



ANALYSIS

# Chinese worldviews and China's foreign policy

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

China's growing assertiveness, particularly in the South China Sea, has resulted in greater scrutiny of Chinese intentions and led to a more intense debate about how the United States and its allies should respond. For some, the motives for China's international behaviour are simply those of any emerging — or in China's case, re-emerging — power. However, to gain a more nuanced understanding of what is motivating Chinese behaviour it is necessary to examine the narratives that underpin Chinese worldviews and China's foreign policy behaviour.

Four key narratives are used by Chinese leaders and elites to justify Chinese foreign policy actions and interpret the world: the century of humiliation; the view of cultural characteristics as being inherent and unchanging; the idea of history as destiny; and notions of filial piety and familial obligation as they apply both inside China and to China's neighbours. While these narratives are not the only things that shape Chinese foreign policy, when considered with other factors influencing China's actions in the world, they provide a more nuanced guide to China's aims and ambitions. This knowledge can also help shape more effective responses to China, both in the short and long term.

*The American approach to policy is pragmatic; China's is conceptual. America has never had a powerful threatening neighbor; China has never been without a powerful adversary on its borders. Americans hold that every problem has a solution; Chinese think that each solution is an admission ticket to a new set of problems. Americans seek an outcome responding to immediate circumstances; Chinese concentrate on evolutionary change. Americans outline an agenda of practical 'deliverable' items; Chinese set out general principles and analyze where they will lead. Chinese thinking is shaped in part by Communism but embraces a traditionally Chinese way of thought to an increasing extent; neither is intuitively familiar to Americans.*

Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, 2014<sup>1</sup>

Since the world became conscious of China's growing economic power there has been a debate about what role the country will come to play in international affairs. In recent years that debate has gained a sharper edge as China has become more assertive under President Xi Jinping. China's actions in the South and East China Seas, its creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and its pursuit of the One Belt, One Road maritime and continental trade route strategy have all led to a more intense scrutiny of Chinese intentions.

The debate about what role China wants to play in the world is connected with an equally important debate on how the world should respond to China. This too has gained a sharper edge. After what seemed like a prolonged period of hand-wringing, the United States has responded to China's recent island-building activities in the South China Sea by undertaking a freedom of navigation operation. At stake is not just the future of a few coral atolls. Washington's response to Beijing on this and other critical issues will define the character of US–China relations, and therefore the future of Asia-Pacific security, for years to come.

Most analysts agree that China has become more assertive in recent years, particularly in the South China Sea. What is debated is why this change in behaviour has taken place and what to do about it. The motives for China's international behaviour are often assumed to be similar to those of any emerging — or in China's case, re-emerging — power. According to this view, the interests and behaviour of the Chinese state, like any other state, are predetermined by its position within the international system. By this logic, as China rises it will naturally want to dislodge the current pre-eminent world power, the

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United States. At the same time, the United States will fear China's rise and act to prevent it. This dynamic has been referred to as the 'Thucydides trap'.<sup>2</sup>

What is often lost in such analyses is the extent to which China's own worldviews play a role in shaping its foreign policy behaviour. This seems an important omission. It may be the case, as Hugh White, Professor of Strategic Studies at the Australian National University argues, that China wants primacy "not because they're communist, not even because they're Chinese, it's because they're normal," and therefore, just like the Persians, Athenians, Spartans, Romans, and Americans, they will want what these other civilisations have wanted.<sup>3</sup> However, this ignores the fact that the type of primacy that each of those civilisations exercised was very different and reflected particular cultural, historical, and political underpinnings.

In seeking to explain China's actions, the importance of understanding Chinese worldviews is sometimes acknowledged, but often dismissed.<sup>4</sup> As the quote above underlines, however, even for Henry Kissinger, the doyen of Realist foreign policy practitioners, differences in worldviews do matter, even if one can disagree with Kissinger's particular depiction of how China sees the world. Understanding China's worldviews matters because it provides a guide to *what* China is doing and *why*. It also helps the policymakers of other countries to understand what impact their responses to Chinese behaviour today will have on Chinese attitudes and behaviour in the future.

The purpose of this Analysis is to shed greater light on the *what* and the *why*. It will do this by examining four key narratives used by Chinese leaders and elites to explain Chinese foreign policy and interpret the world: the century of humiliation; the view of cultural characteristics as being inherent and unchanging; the idea of history as destiny; and notions of filial piety and familial obligation as they apply both inside China and to China's neighbours. The Analysis explores how these narratives are reflected in recent Chinese foreign policy actions and initiatives, and the way that they interact with other key factors shaping Chinese foreign policy. It concludes by examining how a knowledge of these narratives might help shape more effective responses to Chinese foreign policy actions and initiatives.

## CHINESE WORLDVIEWS

Before turning to the narratives, three qualifications need to be borne in mind when considering how Chinese worldviews shape Chinese foreign policy.

First, the ultimate aim of Chinese foreign policy, indeed of all Chinese policy, is to keep the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in power. This means that the four narratives outlined in this Analysis are, to differing

degrees, used or reinforced by the Party-state<sup>5</sup> as a means to maintain its legitimacy. It also means that the narratives can be modified, emphasised or downplayed to suit the circumstances and interests of the Party-state at any given time. However, this does not mean that the narratives have no inherent value or power. In fact, it is because the Party-state promotes or uses these narratives that they have such resonance. The deliberate way in which the Party-state uses socialising mechanisms, particularly in the education system, to inculcate social and political messages in people's everyday lives means that the narratives they choose to promote become the parameters within which foreign policy actions can be explained and justified.<sup>6</sup> They also serve as parameters within which the actions that other countries take in response to China can be interpreted and portrayed.

Second, it is impossible to tell with certainty how much the Chinese leadership or broader population genuinely believes these narratives. While the Party-state controls information and dictates national narratives, China is not a totalitarian state. Increasing numbers of Chinese travel abroad and have access to outside information. At times the Chinese public will become vocal and even violent on particular foreign policy issues, as with the anti-Japanese protests in 2012 in response to Japanese activists landing on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. Within Chinese foreign policy circles, multiple views exist, with varying effects on Chinese policy and its implementation.<sup>7</sup> Ministries jockey for influence and funding, and sometimes have competing agendas and interests.<sup>8</sup> As already noted however, in part, whether Chinese actually believe these narratives is not as important as how the narratives define the parameters for Chinese foreign policy and interpret others' behaviour. It is also true that these narratives are not simply created out of thin air. For the Party-state to use them, they have to resonate with the broader population. Even if it is not possible to determine the full extent to which Chinese elites and the broader population believe these narratives, it is reasonable to conclude that they believe them to some degree, and that they are widely shared.

Third, while it seems self-evident, it is worth emphasising that these narratives are not the only things that shape Chinese foreign policy. As the discussion below will underline, Chinese leaders may share the same long-term foreign policy aims, but will emphasise different means to achieve those same ends. It is certainly the case, for example, that as China's economic and military power has grown, its ability to pursue and protect its interests has also increased. It is, however, difficult to determine how much one factor or another shapes particular foreign policy actions. This is hard enough to do in a country with an open political system such as the United States. It is much harder in a country with decision-making processes as opaque as that of China. Nevertheless, while it is difficult to determine exactly what role these worldviews play in shaping Chinese foreign policy, this is not a reason to

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ignore them. Understanding the narratives outlined below will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the factors driving Chinese foreign policy and will help policymakers to better interpret and respond to Chinese actions.

### THE CENTURY OF HUMILIATION

The foreign policy narrative that is most widely understood by policymakers and observers outside China is the century of humiliation (also known as the hundred years of humiliation). The term is widely used among Chinese policymakers as shorthand to describe how China's sense of its central role in world affairs was weakened by Western incursions that began with the Opium Wars in the 1840s. Chinese often draw on humiliation narratives as a starting point for their discussions of how China should interact with other nations. As far back as 1959, a US commentator noted:

“The Chinese have one very broad generalisation about their own history: they think in terms of ‘up to the Opium war’ and ‘after the Opium war’; in other words, a century of humiliation and weakness to be expunged.”<sup>9</sup>

While the narrative of humiliation has existed since early in the twentieth century, it has been particularly cultivated by the Party-state over the past 25 years. Since the patriotic education campaign of the early 1990s, which emerged in the aftermath of the violent confrontation with protestors in Tiananmen Square in 1989,<sup>10</sup> the Party-state has emphasised a humiliation and victimisation narrative that lays the blame for China's suffering firmly at the feet of the West.<sup>11</sup> The handover of Hong Kong to Beijing in 1997 was another critical moment in the re-emergence of the humiliation narrative. More recently, this is seen in the development of so-called ‘red tourism’. Historic sites such as the Old Summer Palace in Beijing display signs — in English as well as Chinese — that remind the visitor how glorious the site had been before the Anglo-French forces destroyed it.<sup>12</sup> China's Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2011–2015) made special mention of the importance of rigorously developing red tourism (红色旅游 *hongse luyou*), as a way of strengthening patriotism.<sup>13</sup>

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The constant references within China to this period of weakness in China's history seem peculiar given the growth in Chinese economic and military power. According to GDP measurements, today China is the second-largest economy in the world, behind the United States and in front of Japan. Militarily, China's strength ranks third, behind the United States and Russia.<sup>14</sup> However, accounts of weakness and loss are a critical aspect of the unified national identity that the Party-state uses to ensure stability and CCP legitimacy.<sup>15</sup> The past humiliation suffered by China means that it must now be strong and unified against what are described as ‘foreign incursions’, whether territorial, economic, political,

social or cultural. Furthermore, it is argued that only by having a stable and united country can China resume its 'former, and rightful, position' as a 'peace-loving, harmony-promoting, and internationally respected nation-state'. These views also have an important political purpose, as they ultimately work to support the broader narrative that the CCP is the only entity that could have successfully led China from its former weakness, defeating the Japanese, and ushering in the 'new China'.

#### CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS ARE UNCHANGING

A second and less familiar narrative to outside observers of China is the widely shared view that cultural characteristics are inherent and unchanging. While not a formal narrative in the same way the century of humiliation is, it is a commonly held attitude that is expressed in everything from official statements to private conversations.

One key way this narrative affects how China relates to the world is the belief that China has always been an inherently peaceful actor and has never been aggressively expansionist. It is argued that because China has behaved this way in the past it can be expected to act in the same way in the future. As President Xi Jinping set out in a speech in Germany in 2014:

"The Chinese nation is a peace-loving nation. And the most profound pursuit of a nation has its origin in the national character formed through generations. The Chinese civilisation, with a history of over 5000 years, has always cherished peace. The pursuit of peace, amity and harmony is an integral part of the Chinese character which runs deep in the blood of the Chinese people. In ancient times, the following axioms were already popular in China: 'A warlike state, however big it may be, will eventually perish.' 'Peace is of paramount importance.' 'Seek harmony without uniformity.' 'Replace weapons of war with gifts of jade and silk.' 'Bring prosperity to the nation and security to the people.' 'Foster friendship with neighbours.' 'Achieve universal peace.' These axioms have been passed down in China from generation to generation. China was long one of the most powerful countries in the world. Yet it never engaged in colonialism or aggression. The pursuit of peaceful development represents the peace-loving cultural tradition of the Chinese nation over the past several thousand years, a tradition that we have inherited and carried forward."<sup>16</sup>

This view is reflected in the work of leading Chinese international relations scholars such as Peking University's Li Anshan who argues that contemporary and future Chinese foreign policy is an extension of the historical Confucian ideals of benevolence (仁 *ren*), forbearance (恕 *shu*), trustfulness (信 *xin*), and equality (平等 *pingdeng*).<sup>17</sup> As one Chinese university student argued to the author in Beijing:

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“Because China has always pursued an independent foreign policy of peace, China hopes that we can have a long-term peaceful coexistence with other countries. And we want to get a peaceful and stable international environment. Our country’s implementation of this policy is solemn, sincere and will not change in the long term, because it conforms to Chinese people’s fundamental beliefs. Peace-loving Chinese people abhor aggression very much and will never impose such suffering on others.”<sup>18</sup>

Many historians would take issue with an account of China’s history that emphasised its peacefulness. China’s explanations for its foreign policy need to be viewed critically. What is significant, however, is not whether China is inherently peaceful. What matters is the extent to which the Chinese see themselves as inherently peaceful, and how that self-perception shapes the way that China acts in the world.

The view that cultural characteristics are innate is not just seen to apply to China, however. It also applies to other nations. For example, the United States is understood to always desire a hegemonic role in world affairs and to interfere in the business of others. An expert from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences argues that in relation to the United States, it is its highly unified value system, centred on freedom, which provides the ideological basis for its hegemonic behaviour in the world.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, in many casual conversations, the meaning of the Chinese word for ‘interference’ (干涉 *ganshe*) has been explained to the author by using the US role in the world as an example.

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Likewise, Japan is seen as inherently imperialistic and expansionist. As Peng Guangqian, Deputy Secretary General of the China National Security Forum, argued in July this year:

“Respect for the strong is deeply rooted in a hierarchical culture developed in Japanese history, and is rooted in the Japanese concept of ‘serving one’s proper place in society.’ This also includes blindly worshipping force, advocating force, survival of the fittest, and the supreme strength of the ‘Bushido’ spirit. This concept has not only penetrated every corner of life in Japanese society, but also dominates Japan’s foreign relations. This is completely different from China’s political ideas and values: morally serving the people, upholding justice, compassion for the weak, and respect for the minorities no matter the size, strength, and wealth of their country.”<sup>20</sup>

This narrative of Japan’s unchanging martial nature is inconsistent with the positive role that Japan has played regionally and globally since the Second World War. In fact, in the past, the Chinese leadership has downplayed Japan’s wartime record when necessary to suit the Party-state’s agenda. As Amy King of the Australian National University, among others, has shown, China’s attitude to Japan has changed

dramatically over the decades since the end of the Second World War. From the 1950s until the 1980s, the Party-state played down Japan's war record in an effort to build the bilateral economic relationship. This started to change in the late 1990s. As King argues, Chinese leaders began to instrumentally introduce memories of the war to shore up support for the Party-state and forge a unified Chinese national identity.<sup>21</sup> In recent years, Chinese authorities have again given vent to anti-Japanese sentiment, illustrated in the building of anti-Japanese museums and theme parks as part of the Party-state's patriotic tourism push.

### HISTORY AS DESTINY

Strongly related to the first two narratives is the idea that history is the foundation of the present and the future. According to this narrative, China was a powerful, respected, and peaceful global actor in the past, and this will once again be its natural and rightful role in the future. However, just as hostile international forces encircled China and pushed it from this position during the century of humiliation, these forces will continue trying to 'keep China down'.

To better understand China's vision of itself as an important global actor, it is useful to briefly outline the Sino-centric tribute system of international relations in East Asia that existed up until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> At the same time as the Westphalian international system of nation-states was evolving in the Western world, East Asian global politics worked according to an entirely different model. For over 2000 years, China presided over a network of trade and foreign relations in which neighbouring states as well as some much further away paid 'tribute' in exchange for economic and sometimes security benefits.<sup>23</sup> The aim was to maintain a stable regional system in which member entities remained politically autonomous but recognised China culturally. There were no set rules that applied to all members, but in general, the expectation was that they would provide regular tribute in the form of economic payments, as well as 'kowtowing' to the Emperor. Over the lifetime of the tribute system, members in Asia included present-day Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were also part of the network.

This idea of China resuming its natural role in the world as a powerful, respected, but always peaceful actor is reflected in President Xi Jinping's idea of the 'China dream'. In 2012, Xi said:

"In my view, to realise the great renewal of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream for the Chinese nation in modern history. The China Dream has conglomerated the long-cherished aspiration of several generations of Chinese people, represented the overall interests of the Chinese nation and the Chinese people, and has been a common expectation of every Chinese."<sup>24</sup>

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In China, history has long been used as a tool for producing loyalty to a certain vision of the Chinese nation-state and to the CCP. The narrative of history as destiny has been a key aspect of the patriotic education campaign launched after Tiananmen Square in 1989. The campaign sought to base Party legitimacy on rebuilding the country's material well-being and protecting it from hostile international forces.

The narrative of history 'fulfilling its natural course' and returning China to a central role in world affairs is coupled with the view that the CCP is the only conceivable agent of the country's international rejuvenation. According to this view, China's victory over Japan — presented as a CCP-led victory — and the establishment of the new China in 1949 has set China back on its 'correct path'. The role the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang or KMT) played in defeating the Japanese in the Second World War is, however, rarely acknowledged.

According to this narrative, China is now in a good position to reclaim its rightful role as a central and important global actor. What this means in practice is still largely undefined, at least in public. Consistent with the other narratives mentioned above, China's inevitable return to power is portrayed as being unthreatening to the rest of the world, as China will behave peacefully and benevolently as it had always done in the past. Any concerns raised by other countries about the nature and implications of China's rise are interpreted — and dismissed — as being a perpetuation of their historic mission to keep China weak.

#### FILIAL PIETY AND FAMILIAL OBLIGATION

The fourth narrative that is used to justify and explain Chinese foreign policy is the idea that the Chinese people and the state form a 'family'.<sup>25</sup> This is seen as being very different from the West, where the state and the people are perceived to exist as separate, sometimes adversarial entities, each keeping the other in check. As anthropologist Vanessa Fong argues, in China there exists "the idea of an imagined family in which China was identified with a long-suffering parent who deserved the filial devotion of her children, despite her flaws."<sup>26</sup>

In this narrative, the country and Party-state are conflated and presented as a parental figure, and the familial obligation traditionally reserved for the family unit is also expected for the Party-state.<sup>27</sup> President Xi draws on this idea in public discussions, as the *People's Daily* notes in a recent article:

"Xi Jinping pointed out that it is the common aspiration and objective of all China's sons and daughters for the Chinese people to be as intimate as a family, and strive for the Chinese Dream with one heart."<sup>28</sup>

In conversations with Chinese officials and students about the relationship between people and the state, this sentiment was explained

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to the author through the use of the phrase 'the state and the family are the same' (家国同构 *jiaguo tonggou*).<sup>29</sup> This idea is also reflected in the Chinese word for country or state (国家 *guojia*), which combines the character for country (国 *guo*), and the character for family (家 *jia*).<sup>30</sup>

One implication of this understanding of the Chinese state as a family is that criticism of China is perceived as a personal insult. For example, official media will often use the phrase 'hurt the feelings of the Chinese people' in response to criticisms of China. An internet search on that phrase resulted in 17 000 hits, as compared with 178 hits for 'hurt the feelings of the Japanese people' (the next highest ranked hit) or 17 other possible replacements for the words 'Chinese people', which came up with zero hits.<sup>31</sup> This sensitivity to perceived or real insults from the outside creates and perpetuates a strong sense of collective identity. At the same time as creating a strong sense of 'us' among the Chinese, it also helps to perpetuate a sense of 'them' and reinforce the narrative of China as the victim of ongoing external persecution.

Family obligation is also used to refer to China's role in the Asian region, with China portrayed as the father figure or older brother in a greater regional family. One long-standing idea is that of 'all under heaven' (天下 *tianxia*) being united in concentric circles of loyalty and obligation around the Chinese emperor. It can be seen in President Xi's 'community of common destiny' — the idea that all countries in the region are interconnected, and their success — or demise — is inextricably linked. The narrative of familial obligation is also evident in this statement by Foreign Minister Wang Yi in relation to ASEAN:

"China and the ASEAN countries are adjacent neighbours and are like a big family. The reason why relations are so intimate is because China has always pursued a good neighbourly and friendly foreign policy, and has been willing to be good neighbours, friends, and partners with ASEAN. Furthermore, the foundation of China's foreign policy lies in developing countries. No matter how developed and strong China becomes in the future, it will always safeguard the rights and interests of developing countries, including those within ASEAN."<sup>32</sup>

This use of the narrative of familial obligation is not confined to Chinese officials, however. As one Weibo contributor wrote in response to a recent photo of the leaders of China, Japan, and Korea standing together:

"This is how it should be. Since the time of Confucius we have known that a younger brother must obey the older brother. China is the older brother, and well, you all understand ..."<sup>33</sup>

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## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THESE NARRATIVES?

Gaining a better understanding of these narratives sheds more light on the reasons for particular Chinese foreign policy choices, both today and in the future. We can see this by the way that these narratives are reflected in China's recent actions in the South and East China Seas, and in its creation of the AIIB and pursuit of the One Belt, One Road strategy.

### THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

In recent years, China's actions in the South China Sea have played a major part in creating the perception that something has changed in its approach to the world and specifically that China is becoming more assertive. China has long been a claimant to disputed maritime territories in the South China Sea. More recently, it has undertaken a number of activities of concern to its neighbours, as well as the United States and its allies, such as Australia. It has used its coastguard to more actively police its claims in the region; it placed an oil rig in contested waters in Vietnam's exclusive economic zone; and it has undertaken massive land building, reclamation, and construction work on various islands in the region, including building several airstrips long enough to accommodate Chinese military aircraft.

China's recent actions in the South China Sea, and, this Analysis would argue, possible future actions, reflect a number of the narratives outlined above. One of these is the narrative of history as destiny. According to this view, Chinese actions in the South China Sea reflect its gradual resumption of its rightful and respected place in the world, or in this case, in the region. China's attitude towards the other claimants in the South China Sea also reflects the narrative of filial piety and familial obligation. In this view, China's role in the region is that of a regional father figure and benevolent overseer of a peaceful region, in which its neighbours willingly and without coercion pay tribute and homage. By the same token, if China's neighbours do not willingly pay tribute and homage then this is seen to justify taking stronger measures to ensure that this familial order is respected.

The narratives of the century of humiliation and the unchanging nature of cultural characteristics also inform how China sees the role that the United States is playing in the South China Sea. China interprets US actions, such as its recent freedom of navigation patrol, not as some limited exercise to uphold international maritime norms but as part of a broader and long-standing effort to maintain its hegemony and keep China from resuming its rightful place in the world.<sup>34</sup>

This is not to say that China does not have material interests in the South China Sea. China also has fishing and mineral exploration interests, as well as maritime militarisation programs. Some

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commentators have suggested that the ultimate purpose of Chinese island construction and militarisation of islands in the South China Sea is to allow Beijing to establish a bastion for its ballistic missile-carrying nuclear submarines.<sup>35</sup> However, none of these activities or interests is inconsistent with the narratives outlined in this Analysis.

## THE EAST CHINA SEA

China's recent actions in the East China Sea also reflect the narratives explained above. China and Japan have had a long-term dispute over several small islands and rocks known as the Diaoyu Islands in China and the Senkaku Islands in Japan. The dispute flared up again in 2012 when the Japanese Government pre-empted Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara's plan to buy the islands by purchasing a number of the islands itself. This triggered public and diplomatic protests in China. Since then, Chinese government ships have regularly sailed in and out of what Japan claims are its territorial waters around the islands. In November 2013, China announced the creation of a new air defence identification zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea.

In the case of the East China Sea, the narratives that emphasise China's natural rise and the idea of an extended family of regional countries do not play the most important role. Of greater relevance are the narratives of cultural characteristics as unchanging and the century of humiliation. The focus is very much on Japan and the danger that it is seen to represent to China. This draws on the strong historical memory in China of Japanese expansionism in World War II, a memory that the Chinese authorities have done much recently to revive.

Japan is portrayed as naturally imperialistic, expansionist, and untrustworthy. Media reports, for example, describe Japan's ongoing 'scheming character'.<sup>36</sup> Chinese foreign ministry officials assert that given historical reasons which are seen as without question as true (i.e. Japanese aggression such as in World War II), "it is perfectly natural that Japan's Asian neighbours, including China, are highly concerned" about Japan.<sup>37</sup>

The narrative of humiliation is particularly powerful in relation to the East China Sea. Japan is commonly identified in China as one of the key colonial powers that sought to carve China up after the Opium Wars in the mid-1800s. Japan's move to nationalise three of the five Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands was understood as a deep wound to Chinese pride and an intolerable loss of face that enabled the Chinese authorities to revive those historic fears of Japan.

## THE AIIB AND ONE BELT, ONE ROAD

The narratives outlined above are not just relevant to understanding Chinese behaviour when it comes to security issues. They also help to explain recent Chinese geo-economic initiatives such as the One Belt,

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One Road initiative and the AIIB. One Belt, One Road consists of two main components: the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and ocean-going Maritime Silk Road. Officially unveiled in late 2013, the initiative focuses on connectivity and cooperation among countries, principally in Eurasia. The primary purpose of the AIIB, announced by President Xi Jinping in 2013, is to address the infrastructure needs of the Asia-Pacific. It will do this primarily by funding projects in emerging markets that other international banks are unwilling to fund.

Both initiatives reflect the century of humiliation narrative and the idea of history as destiny. The AIIB and One Belt, One Road are portrayed within China as evidence that China is finally overcoming its period of weakness and vulnerability. As one Chinese academic noted to the author, these initiatives represent “a great shift from the idea of just taking care of ourselves.”<sup>38</sup> These initiatives are seen as a way for China to resume its rightful position as a wealthy, strong, and responsible power, at the centre of a web of regional economic interdependence.

The narratives of the century of humiliation and of unchanging cultural characteristics also inform how China interprets external reactions to these initiatives. As Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress (and former Ambassador to Australia) Fu Ying argued at a recent roundtable dialogue, China was “shocked” by the US' attitude to the formation of the AIIB, wondering why there existed “such resistance when the United States had always wanted China to play more of a role — now China is doing just that, why is the United States trying to prevent it?” Fu traced the issue back to the US history of bullying China, questioning whether there was any point in continuing to try to explain China's good intentions to those who are unwilling or incapable of seeing things any differently.<sup>39</sup>

## OTHER FACTORS SHAPING CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

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As noted at the beginning of this Analysis, whereas an understanding of the four narratives is an important and often underappreciated means of understanding China's actions in the world, it is also true that these narratives do not completely explain Chinese foreign policy. Two particular factors that interact with these narratives and that have shaped Chinese foreign policy of late have been the role of President Xi Jinping, and China's growing material capabilities.

Since Xi Jinping took power from former president Hu Jintao, he has certainly brought a different style to Chinese foreign policy. In part this reflects Xi's personality and upbringing. Xi is a ‘princeling’, or ‘second generation Red’, whose father, revolutionary leader Xi Zhongxun, was a close comrade of Mao Zedong in the 1940s and 1950s. Xi senior strongly believed that a spartan, uncorrupted Party organised under a unified command would best serve the people. Later, Xi senior was

persecuted by Mao, which deeply affected his son. Nevertheless, Xi Jinping seems to follow his father's belief that serving the people is best achieved with a moral, pure, responsible, and resolute Party. Xi also has relatively close (if indirect) connections with the Chinese military, largely through his father but also his service as personal secretary to then minister of defence, Geng Biao. Creating a new National Security Commission in 2013, and appointing himself as Chair, as well as the unprecedented anti-corruption sweep within the military, have sent strong signals as to Xi's intention of asserting his control over the military.

A key difference between Xi and his predecessor, Hu Jintao, is the greater sense of urgency, ambition, and resolve that Xi has brought to the leadership. Xi has an authority and an ease with power, perhaps stemming from his princeling past, that leaves him less afraid to consolidate power, take risks, and push for what he believes in. He also has, for now at least, more political power and freedom of manoeuvre in developing and implementing foreign policy.<sup>40</sup> As former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd argues, Xi is not a status quo politician; indeed, he is the opposite. He is prepared to take calculated risks in a traditionally risk-averse Party culture to pursue his mission.<sup>41</sup>

Xi's history, outlook and style have certainly had an impact on the character of Chinese foreign policy. However, it is also true that Xi is both shaped by the narratives described in this Analysis and is using them to fulfil his primary mission — strengthening the Party. Party legitimacy has two main pillars, the economic and material well-being of the people; and a strong sense of coherent national identity. At times when that economic well-being guarantee is under threat, Party legitimacy can be bolstered by emphasising the second pillar, national identity. The narratives described in this Analysis are useful for the purpose of strengthening the Party as they describe a story in which the united Chinese people and state are working together to ensure China resumes its rightful historical place in the world as a peaceful and important actor, despite the determination of others to hold it down. Xi's remarks often underline this sense of a united Chinese identity working together towards a shared destiny. As he said in 2014, for example:

“For Chinese people both at home and abroad, a united Chinese nation is our shared root, the profound Chinese culture is our shared soul, and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is our shared dream.”<sup>42</sup>

Another factor beyond these narratives that is shaping Chinese actions is the improvement of its material capabilities in recent years. China can now pursue the aims reflected in these narratives, for example to resume its rightful place in world affairs, because it finally has the economic and military ability to do so. One can see the interplay of these narratives — of the improvement in China's material capabilities and

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Xi's particular foreign policy style — in actions in the South China Sea. China now has the means to ensure that its neighbours pay due deference to its benevolent and fatherly position in the region, and to respond to what it sees as US efforts to keep China from resuming its rightful role in the world. Xi brings to this an urgent sense of mission, driven in part by the widely held perception that Hu's weak response to the action of other claimants in the South China Sea during his time as leader between 2003 and 2013 had enabled them to encroach on China's territorial integrity. Combined, this has also created space for various Chinese actors, including the military and maritime security agencies, to behave more boldly in that region than they have ever done before.

## RESPONDING TO CHINA

Understanding China's worldviews and the ways that they interact with other factors that shape Chinese foreign policy is important when considering both current behaviour and the possible trajectory of Chinese policy in coming years. This understanding may help non-Chinese policymakers avoid responses to Chinese actions that are counterproductive both now and in the future because they reinforce Chinese perceptions of being isolated and 'bullied' (欺负 *qifu*) by the outside world.

It is increasingly argued that the best response to China's new assertiveness is a firm one. The tendency is to extrapolate from the particular to the general; a failure to respond to specific cases of Chinese assertiveness, such as in the South China Sea, it is argued, will result in Chinese assertiveness elsewhere. Recently, for example, US Fifth Fleet Commander Admiral Scott Swift warned that, in a clear reference to Chinese activities in the South China Sea, if coercion works at sea, those responsible were likely to become a greater threat and "seek us out in our supposed sanctuaries ashore."<sup>43</sup> Similarly, US analyst Patrick Cronin argues that China unchecked poses a direct risk to rules set up by the United States that protect peace and stability. He argues that if China sets the rules instead, this could threaten human rights and freedom of information in other countries in the region, and render the US role and voice "minimal, and that will not be a better world."<sup>44</sup>

However, the Chinese also extrapolate from the particular to the general. In accordance with the narratives outlined above, US freedom of navigation patrols are not viewed by the Chinese as simply an effort to protect maritime rules in the South China Sea, they are seen to be part of an overarching effort by the United States and its allies to keep China weak. Similarly, the initially unreceptive attitude of the United States to the AIIB fits neatly into Chinese narratives about the inherently hegemonic intent of US policy. Chinese policymakers interpret policy designed to deal with a specific instance of Chinese assertiveness through the lens of these worldviews, further reinforcing China's sense of

isolation and persecution. At the popular level, policy responses such as the US freedom of navigation operation feed into popular demands that the leadership be more assertive in protecting Chinese interests.

This is not an argument for appeasement. As this Analysis shows, there are worrying aspects to these narratives outlined in this Analysis. China believes that it is on course to resuming the central role it had once played in regional and global affairs — and that the outside world should recognise this. It feels it has been held back from this more central role by the United States and by some US allies and that these powers will continue to restrict China's development where they can. China sees its role in the world as benign and benevolent, but seems increasingly willing to use its national power to stake its regional and global position.

It is also clear, however, that China's vision of its role in Asia and the world more broadly is still evolving. How it evolves will depend as much on how countries respond to China as it does on China's own interests, ambitions and worldviews. The United States and China's neighbours will need to carefully weigh how they respond to Chinese actions, including how these responses are likely to be interpreted in China, and used as a justification for future behaviour. It is in this regard that an understanding of the narratives that inform China's worldviews can play a useful role.

In some cases policymakers will need to respond firmly to Chinese actions, even if this may have longer-term costs. In the East China Sea, the strong reaction of the US and some of its allies to China's declaration of an ADIZ may have reinforced narratives of persecution and humiliation. However, the response would also have sent a warning to the Chinese leadership that such declarations do not go unnoticed by the broader international community, and that the United States and its allies have the means to apply consequences should they choose to do so. It may indeed have provided a strong enough signal to convince Chinese policymakers that there would be more costs than benefits to declaring an ADIZ in the South China Sea, at least for the time being.

In other cases, however, a greater understanding of Chinese worldviews can help policymakers to pursue responses that do not reinforce these narratives in ways that are ultimately counterproductive. Washington's tough response to the AIIB and its ambivalent attitude to One Belt, One Road are two examples where US policy will have unnecessarily reinforced narratives of humiliation and persecution. In the Chinese worldviews, this response will have reinforced the idea that no matter what China does on the world stage, and no matter how benign its policies are, the United States will try to curb China's emergence as a more central actor in the international system.

*China sees its role in the world as benign and benevolent, but seems increasingly willing to use its national power to stake its regional and global position.*

*The narratives can... help policymakers to understand what impact their responses to Chinese behaviour today will have on Chinese attitudes and behaviour in the future.*

## CONCLUSION

This Analysis has sought to highlight four narratives that are important to understanding China's worldviews: the narrative of the century of humiliation; the view of cultural characteristics as being inherent and unchanging; the idea of history as destiny; and notions of filial piety and familial obligation applied both inside China and to China's neighbours. These four narratives, combined with an understanding of the other key factors that shape Chinese foreign policy, provide a better guide to the aims and ambitions of Chinese foreign policy than a simple assumption that China will think and act like all emerging powers in history. The narratives can also help policymakers to understand what impact their responses to Chinese behaviour today will have on Chinese attitudes and behaviour in the future.

Ultimately, choices about how the United States and its allies respond to China need to be taken on a case-by-case basis. There are unlikely to be clear-cut or perfect responses. Each decision will come with risks of action and inaction, in both the short and the longer term. In some cases US and other Western policymakers may see no option but to take action that reinforces the more negative aspects of the Chinese narratives outlined above. In other cases, however, an understanding of these Chinese worldviews can help policymakers to avoid actions that are needlessly counterproductive.

As former US President Richard Nixon once argued:

“coming to grips with the reality of China ... means distinguishing carefully between long-range and short-range policies, and fashioning short-range programs so as to advance our long-range goals.”<sup>45</sup>

Making those choices means using as much information about the forces shaping Chinese foreign policy as possible. It means judging China by its actions, but it also means understanding the worldviews that underpin those actions and the way many Chinese people interpret the world.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 226.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Graham Allison, "The Thucydides Trap: Are the US and China Headed for War?" *The Atlantic*, 24 September 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>, accessed 18 November 2015, in which he argues that tension between a predominant United States and a rising China is almost inevitable according to historical precedents: "In 12 of 16 cases over the past 500 years, the result was war."

<sup>3</sup> Hugh White, in answer to a question by the author at UTS:Australia-China Relations Institute panel discussion, "The Hugh White Thesis: Five Years On," 11 August 2015, 1:03:45, <https://soundcloud.com/australia-china-relations-institute/the-hugh-white-thesis-five-years-on>, accessed 2 October 2015. See also Hugh White, "Obama's India Visit Reveals Weakness of US Position in Asia," *Lowy Interpreter* (blog), 16 February 2015, <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2015/02/16/Obama-India-visit-reveals-weakness-of-US-position-in-Asia.aspx>, accessed 2 October 2015.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Ely Ratner, at the time at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), made this case in conversation with the author in Washington DC, May 2015. Other commentators such as Patrick Cronin, also at CNAS, and Bonnie Glaser from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, also make this case.

<sup>5</sup> The term 'Party-state' is used in this Analysis to describe the complex combination of the Chinese Communist Party and the structures of government and administration (state). Many Western commentators tend to try to make sense of the Chinese Party-state system by using familiar terminology such as 'president' and 'party'. However, using these kinds of classifications to describe Chinese political structures hides important differences. Politics, power, and governance in China are in many ways simply not comparable to their Western counterparts.

<sup>6</sup> For more information about how the Party-state uses techniques of socialisation for legitimisation, see, for example, Anne-Marie Brady, "Mass Persuasion as a Means of Legitimation and China's Popular Authoritarianism," *American Behavioural Scientist* 53, No 3 (2009), 434–457, and Anne-Marie Brady (ed), *China's Thought Management* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011). Regarding how the Party-state has done so over many decades, see John L Austin, *How To Do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), and Hu Ping, *The Thought Remolding Campaign of the Chinese Communist Party-State*, trans Philip F Williams and Yenna Wu (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Linda Jakobson, "China's Unpredictable Maritime Security Actors," Lowy Institute Analysis, 11 December 2014, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/chinas-unpredictable-maritime-security-actors>.

<sup>8</sup> Merriden Varrall, "Domestic Actors and Agendas in Chinese Aid Policy," *The Pacific Review*, 24 July 2015, DOI: 10.1080/09512748.2015.1066414.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Harris, "China and the World," *International Affairs* 35, Issue 2 (1959), 162.

<sup>10</sup> After the suppression of protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the Chinese Government launched an extensive propaganda campaign of patriotic education to rebuild loyalty to the Communist Party's rule. Legitimacy was redefined as being able to improve standards of living and build China's strength, even as it was besieged and embattled by hostile international forces perpetuating long-standing imperialist insults to Chinese pride — starting in the century of humiliation. See, for example, Zhao Suisheng, "A State-led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, Issue 3 (1998), 287–302. Research by Gries and Sanders demonstrates just how effective across most of the Chinese population this 'top-down' campaign through education has been: Peter Hays Gries and Matthew A Sanders, "Whom Do We Trust? Testing for Socialisation Effects in Chinese Surveys," in *Perception and Misperception in American and Chinese Views of the Other*, eds Alastair Iain Johnston and Shen Mingming (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015), 41–62.

<sup>11</sup> Wang Zheng, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 102.

<sup>12</sup> There is no doubt that the Allied forces of the United Kingdom, France and other Western countries wreaked considerable havoc in many Eastern cities. The ruins of the spectacular pleasure garden *Yuan Ming Yuan* (Gardens of Perfect Brightness), or the Old Summer Palace, razed to the ground twice (first in 1857 and again in 1860), attest to this. However, the signs outside these sites explaining their demise tend to focus exclusively on Chinese victimisation, and not refer to the broader political context.

<sup>13</sup> Full English translation of the Five-Year Plan, 20, <http://www.cbichina.org.cn/cbichina/upload/fckeditor/Full%20Translation%20of%20the%2012th%20Five-Year%20Plan.pdf>, accessed 6 November 2015.

<sup>14</sup> According to Global Firepower.com, <http://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp>, accessed 18 November 2015.

<sup>15</sup> William A Callahan, "Sino-Speak: Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, No 1 (2012), 33–55.

<sup>16</sup> "Speech by Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at the Körber Foundation," *People's Daily*, 30 March 2014, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2014-03/30/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20140330\\_2-02.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2014-03/30/nw.D110000renmrb_20140330_2-02.htm), accessed 4 November 2015; English language link [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/t1148640.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1148640.shtml), accessed 4 November 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Li Anshan, "Cultural Heritage and China's Africa Policy," in *China and the European Union in Africa: Partners or Competitors?*, eds Jing Men and Benjamin Barton (Farnham UK; Burlington USA: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 41–60. A similar argument is made by Yan Xuetong, from Beijing's prestigious Tsinghua University, who has argued that ancient Confucian ideals fundamentally underpin how China sees the world: Yan Xuetong, "How China Can Defeat America,"

*The New York Times*, 20 November 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/21/opinion/how-china-can-defeat-america.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/21/opinion/how-china-can-defeat-america.html?_r=1), accessed 22 November 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Confidential conversation with Chinese university student, Beijing, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Wang Jisi, "The Logic of American Hegemony," *American Studies Quarterly* 17, No 3 (2003), 7–29.

<sup>20</sup> Peng Guangqian, "彭光谦：崇拜强者是日本政治文化传统 [Respecting the Strong is Part of Traditional Japanese Political Culture]," *Huanqiu (Global Times, Chinese version)*, 1 July 2015, [http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion\\_world/2015-07/6814001.html](http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion_world/2015-07/6814001.html), accessed 8 September 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Amy King, "China-Japan: What Comes Next?" *The China Story: Agenda 2013* (Canberra: Australian Centre on China in the World, 2013), <http://www.thechinastory.org/agenda2013/china-japan-what-comes-next/>, accessed 29 October 2015.

<sup>22</sup> It is broadly accepted that a tribute system of some sort existed and operated to regulate China's trade and diplomacy with its neighbours at least as far back as the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), and that the system collapsed at the end of the Qing dynasty (1644 CE–1911 CE) in the early 1900s, following the concessions demanded of China after the Opium Wars in the nineteenth century.

<sup>23</sup> As Eisenman, Heginbotham and Mitchell note, "While flawed, the tributary system offered mutual benefit from both economic and security standpoints to the tributary states and China alike. Tributary states received trade benefits and, in some cases, security guarantees." Joshua Eisenman, Eric Heginbotham and Derek Mitchell, eds, *China and the Developing World: Beijing's Strategy for the Twenty-First Century* (London; New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 9.

<sup>24</sup> Cited by Kazuko Kojima, "The Chinese Communist Party: An Institutional Perspective," in *Handbook of the Politics of China*, ed David SG Goodman (Cheltenham, Glos: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2015), 50.

<sup>25</sup> The notion of China as a 'family' goes back at least to the late 1700s under the Qing dynasty. When uniting 'outer' entities such as Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang together with the 'inner' Han Chinese, into 'one family', the Qing rulers used the phrase 'interior and exterior as one family' (内外一家 *nei wai yi jia*), to convey the idea of unification of different peoples. See James A Millward et al., eds, *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 76–77.

<sup>26</sup> Vanessa Fong, *Paradise Redefined: Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developing World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 52.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. See also Fong's notion of 'filial nationalism': Vanessa Fong, "Filial Nationalism among Chinese Teenagers with Global Identities," *American Ethnologist* 31, No 4 (2004), 631–648.

<sup>28</sup> "The Chinese People are Intimate as a Family, They Build the Chinese Dream Together with One Heart," *People's Daily*, 1 October 2015, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2015-10/01/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20151001\\_1-01.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2015-10/01/nw.D110000renmrb_20151001_1-01.htm), accessed 5 November 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Some argue that the concept of 家国同构 *jiaguo tonggou* has existed since the Qin dynasty, where it described “an ultra-stable social structure and family-state system”, in which “the family forms the archetype and the power of the state, and where the state forms the extension and amplification of the family”: Da Sulin, “家族政治与基层治理 [Family Politics and Grassroots Governance],” *People’s Tribune*, Issue 20, 2013, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmlt/html/2013-07/11/content\\_1279735.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmlt/html/2013-07/11/content_1279735.htm), accessed 3 November 2015. More recently, the concept has been raised in Chinese state media, explicitly describing the linkage between the Chinese state and family, and explaining this as having been true “since ancient times”. For example, 家国同构 *jiaguo tonggou* means that the individual, the family, and the state are all intimately linked with one another. The family is a reduction of the state, and the state is an amplification of the family: “Historians Discuss Ancient Culture of Clean Government: ‘*Jiaguo Tonggou*’ from Vision to Crossroads,” *People’s Daily*, 22 August 2014, <http://legal.people.com.cn/n/2014/0822/c188502-25515409.html>, accessed 3 November 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Frank Pieke argues that in fact, in China, the state is society. See Frank Pieke, “Contours of an Anthropology of the Chinese State: Political Structure, Agency and Economic Development in Rural China,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10, No 3 (2004), 517–538.

<sup>31</sup> See Victor Mair, “Hurt(s) the Feelings of the Chinese People,” *Language Log*, 12 September 2011, <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=3425>, accessed 27 January 2011. In an earlier search on google.cn of the terms ‘humiliation’ or ‘bullying’ (欺负 *qifu*) and ‘disrespect’ or ‘looking down’ (看不起 *kanbuqi*), Pál Nyiri found 623 000 entries with the term ‘bullying China’ (欺负中国 *qifu Zhongguo*) and 521 000 with ‘looking down on Chinese people’ (看不起中国人 *kanbuqi Zhongguoren*). Pál Nyiri, “On Language,” *China Can’t Stop Saying No*, <http://chinasaysno.wordpress.com/chapters/language/>, accessed 1 August 2012.

<sup>32</sup> “Wang Yi: China and ASEAN Countries Are like a Big Family, We Support the Development and Growth of ASEAN,” *People’s Daily*, 25 June 2013, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2013/0625/c70731-21969654.html>, accessed 5 November 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Weibo (the Chinese version of Twitter): @爱吃哈密瓜滴小月 (*Ai chi hamigua di xiao yue*, ‘Little moon who loves to eat canteloupe’), 2 November 2015, accessed 2 November 2015.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, a recent article regarding the US freedom of navigation operation in which US activities were explained as aiming to ensure its continued global hegemony: “The US’ first objective is to maintain maritime hegemony. Maritime hegemony is the lifeblood which decides whether or not the US can maintain world hegemony. To guarantee its maritime sovereignty, the US uses its ‘jurisdiction’ to involve itself in issues of maritime sovereignty and maritime rights, and use military means to declare the US viewpoint to the world.” “用霸权挑战中国南海主权终将徒劳 [Using Hegemony to Challenge Chinese Sovereignty in the South China Sea is Ultimately Futile],” *People’s Daily*, <http://world.people.com.cn/n/2015/1102/c1002-27764899.html>, 2 November 2015, accessed 4 November 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Brendan Thomas-Noone and Rory Medcalf, "Nuclear-Armed Submarines in Indo-Pacific Asia: Stabiliser or Menace?" Lowy Institute Report, 4 September 2015, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/nuclear-armed-submarines-indo-pacific-asia-stabiliser-or-menace>, accessed 4 November 2015.

<sup>36</sup> "Japanese Finance Minister Shamelessly Bad-Mouths the Chinese Economy, US Media Claims Japan is a Loner in the G20," *Huanqiu* (*Global Times*, Chinese version), 7 September 2015, <http://world.huanqiu.com/exclusive/2015-09/7426723.html>, accessed 7 September 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang's Regular Press Conference on 16 June 2015, [http://www.mfa.gov.cn/mfa\\_chn/fyrbt\\_602243/t1273492.shtml](http://www.mfa.gov.cn/mfa_chn/fyrbt_602243/t1273492.shtml), accessed 9 September 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Confidential interview with Chinese Professor of international relations, Foreign Affairs University, Beijing, March 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Comments by Fu Ying at a roundtable held at the University of Sydney China Studies Centre, 15 September 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Xi Jinping has attempted to consolidate power and streamline decision-making by creating new foreign policy institutions and taking the lead in existing institutions. It is generally accepted wisdom that Xi has taken on more positions of power than any Chinese leader since Deng Xiaoping, or even Mao Zedong, and that therefore most if not all important foreign policy decisions would have his direct knowledge and approval. For example, in 2013 Xi established a new National Security Commission (NSC), with himself as Chair. The commission was intended to streamline military decision-making and provide new control over China's domestic 'stability maintenance' forces. In addition to the NSC, Xi has established a number of 'Leading Small Groups' within the Party's Central Committee, including on military reform, which he heads. Xi has also expanded the scope of Party authority into areas that were formerly the prerogative of the State Council. To what extent he has been successful in streamlining and taking control over decision-making remains debatable. See, for example, Linda Jakobson, "China's Unpredictable Maritime Security Actors," Lowy Institute Analysis, 11 December 2014, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/chinas-unpredictable-maritime-security-actors>.

<sup>41</sup> Kevin Rudd, "The Future of US–China Relations under Xi Jinping: Towards a New Framework of Constructive Realism for a Common Purpose," Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center Report, 11, <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Summary%20Report%20US-China%2021.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> Speech made by President Xi Jinping to representatives attending the 7th Conference of Friendship of Overseas Chinese Association, 6 June 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Brendan Nicholson and Cameron Stewart, "US Fleet Sends Message to China: We'll Maintain Freedom of Seas," *The Australian*, 7 October 2015, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/defence/us-fleet-sends-message-to-china-well-maintain-freedom-of-seas/story-e6frg8yo-1227559645596?sv=15c30d3b599d692941220c1c348c91ee>, accessed 8 October 2015.

<sup>44</sup> "China's Relations with Southeast Asia," hearing by US–China Economic and Security Review Commission, 13 May 2015, 55, <http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/transcripts/May%2013%2C%202015%20Hearing%20Transcript.pdf>, accessed 8 October 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Richard M Nixon, "Asia after Viet Nam," *Foreign Affairs* 46 (1967), 111–125; Stanley D Bachrack, *The Committee of One Million: "China Lobby" Politics 1952–1971* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 261.

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