APEC, an important incentive to join was the fear to miss the boat. Beijing saw participation in this institutional order as essential for its development and was therefore willing to change domestic policies, such as arranging a limited convertible renminbi. In these cases, interdependence prevailed over independence, as if it was a necessary symptom of membership of the international community.

Referring back to the theoretical chapters of this thesis, there is not yet a Chinese school of International Relations Theory. However, Chinese history and current practices can inform modern theory, so that they better reflect the modern multipolar world in which China is growing up. To learn from this analysis, one needs to look at the differences and similarities. It turns out that Chinese behaviour in multilateral organizations is – surprisingly – largely informed by Westphalian institutions. Even though increased the engagement in regional multilateral organizations indicates an important shift in policy from the isolationist era under Mao, the international system continues to consist of nations with undisputable sovereignty. Interdependence is considered necessary sometimes and can then be regulated through multilateral organizations, but preferably not with binding or supranational elements. Accordingly, China has sought to keep the institutions at a low profile concerning supranational elements.

On the other hand, the enthusiasm for membership of the many forums on the Asian continent indicates that China supports the movement towards regionalization. In Asia, where the Chinese dominance is considered a return to the old situation, Beijing has adopted a leading role in all the case studies investigated. Only in APEC has it become less active after the underlying goal of WTO-membership was accomplished. Regional organizations provide a platform for China to regulate relations with neighbouring countries peacefully and gradually. Reflecting the pragmatic attitude in foreign policy, the Chinese leadership has learned that cooperation can be



beneficial if there is consensus among member states in an organization. Moreover, in the process of China's rise, it is increasingly confident to take the lead in those situations.

Even though a strong China, surrounded with less powerful neighbours, is a reflection of its past during the tributary system, it would be a step too far to conclude that China seeks to restore the old systematic situation. For this, the internalization of the norms of 'Western' international society, mainly sovereignty, has established too deeply. China, as well as the other member states of the various organizations in the region, values sovereignty highly. Therefore, it is unlikely that the process of regionalization within Asia will bring fundamental changes to international governance in the region. Thus, even though thinking outside the 'Westphalian box' can increase understanding about Chinese foreign policy, it can be concluded that China currently strictly applies the principles of Westphalian sovereignty. Only when a high interdependence coincides with strong domestic interests does it allow for influence from international organizations. Examples include the domestic economic reform that was necessary for WTO entry, and the military cooperation in the SCO which needs to secure the western border regions.

The rise of China towards global great power status is unique in the sense that this has never happened before in an institutionalized world. Institutions play an important role in this development, notably when it comes to the relationship with the United States. The Chinese leadership tries to limit the involvement of the United States in regional affairs, whether it is the conflict of the South Chinese Sea or multilateral trade agreements. While the military capabilities of China are still far behind those of the US, the institutional environment is an area in which the spheres of influence are clearly reflected. In regional organizations, Beijing already possesses much structural power and acts no longer as a norm taker. In all the case studies, the increased influence of China has limited the role of the US. ASEAN started partly as an anti-communist bloc but is now an association of countries that prefer to do foreign politics in the ASEAN-Way. APEC, the forum in which the US is an active member, has become less relevant as Beijing has opposed institutionalization and further development. The SCO is an entirely non-western organization that provides alternatives for the dominant military presence of America in Central Asia. What evolves is a balance of power game with influence in regional organization determining the degree of power. In the global arena, multilateralism is an extension of Beijing's strategy to prevent hegemony in the world.

US scholar Lucian Pye once famously said that China was not a country but 'a civilization pretending to be a state.'<sup>187</sup> That may have been right at that time, but today the country has been transformed into a modern state that plays an active role in international forums. Being adapted to an institutionalized world and it is now able to help shaping it. Even though the leadership in Beijing continues to decide to what extent international organization can influence domestic policy, China's membership of organizations in the region is an important tool to regulate its foreign policy.

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<sup>187</sup> (Ching, 2011)

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