

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**The Identity Factor in Chinese Europe Policies:
China's European Quest for Ontological Security**

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Abstract

This thesis contends that Chinese ontological security seeking is an overlooked aspect in China-Europe relations, but that several political actions are difficult to explain without accounting for this factor. Whilst the role of the identity factor in Chinese foreign policies towards other great powers has been thoroughly analysed, the literature has yet to address how it shapes China's policies towards Europe. This omission is puzzling, given that Europe was a key actor shaping the identity crisis of the Chinese polity after the fall of the Qing dynasty. In addressing this scholarly gap, this thesis has thus sought to answer the question of 'how does Europe matter for Chinese identity, and how does identity matter for China's current-day policies towards Europe?'

This question has been approached through a two-pronged research strategy, combining a section of historical diachronic analysis with a section of contemporary synchronic analysis. The diachronic section investigates the Chinese view of Europe from the Opium Wars onwards, through a discourse analysis of political textual monuments from four key eras of ontological security seeking: The efforts at reforming the empire during the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861–1872); the Early Republic Era (1910–1915), with its attempts to realize a new republican state; the early days of the Chinese Communist Party's New China (1945–1955); and the time around Deng Xiaoping's reforms (1975–1990). The analysis demonstrates how the Chinese idea of Europe was intimately connected to these fundamental changes in China's political identity, as Europe moved from being regarded as barbaric, to a political lodestar, to a battleground for Communism, and finally to a role as a fundamentally separate civilization in a multipolar world.

The synchronic section proceeds to investigate the degree to which this Chinese view of Europe has been a factor in contemporary Sino-European relations, centring on three cases: the political crisis regarding EU's embargo on arms sales (2003–2006); the fallout with China's European partners following incidents in 2007 and 2008; and the diplomatic boycotts of the UK and Norway (2010–2016). Analysing these cases through a three-layered approach based on ontological security theory, the empirical argument of this thesis is that the Chinese discourses of Europe, emphasizing ritualized civilizational recognition, shaped a particular range of Chinese policy choices, that cannot be explained through models based on economic or geopolitical rationality. The thesis also argues that the case of China is salient for exploring aspects of ontological security that until now have been under-theorized. By expanding the theoretical framework to include key Chinese concepts, the analysis contributes both to ontological security theory building, and a better understanding of the identity factor in Chinese foreign policies in general.

Note on Transliteration and Translation

The timespan of this thesis' research project entailed the implementation of a wide range of sources in different languages, and with varying transliteration practices. Most notably, the source material includes texts written with both traditional and simplified Chinese characters. Furthermore, the secondary sources comprise texts utilising the older Wade-Giles Romanization system to transliterate Chinese words, in addition to the now standard Pinyin system.

In order to better simplify the reading experience, and facilitate comprehension and comparison of the long lines in Chinese conceptual developments, I have opted for a single standard for the entire thesis. Thus, I have consistently transcribed traditional Chinese characters into simplified characters where these appear in the text, following the norms of standard mainland Mandarin. Similarly, I have Romanized all material using modern-day Pinyin, without diacritical marks. There are two notable exceptions. One is for certain names where it is the common norm to write them using an alternative form of transliteration. Thus, the text refers to Sun Yat-sen, not Sun Zhongshan. For a full list over the names this applies to, see the author's instruction of the *China Quarterly*. The other exception regards directly quoted sources in the text, in which cases I have provided the Pinyin form in square brackets.

Translations are by the author unless otherwise indicated. As Mandarin is a language that differs substantially from English in terms of grammar and syntax, this exacerbates the eternal translator's dilemma of metaphrasing vs paraphrasing. Given this thesis' focus on analysing Chinese-language discourses, I have chosen to hew more closely to literal translations, prioritising a more direct rendition of the content, at the cost of the language flow in English. Chinese names are written according to the East Asian tradition, with surnames first and given names second.

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Part I: Theoretical Framework & Academic Context

Chapter 1: Introducing the China-Europe Identity Factor

1.1 Defining the Research Project

The sweeping restructuring of China's international role creates challenges both for other actors on the international stage and for China itself, as the Chinese leadership strive to obtain security for the current political regime and the continuation of the Chinese rejuvenation project. As a result, scholarship on the motivations of China's foreign policies has proliferated, given Beijing's new significance in defining the global security environment.¹ However, this thesis contends that there is a range of questions which remains largely unexplored regarding one of the most important nexuses in Chinese foreign policy: the rapidly developing Sino-European relationship. In particular, this thesis will argue that the current literature has yet to address the degree to which the Chinese pursuit of ontological security—securing a stable legitimate identity at home and abroad—is a significant factor shaping China's policies towards Europe. Whilst the role of the identity factor in Chinese foreign policies towards other major international actors, such as the US, Russia, and Japan, has long been a field of scholarly enquiry,² this is a perspective that has been overlooked in China-Europe relations. This omission is all the more puzzling, as Europe was the single most important actor shaping the identity crisis of the Chinese polity after the fall of the Qing dynasty. This thesis thus argues that Chinese

¹ Amongst the number of works on this, that will be related to later in this thesis, see e.g. Y. Deng and Wang 2004; R. Li 2008; Rozman 2012

² See R. Li 2008; Rozman 2012; Jian Yang 2010; Rozman 2013a; Larson and Shevchenko 2010a; Callahan 2005b; Sinkkonen 2014; Callahan 2004a

ontological security seeking is an overlooked aspect in China-Europe relations, and that several contemporary political actions are difficult to explain without accounting for this factor. In addressing this issue, this thesis will thus investigate the research question of 'how does Europe matter for Chinese identity, and how does identity matter for China's current-day policies towards Europe?'

The fact that literature on China-EU relations omits the identity factor, whilst literature on identity in international relations fails to engage with the case of China and Europe, has both empirical and theoretical consequences. In empirical terms, the absence of identity dynamics, hampers the explanatory power of a volatile relationship between two of the world's foremost power centres. Scholarly approaches have traditionally regarded Sino-European relations from primarily economic perspective, a perspective which is insufficient to explain a range of discrepancies in the relationship. As the following chapters demonstrate, the contemporary China-Europe relationship has seen considerable volatility over a short period of time, from being touted as a potential new great power axis, to being riven by instances of political boycotts and diplomatic freeze. These instances of political crisis, and the moves taken to defuse them, from the apology diplomacy surrounding the Dalai Lama to the Chinese insistence on an extraordinary audience with Queen Elizabeth II as a key point of the normalization of ties, are difficult to reconcile with geopolitical or economic drivers alone.

Whereas such key developments over recent decades are difficult to explain fully through mainstream positivist approaches, they are compatible with an ontological security theory-driven identity analysis. The greatest challenges in China-Europe relations have arguably arisen when political decisions in Europe challenged fundamental tenets of China's identity narrative. Seemingly contrary actions like Dalai Lama-related boycotts towards important trade partners, when simultaneously seeking these same countries' acquiescence in creating a more multipolar world order,

can be more saliently understood through analysing them as based on a broad Chinese understanding of ‘identity security,’ and the importance of maintaining a sustainable legitimate identity both at home and abroad. To discount identity concerns from an analysis of China – Europe relations thus entails overlooking one of the most salient variables of the political dynamic.

In theoretical terms, another puzzle motivating this thesis is how implementing the case of China’s relations with Europe into the identity literature can contribute to developing ontological security theory, in addition to contributing to the understanding of Chinese foreign policy motivations. A consequence of this case’s absence from the current body of works, is the continued overrepresentation of established Western nation-states in the case universe. This bias weakens our conceptual apparatus for analysing non-Western states, at precisely the moment in time when these countries global influence is more important than ever. Furthermore, this skewed case selection results in a tendency to overlook the role in national identity-building that is shaped by the historical legacies of the forced entry into modernity during the age of colonialism. Particularly in the case of China, this is a key point. The violent inclusion of China into the Western world order during the colonialist era demarcated a breaking point where China’s image of itself, China’s image of the world, and for that matter the world’s image of China, were all fundamentally ruptured. Arguably, this separation has yet to be mended, and consecutive Chinese governments have sought through different strategies to re-obtain a stable representation of China on the world stage. As pointed out by Yong Deng, the end of the Cold War brought forth yet another fundamental status crisis for China. As a result of this, the necessity to shape a new identity for domestic and foreign consumption became apparent to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), that oversaw a development to an identity based on a form of great power nationalism.³

³ Y. Deng 2008

This has led to a greater Chinese drive for status recognition internationally, and for the CCP to be regarded domestically as the guardians of this rejuvenation. Thus, to quote Callahan, “the heart of Chinese foreign policy is thus not a security dilemma, but an identity dilemma.”⁴ As this thesis will conclude, this identity dilemma matters. Also for China’s policies towards Europe.

In reaching this conclusion, this doctoral research project has proceeded to analyse the research question through the lens of ontological security theory. Furthermore, I have sought not only to investigate how ontological security can contribute to our understanding of China-Europe relations, but also to explore how the case of China’s Europe policies can contribute to the development of ontological security theory. Empirically, the research has combined a diachronic, historical, and a synchronic, contemporary, research strand. The diachronic investigation focuses on the role of Europe in the Chinese efforts to re-establish a stable political identity narrative after the challenges of the Opium Wars. It thus provides a necessary deep conceptual understanding for studying Chinese ontological security seeking in current-day foreign policies. The synchronic strand, focusing on the present era, centres on three cases of political crisis in the China-Europe relationship over the last two decades, in order to ascertain the degree to which Chinese ontological security seeking played a role in shaping its relations with Europe in these defining moments of the China-Europe relationship. Over the course of this chapter, this thesis’ position within the extant literature will be further detailed, followed by an overview of the structure of the thesis.

⁴ Callahan 2009, 192

1.2 Background and Academic Context

This thesis has been motivated by the extent to which the literature on China-Europe relations has neglected to address certain central issues and developments in the relationship over the last decades. These omissions are arguably due to the overlap of four gaps in the current literature, that this research project seeks to address. This work thus contributes to the academic debate at the intersection of four interrelated literatures: the general literature on China-EU relations, scholarship on identity as a factor in China's relations with Europe, the study of Chinese identity processes, and ontological security theory building. Firstly, the foreign policy dyad between China and Europe is a generally underexplored field compared to the extensive studies of Chinese relations with other major global actors. Secondly, within the literature addressing China-Europe, or China-EU, relations, investigations into the role played by identity is lacking to an extent one does not see in the scholarship on China's other key relationships. Thirdly, whereas ontological security literature has rapidly grown to include a range of salient analyses of various countries' foreign policies, only to a small extent has this approach been applied to China. Finally, and related, there is an absence of ontological security theory development based on exploring Chinese cases. It is at the intersection of these four issues of the extant scholarship, two of them empirical, and two of them theoretical, that this thesis aims its contribution.

With regards to the first of the empirical issues presented above, the field of China-EU studies is still strangely underexplored. This stands in sharp contrast to e.g. the relationship between the USA and China, or China and Japan, that have, understandably enough, given rise to a large and growing body of works, drawing

upon and contributing to both empirical policies and theoretical debates.⁵ The literature regarding relations between two of the world's three largest economic actors, the EU and China, is on the other hand relatively meagre. Scholarship on Sino-European relations has its main strengths in research on the importance of economic imperatives.⁶ In particular the literature has focused on Chinese efforts at playing different European actors against each other in order to achieve better economic terms and compliance with what Beijing regards as sensitive political issues.⁷

The scholarship on Europe and China does, however, share a general trait of still underdeveloped research fields, in that the dominant body of literature is overwhelmingly one of edited volumes.⁸ In addition to a number of journal articles on the topic, as well as a rich and rapidly growing selection of policy papers.⁹ The edited volumes are in most cases excellent examples of the academic salience of addressing a topic through a kaleidoscopic collection of authors addressing different aspects of the China-EU relationship in short and succinct summarizing chapters. There is also

⁵ For a selection of important works on China-US relations, utilising empirical studies for broader theoretical insights, see e.g. Allison 2017; Z. Wang 2012; Friedberg 2011; Kissinger 2012; Lampton 2001; Hugh White 2013; For a similar introduction to the field of China-Japan studies, see e.g. Holstag 2015; Gries et al. 2009; Dent 2010; P. J. Smith 2009; Christensen 1999; Whereas on the topic of Sino-Russian relations, a good intro can be found in e.g. Bekkevold and Lo 2018; Bellacqua 2010; Eder 2013; Wishnick 2017; KaczmarSKI 2015

⁶ See e.g. Bräuner 2014; Christiansen, Kirchner, and Murray 2013; Parello-Plesner 2013; Fox and Godement 2009; Shambaugh, Sandschneider, and Hong 2007; Men and Balducci 2010; E. J. Kirchner, Christiansen, and Dorussen 2016, 1–3; Geeraerts and Huang 2016, 189–90

⁷ Fox and Godement 2009

⁸ For a number of good examples of this genre, see Fei and Kerr 2008; Brown 2014; Shambaugh, Sandschneider, and Zhou 2007a; Ross, Tunsjø, and Tuosheng 2011; Austermann, Wang, and Vangeli 2014; Wiessala, Wilson, and Taneja 2009a; H. Zhou 2016; Z. Pan 2012a

⁹ Cameron 2013; Casarini 2013; Reiterer 2014; Pawlak 2012

a small number of excellent monographs, but these tend to be focused on narrow and often economy-related aspects of the relationship, such as Farnell and Crookes overview of the political economy drivers in EU-China relations.¹⁰ However, I will argue that the field of Europe-China studies deserves to significantly strengthen this strand of in-depth, theory-driven monographs. A key argument of this thesis is thus that such a focus has overlooked the degree to which economic imperatives in China-Europe relations are locked into a relationship with perceptions of Chinese identity. This important aspect of Sino-European relations is being touched upon briefly by Callahan, who emphasizes how China's relations with the EU are important, in that "it helps the PRC to construct a view of China as a non-hegemonic superpower".¹¹ This thesis will stress that such aspect holds all the more importance in current Chinese foreign relations, as the repercussions of China's rapid economic and political rise make the question of China's ontological security even more important, as a tool to deescalate potential security dilemmas both regionally and globally.¹² As Steele has successfully demonstrated that ontological security can at times take prevalence over even physical security, it is pertinent to explore whether in the case of China and Europe, ontological security may also trump economic security.

This brings up the second empirical point about the current literature. In addition to the fact that too few have yet followed in the footsteps of those scholars that have pioneered research in the field, the extant scholarship is concentrated along a rather slim range of approaches, that leaves certain topical gaps open for exploration. The role played by identity in China's policies towards Europe is amongst those areas that have been notably absent from the range of academic literature on the topic. Within

¹⁰ Farnell and Crookes 2016

¹¹ Callahan 2008b, 131

¹² Ramo 2007, 12

the general literature on Chinese foreign policies, a rapidly growing literature has investigated the role of identity, historical grievances, and nationalism.¹³ These salient approaches have, however, been conspicuously absent from China-Europe studies. In terms of the long-term developments in Europe as a factor in Chinese political identity development, there is a certain literature within the history discipline that provide a wealth of empirical information, but this has so far mainly been a strand of scholarship separate from International Relations-theorization.¹⁴ There is to the best of my knowledge no extant genealogy, or history of ideas of the Chinese concept of Europe. Regarding contemporary Chinese policies towards Europe, and the role of identity as a factor in these, relevant literature is also rather lacking. Few articles and chapters exist, and those who do are mostly bereft of a deeper historical grounding. The current literature on EU-China relations is thus missing out on what is arguably a key explanatory factor.

The extant literature's mainstay of articles and edited journals is thus often, as incentivized by their format, limited in terms of their theoretical depth and empirical scope, although providing keen insights within their area of focus.¹⁵ The absence of

¹³ See e.g. S. Zhao 2004; Gries 2004; Y. Deng 2008; Z. Wang 2008a; S. Zhao 2013; C. R. Hughes 2006a; Zhimin Chen 2005a; Carlson 2009; Tønnesson 2016; C. R. Hughes 2011a; Callahan 2006b; Callahan 2009; Zhimin Chen 2005b; Beukel 2011; Sinkkonen 2013; Carlson et al. 2016; Y. Zheng 1999

¹⁴ For a selection of some key books of this literature, that will be engaged with in more detail in the historical chapters, see Svarverud 2007a; Lackner, Amelung, and Kurtz 2001; Huangfu 2012; Miller 2013; Y. C. Wang 1966; Meissner 2006; S. Kirchner 2013; Kirby 1984; Albers 2016; Teng and Fairbank 1979a; Yongjin Zhang 1991b; Angle 2000; Pusey 1983

¹⁵ In addition to the works treated in more detail in this and the subsequent chapters, the following contributions also make for interesting reads on China-EU relations, even though falling outside the focus of this thesis Geeraerts 2013; Noesselt 2012; Chaban and Holland 2008; Wiessala, Wilson, and Taneja 2009b; Vogt 2012; Hong 2012; CASS European Research Institute 2008; Huo 2005; Barysch, Grant, and

comprehensive studies of identity as a factor in China-Europe relations leaves the field of possible theoretical approaches to the topic quite open. As one of the main edited volumes on China-EU concludes by listing the main variables of the relationship, identity is notable by its absence.¹⁶ The recently published monograph from Christiansen et.al. provides a welcome contribution to the field, and it does indeed refer to ontological security as an important factor in understanding Chinese foreign policy motivations; “Historical narratives about foreign bullying and invasion have been instrumental in securing the Communist Party’s domestic legitimacy after the collapse of the socialism and have nourished scepticism about the Western liberal order.”¹⁷ However, as is natural for a book whose intended scope is an all-encompassing treatise on the relationship, this factor is only allotted two pages.¹⁸ In Casarini’s earlier monograph, a pathbreaking read still almost alone of its kind, the wide scope of including the role of US and East-Asia as actors in the EU-China relationship, similarly points towards further potential research projects being undertaken on the specifics of China’s identity in its EU relations.¹⁹

Edited tomes such as Zhongqi Pan’s excellent take at the role of conceptual differences in China-EU relations broach the identity issue in a constructive manner,²⁰ and a few chapters on Chinese security policies briefly explore the basis on which Chinese and European threat perceptions differ.²¹ However, treatises on these conceptual gaps often regard these concepts and values as immanent aspects of these two political

Leonard 2005; Zhao Chen 2015; Möller 2002a; Men 2011; Yongjin Zhang 2014; Men and Pardo 2014; B. Wu 2010; Wiessala, Wilson, and Taneja 2009a; Austermann, Wang, and Vangeli 2014; Sandschneider 2002; Edmonds 2002

¹⁶ Shambaugh, Sandschneider, and Zhou 2007b

¹⁷ Christiansen, Kirchner, and Wissenbach 2019, 55

¹⁸ Christiansen, Kirchner, and Wissenbach 2019, 55

¹⁹ Casarini 2009

²⁰ Z. Pan 2012a

²¹ E. J. Kirchner, Christiansen, and Dorussen 2016, 12; Duke and Wong 2016, 24

entities, thus not engaging thoroughly enough with the contingent identity constitution processes. This is another gap sought covered by this thesis, and a key contribution that the ontological security literature can make to the understanding of China-EU relations. The Sino-European relationship also holds particular interest with regards to Chinese ontological security-seeking in general. The relationship is in many ways distinct from the ties China has developed with the other major power centres of the world, due to the absence of a strong military aspect. This arguably gives Beijing added room for manoeuvre, utilizing Europe as a testing ground for their redefinition of China's new identity as an international actor. China is currently in the middle of an enormous transition, both its identity on the international stage and towards its domestic public is in a state of flux, and the consequences of a misconstruction of Chinese identity carry potentially damaging consequences for the security of the Chinese party-state.²² "China, however, provides one of the most striking examples of a state's deliberate attempt to change its self-identity and its relationships of identification to other states."²³ Chinese policy white papers highlight Beijing's very real concern regarding these questions, also with regards to Europe.²⁴

In terms of the theoretical scholarship motivating this thesis project, the first main point regards how the study of China-Europe relations in particular, and Chinese foreign policies in general, would benefit from being further included in the case universe of ontological security theory. The role played by identity in foreign policy is a question explored by a number of related theoretical approaches. Although the role of identity tends to be absent in neo-liberal and neo-realist works on international politics, and by extension also of their analyses of Chinese foreign policies, identity as

²² Rozman 2011; Y. Deng 2004

²³ Krolkowski 2008, 120

²⁴ For a full list of the Chinese government's White Papers, see the web portal at PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019

a factor to be considered alongside more ‘hard’ aspects such as geography and power capabilities is still present in numerous studies within the classical and neo-classical realist traditions, although often related to through the prism of the role of nationalism or national strategic culture.²⁵ Thus, in Yahuda’s seminal work on international politics in the Asia Pacific, he underlines the importance of geography and territorial security as drivers of the foreign policies of the countries of the regions, but also points to the important role played by cultural, ethnic and historical issues.²⁶ In particular, he notes how issues of identity carries especially large weight in analysing Chinese foreign policies over the last half-century.²⁷ Among the relevant aspects of state identity for international politics, an increasing body of scholarship has furthermore pointed out how perceptions of threat are dependent upon interpretation of identities,²⁸ your identity on the international arena thus matters for the security milieu that circumscribes your policies. Based on such implications, constructivists such as Wendt have named identity security one of a state’s four basic interests,²⁹ while related scholarship in the liberal vein has utilized Nye’s concept of ‘soft power’ to further analyse the effects of identity as a means of power in world politics.³⁰

The problem demonstrated by the literatures above is, however, that they tend to define identity as a given variable. The growing literature on ontological security, to

²⁵ For leading thinkers within this literature, see eg. Mearsheimer 2018; Walt 2019; Kissinger 2011; Morgenthau 1955; Johnston 1998; Feng 2007; Wiarda 2013

²⁶ M. B. Yahuda 2004, 10–12

²⁷ M. Yahuda 1999, 651–53

²⁸ Campbell 1992; Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth 2014

²⁹ Wendt 1994

³⁰ Nye 2009; S. Ding 2010

the contrary, emphasizes in the poststructuralist vein how a country's identity is a precondition for its policy preferences and motivations, but without discounting the role of material factors *per se*. To establish and uphold a stable, legitimate identity, internally and externally, is thus a real and valid matter of security for any state actor on the world stage.³¹ Behaviour in order to affirm the state's sense of self-identity may, moreover, be at odds with the rationality derived from a narrow definition of security-seeking.³² In the case of China, a state which is currently undergoing a major transition in its role on the world stage, the concept of ontological security takes on added importance, and it does so also in the case of Chinese relations with Europe. Scholarship on Chinese foreign policy has repeatedly and saliently addressed the questions of Chinese identity as a factor in Beijing's relationship with actors such as the US and Japan.³³ There is also a considerable body of literature addressing the effects of the rising Chinese nationalist movements from the early 1990s onwards that draws attention to the identity and emotions in Chinese statecraft. However, Yong Deng's prescient book on Chinese status-seeking, is as an example quite typical in that it only allocates a couple of pages to a mention of China-Europe, highlighting the extent to which there is a double gap in the literature, where EU-China books do not engage with identity, and identity literature on China does not engage with China's relations with Europe.³⁴ However, since the painful Chinese transition to modernity from the 19th century onwards, Europe, as the imperial centre of the new Westphalian world order, has been a central arena for China's quest to establish and explore a new

³¹ For key theory-developing texts, see Steele 2008a; Zarakol 2010; Zarakol 2016; Mitzen 2006a; Skey 2010; Rumelili 2014; Ejdus 2018; Gustafsson 2014a; Subotić 2016; S. Kay 2012; Steele 2005a; Mitzen 2006b; Krolkowski 2008

³² Steele 2005b

³³ See e.g. R. Li 2008; Z. Wang 2012; Rozman 2012; Jian Yang 2010; Nathan and Scobell 2012; Rozman 2013a; Qiu 2006; Larson and Shevchenko 2010a; Callahan 2005b; Sinkkonen 2014; Callahan 2004a

³⁴ Y. Deng 2008

stable identity. This thesis thus contends that such an approach is all the more relevant also in the case of China's Europe policies.

For China in general, the efforts to project a legitimate identity have been given added urgency in recent years as the repercussions of China's rapid economic and political rise made the question of China's ontological security even more important.³⁵ In order for the Chinese authorities to achieve security for the continuation of their regime, and the continued rise of China through a challenging reform period, two necessary conditions need to be met, both being intimately tied to the question of ontological security: Domestically, the regime needs to constitute itself as the legitimate representative of a rejuvenated Chinese civilization, and internationally they need to constitute China as a peacefully rising power.³⁶ What is more, these goals are both intimately intertwined, as international status seeking is inevitably entangled with domestic legitimization games.³⁷ Beijing's top concern is the preservation of its political system, a goal closely related to economic growth.³⁸ Economic growth is linked to internal stability and international perceptions of China; at the same time, international acceptance and approval are major sources of domestic legitimacy for the CCP.³⁹

At present, as difficult and long overdue economic and political reform processes are being set in motion, this transformation puts China in a position of extra vulnerability concerning its ontological security, a development that further explicates the utility of

³⁵ A. Goldstein 2008; H. Wang 2004

³⁶ R. Li 2008; Rozman 1999; Ramo 2007, 7

³⁷ Carvalho and Neumann 2014; Fearon 1994

³⁸ F.-L. Wang 2004, 19; China News 2009; A. Goldstein 2008

³⁹ S. Ding 2010, 257

ontological security theory in research on Beijing's foreign policy motivators.⁴⁰ Furthermore, there have also been a number of calls for a more theoretically informed discussion to the topics of Chinese identity politics and nationalism overall. Notably, in their landmark investigation into Chinese identity seeking, Dittmer and Kim sketch out a number of broad principles for future research programs asking for a more theoretically stringent approach.⁴¹ Similarly, in his contribution, Hunt asks that "this notion of a constructed identity may deserve to be taken a step farther" in terms of their co-constitutiveness within political and economic networks of meaning.⁴² The argument imbued in this thesis is that ontological security expands upon, and answers to precisely these issues. The application of ontological security as a theoretical lens is, as will be detailed in the next chapter, based on the analytical salience it can lend to the analysis of the identity factor in China-Europe relations, by enabling it to bridge historical and contemporary dynamics through a clearly articulated framework.

As regards the second theoretical point to which this thesis seeks to contribute, this thesis will address an equally important area deserving further scholarship; namely exploring the processes of ontological security in a large non-Western political entity. Whilst the extant literature on the role of identity in Chinese foreign policies has predominantly been addressed through identity theories that differ from the more rigorous framework of ontological security approaches,⁴³ so has the literature on ontological security traditionally been distinguished through a certain overemphasis in focus on relatively homogenous nation-states in the Western hemisphere.⁴⁴ By addressing this double gap in the literature, this project's focus on the case of China seeks to enrich the scope and applicability of ontological security by testing this

⁴⁰ Kinnvall 2004b

⁴¹ Dittmer and Kim 1993a

⁴² Hunt 1993a, 79

⁴³ R. Wong 2013; Rozman 2013a; Rozman 2012; R. Li 2008

⁴⁴ S. Kay 2012; S. Kay 2012; Steele 2005a; Steele 2008a; Mitzen 2006b

theoretical approach on a complex and consequential key actor that historically has had its identity violently challenged by the European Westphalian paradigm, rather than reified by it. As much as the analysis of Chinese foreign policies towards Europe can be enriched by applying the theoretical optic of ontological security, so can ontological security theory itself be enriched by the inclusion of an in-depth analysis of the Chinese case, in particular with regards to diversifying the traditionally Western-centred set of case studies that have informed broad swaths of the literature on identity and politics.

Precisely the ability of the ontological security framework to “[offer] a way to compare systems across time and space,”⁴⁵ makes it a versatile and analytically solid tool for undertaking this thesis’ research ambition of combining a broad historical spectrum with a spatial focus on an understudied non-Western case study. This combination of analytical flexibility within clearly defined fundamental parameters, also has the added strength of being disposed for further theoretical development. In Chapter 2 I will thus further substantiate my call for a more robust theoretical lens, based on a broader spectre of geographically, temporally, and culturally diverse cases, arguing for why this is of general value to the field of ontological security, in addition to providing analytical strength to this thesis’ investigation of the role of identity in China-Europe relations. Following from this theoretical debate, the thesis engages with the empirical material collected on China’s relations to Europe, through the chapter structure outlined below.

⁴⁵ Zarakol 2017, 48

1.3 Thesis Structure

The thesis is made up of three parts in addition to the conclusion. In this first part, the research project is introduced, along with its main analytical concepts. Following from this, the ontological security approach and the investigation's research methodology and methods will be presented. Then, in keeping with the dual focus of the proposed project, the second part of the thesis consists of the diachronic analysis of China's idea of Europe, and how this related to the Chinese efforts to redefine itself in the modern world. Seeking to discern the roots of the current Chinese endeavour to achieve ontological security, the investigation focuses on a set of historical junctures that carry particular significance for the Chinese effort to achieve ontological security after the European influx starting with the Opium War marked the traumatic beginning of China's modern era.⁴⁶ Having contextualized Chinese ontological security in historical terms, the third constituent part will analyse the synchronic aspect; to what degree the latest chapter of the Chinese efforts to achieve ontological security manifests itself in present-day foreign policy. For this section, the scope is broadened both spatially and conceptually, in order to undertake a synchronic case study of the importance of Chinese perceptions of identity and security in shaping its current Europe policies. Finally, the conclusion will review the research findings, and summarize the analytical conclusions.

Following from this three-part structure, after the introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 will address the research question raised in the first sections of this thesis through arguing in detail for the salience of addressing the identity factor in China-EU relations through the framework of ontological security. Chapter 3 then explicates further on the epistemological basis for this research project, by detailing the derived

⁴⁶ E. S. K. Fung 2010b

methodology and research methods. The second part, namely the diachronic section, traces and analyses the role of Europe in the foundational narratives upon which various Chinese polities have been sought established, following the ontological security crisis surrounding the fall of the Qing dynasty. Chapter 4 introduces the section, and goes on to give a historical background of how the continent of Europe gradually became introduced to the Chinese scholarly corpus of texts from the days of the Roman Empire onwards. Chapter 5 builds from the historical background to give a diachronic analysis that traces the Chinese concept of Europe through the early modern era, and how this concept related to Chinese ontological security seeking as political entrepreneurs strived to re-establish a foundational narrative for the Chinese polity. This analysis focuses on two on the key moments of Chinese ontological security crises, namely the Self-Strengthening Movement in the aftermath of the Opium Wars, and secondly the political and philosophical movements leading up to the foundation of the Republic of China. Chapter 6 traces this analysis further into the post-WWII era, through looking at the development of China's view of Europe in two other key moments of the history of the Chinese polity, namely the foundation of the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong, and the fundamental reform of this People's Republic by Deng Xiaoping some three decades later.

The third part consists of the synchronic analysis. The section follows on from the tracing of the long-term foundational narratives of the Chinese state in part one, but focusing on a considerably narrower temporal timeframe allows this section to proceed to a more detailed analytical level. Thus, it includes the tracing of the foundational narratives into a three-layered analytical approach: First, it seeks to verify and trace the fundamental narratives forming the base of Chinese ontological security, establishing that these were indeed framing Beijing's Europe policies of these years. Second, these chapters strive to detail the more specific main discourses derived from the fundamental narratives, at the level of the concrete contemporary political and diplomatic issues of the time. Third, it seeks to explore the political repercussions

of these discourses and how the identity factor may have served as a salient element in the key political issues of the contemporary era of Sino-European relations. This research method is applied to three key cases of political and diplomatic importance in the relationship between Europe and China over the last two decades. Firstly, Chapter 7 introduces the synchronic section before moving on to an analysis of the relations between China and the EU in 2003-2006, as the predictions of the two parties consolidating a new power axis in world politics was cut short by disagreements over the EU arms embargo policy. Chapter 8 analyses the symbolic status implications relevant to the diplomatic tensions between Beijing, Berlin, and Paris in the years 2007-2010, as a number of issues of little practical relevance but with considerable ontological security implications for China caused a substantial rupture in Europe-China relations. Chapter 9 brings the analysis closer to the current date, and includes Xi Jinping's ascendancy to power and the discursive changes that entailed. These changes are further analysed through studying the cases of Beijing's boycotts of the UK and Oslo in the years 2010 to 2016, and the extent to which both the reasons for the boycott, and the rationale behind the diplomatic solutions to these issues were heavily informed by identity dynamics.

Finally, the concluding chapter 10 will summarize the findings of the preceding empirical chapters and consolidate their theoretical implications. In sum, the thesis concludes that Europe has indeed been a major constitutive factor in the political and ideological contests of Chinese ontological security seeking. Particularly in the early decades of the last century, the European influence was integral to the Chinese efforts at re-establishing a stable national identity. Even though the relative influence of Europe in this was substantially reduced following the Second World War, it was still notable enough to effect Chinese policies towards the continent. In terms of the second constituent part of this thesis' research question, the conclusion is that Chinese motivations based on matters of identity and ontological security has had a substantial impact in some of the key moments defining current China-Europe relations. In sum,

this thesis contends that one of the more salient factors in the China-Europe relationship through decades of political power-shifts and diplomatic vagaries, is indeed the one that has received some of the least attention; namely the identity factor.

Chapter 2: On Ontological Security

2.1 What Ontological Security Can Do for China

In analysing identity as a factor in China-Europe relations, this thesis has opted for engaging the issue through the framework of ontological security, an approach that focuses on the need for actors in the international system to obtain a stable sense of who they are as a polity. Over the following sections I will briefly outline the argument for why the ontological security approach is a salient lens through which to analyse Chinese Europe policies. The chapter then reviews the literature on ontological security, situating the chosen theoretical construct within a range of intra-paradigm debates. Third, based on these arguments, I develop my approach to ontological security theory more in detail, and discuss what the case of China-Europe relations can contribute to develop ontological security theories further.

In essence, there are two contributions that ontological security can make to the analysis of China-Europe relations: First, it allows for the systematic analysis of the identity factor in Chinese foreign policy, by engaging with the issue through a theoretically stringent framework that has already demonstrated its salience. Amongst the strengths of the ontological security theory when engaging with the issue of identity processes, is not only the systematized linking between identity drivers and security interests, but also the antifoundational view of the Self, that allows for a deeper analysis of the formation of common identities whilst avoiding the pitfalls of reifying the state.⁴⁷ Given that the Chinese polity has experienced a century

⁴⁷ Kinnvall, Manners, and Mitzen 2018, 254–55

of experimentation with very different political types of statehood, following from a very different trajectory into modernity from the European one, this thesis argues that this is a particularly important factor in the case of China. This approach also allows for a more dynamic inclusion of the literature on Chinese identity and nationalism, as it provides a conceptual framework that allows for more easily bridging the scholarships focusing on respectively the state-led, and the society-led aspects of modern Chinese nationalism.⁴⁸ Following from this point, I will argue that one of the main strengths of ontological security theory is in the approach's conceptual openness in analysing through which societal structures and social processes ontological security is sought achieved.⁴⁹ To quote Zarakol: "The concept of ontological security may offer one of the rare bridges of commensurability for societies along temporal and spatial lines."⁵⁰ In the Chinese case this conceptualisation is also helpful in analysing the overlapping dynamics of state security and the regime security of the CCP. A similar set of concerns also underpins this thesis's utilization of the term

⁴⁸ Scholarship on Chinese nationalism have evolved into a considerably body of knowledge, following the flourishing of nationalist discourses in post-Cold War China. For one of the earliest and best surveys of the literature, see S. Zhao 2004; A useful way of subdividing the literature is by distinguishing between scholarship focusing on the state-led aspects of the proclaimed new wave of nationalism, focusing on the instrumentalist use of patriotism by the CCP, in particular after 1989. Key works here include Y. Deng 2008; Gries 2004; Z. Wang 2008a; S. Zhao 2013; C. R. Hughes 2006a; Zhimin Chen 2005a; Carlson 2009; Tønnesson 2016; Other scholars have been focusing mainly on the "bottom-up" dynamics of popular nationalism, and the interplay between these dynamics and the state-level actions, such as eg. C. R. Hughes 2011a; Callahan 2006b; Callahan 2009; Zhimin Chen 2005b; Beukel 2011; Sinkkonen 2013 For a succinct overview of other key debates within the literature on Chinese nationalism, including the broader discussion on primordial or instrumentalist views on the roots of Chinese nationalist sentiments, the degree to which imperial China could be seen as harbouring nationalist or merely culturalist ideology, and the contemporary debates on more assertive and virulent strands of Chinese nationalism, see; Carlson et al. 2016

⁴⁹ See I. B. Neumann 2014; I. B. Neumann and Wigen 2018

⁵⁰ Zarakol 2016, 49–50

“polity” instead of more common concepts such as state or nation, when describing the processes of Chinese ontological security seeking over the last centuries. The broader purview of this term allows for a more precise analysis of differing modalities of identity, institutionalization, hierarchy and authority across cases.⁵¹ The second main point on which ontological security may contribute to the study of China more broadly, is the ability of the framework to incorporate locally relevant dynamics within the purview of its epistemological approach, which makes it a preferred vehicle for bringing certain concepts found in the Chinese area studies literature more fully into the canon of international relations theory, and thus also bringing IR theory more coherently into the study of Chinese internal and external political drivers. As such, this thesis will contend that the case of China-Europe relations is a salient case to exemplify, explore, and expand aspects of ontological security that until now have been under-theorized.

2.2 Defining and Debating Ontological Security

In the quest to analyse the interactions and processes of the large-scale social structures shaping global-level politics, ontological security focuses on what creates and sustains the identities of state actors on the international arena, enabling concerted efforts and complex large-scale social structures. These are questions fundamental to social science already at the field’s birth, Plato famously likened

⁵¹ For an extended argument on this concept, defined by the authors as denoting a social entity that “has a distinct identity; a capacity to mobilise persons and their resources for political purposes, that is, for value satisfaction; and a degree of institutionalization and hierarchy (leaders and constituents)”, see Ferguson and Mansbach 1996; Ferguson and Mansbach 2008, 371; For a further argument in favour of this concept’s utility in IR, see eg. Jackson 2004a

politics to the weaver's craft; a matter of ensuring cohesiveness of the polity.⁵² A fundamental task for any polity is thus the ability to provide its members with a sense of identity, in other words a meaningful co-existence as a part of that polity. The creation of large-scale societies beyond the primary groups and bands of the early man, is owed to the human ability to create, in Anderson's words, imagined communities covering thousands or indeed millions of persons an individual would never even meet.⁵³ Built on Giddens's sociological work on identity and modernity,⁵⁴ the concept of ontological security was introduced into international relations theory in the late 90's,⁵⁵ and has over the last two decades been systematized and developed by authors such as Mitzen, Steele, Kinnvall, Zarakol, and others into a concept denoting the need for these imagined communities in the international system to obtain a stable sense of who they are.⁵⁶

Ontological security-seeking is defined as the need to "minimize hard uncertainty by imposing cognitive order on the environment",⁵⁷ underscoring the importance for a

⁵² Plato 1995, 34–37; I. B. Neumann 2018b, 167–68

⁵³ Anderson 1991; Harari 2014, 149

⁵⁴ Giddens 1991; The concept of ontological security was originally developed in the field of psychology, in the works of Laing 1998; Erikson 1994

⁵⁵ The notable "first-movers" in this respect are the works of Huysmans 1998; and McSweeney 1999; These works tie into the general theoretical movement towards identity on those years, as spearheaded by eg. Wendt 1994; For an overview of the use of the ontological security concept within other social sciences, see Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017, 17

⁵⁶ For a succinct overview of the field see eg. Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017; or the concise literature overview in Ejdus 2018, 884–90; Amongst the main texts defining and developing ontological security theory over the last decades are Mitzen 2006d; Kinnvall 2004a; Steele 2005a; Kinnvall 2007; Steele 2008a; Zarakol 2010; Zarakol 2011; Guzzini 2012b; Gustafsson 2014a; Rumelili 2014; Subotić 2016; Zarakol 2016; Kinnvall 2018; Innes and Steele 2013; Lupovici 2012; Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017; G. He 2014; S. Kay 2012

⁵⁷ Mitzen 2006d, 346

state to uphold a stable cognitive understanding of its identity as a source of domestic legitimacy. As Steele points out, ontological security-seeking behaviour in order to affirm the state's sense of self-identity, may at times even lead to strategic choices incommensurate with rational interest seeking in a narrow sense.⁵⁸ As he persuasively argues through cases such as the Belgian decision to face almost certain physical defeat in order to save their self-identity and honour, when deciding to fight Germany in 1914, this demonstrates how the conventional concept of survival in the sense of physical security fails to explain a range of foreign policy actions.⁵⁹ Thus, as Steele argues, "self-identity, rather than survival, becomes an operative analytical concept around which future security research could be centred."⁶⁰ As summarized by Kinnvall and Mitzen, the ontological security literature is thus at the core a project that is; "fundamentally focused on attempting to articulate the relationship between identity and security, and between identity and important political outcomes in world politics, with the premise that political subjectivity is socially constituted in ways that have reverberating effects at many levels."⁶¹

In addressing these issues, ontological security does, as the name entails, bring the concept of identity into the field of security, and the concept of security into the field of identity, in an effort to operationalize and analyse the role played by identity configurations in international relations, and in particular the identities of a specific kind of social unit, namely the modern nation-state. Identity and security, as two of the core concepts of the field of IR, are both contested and far from clearly defined analytical categories; as such it follows that a combination of these two concepts into the relatively speaking young theoretical framework of ontological security, leaves a range of questions subject to theoretical debate. The most prescient fault-lines in the

⁵⁸ Steele 2005b

⁵⁹ Steele 2008b, 110–11

⁶⁰ Steele 2008b, 164

⁶¹ Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017, 5

current debates are first, the aggregation issue, namely how and on what basis one may apply individual-level theories on to society level; secondly, the debate regarding the role of the Other for the sense of the Self, and to which degree the Self is sustained through self-reflexion or relational interaction; and thirdly, which role is played by narratives, namely the need to (re)create a stable identity of a group in temporal terms. In the following sections these three debates are introduced, defining the standpoint of this thesis in the ongoing scholarly exchange.

2.2.1 *Aggregation Dilemmas*

Ontological security was imported into international relations theory from the realm of psychology.⁶² Thus, when Laing first introduced the term, it was done in the context of analysing schizophrenia in individuals,⁶³ and in Giddens's development of the term in the field of sociology, the individual's need for a routinized self-identity in late modernity was the focal point.⁶⁴ As such, one of the key conceptual leaps of the ontological security concept, and simultaneously also the most contentious, is the adoption of a sociological theory for analysing individuals, for the purpose of analysing the practices of states.⁶⁵ This transferral of a theoretical framework from the level of analysis of the individual to that of the state, entailed epistemological and analytical challenges, the main issue being the degree of anthropomorphising of the state. In Mitzen's pioneering transfer of Giddens's concept to the state level, she argues that "like the state's need for physical security, the need for ontological security is extrapolated from the individual level. Ontological security refers to the need to

⁶² Dittmer and Kim 1993b, 3

⁶³ Laing 1998

⁶⁴ Giddens 1991, 35–40; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017, 6–7

⁶⁵ Steele 2008b; Mitzen 2006d; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017; See also Huysmans 1998, 251

experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time (...) in order to realize a sense of agency.”⁶⁶ I will argue her main theoretical rationale is the justification “that society must be cognitively stable in order to secure the identities of individuals, and as such individuals will become attached to these stable group identities.”⁶⁷ The risk with this approach is that it may easily transform into anthropomorphising the state, leading to a simplified analytical lens reifying the state as an unitary actor.⁶⁸

In one of the most eloquent critiques of the ontological security approach, Richard Ned Lebow points precisely to this predicament, as the first of three counterarguments to the ontological security literature, all of which deserve consideration: “Ontological security rests on the premise that states have, or can have, something resembling a singular and consistent identity. This is no more possible for political units as it is for individuals.”⁶⁹ Second, he notes that ontological may be epiphenomenal, in the sense that policies at odds with national identifications rarely lead to electoral punishment, instead it has been seen to alter these national identifications. Third, following from this, he points out that establishing cause and effect of identity when identity itself is co-constitutive is impossible, a point exemplified by Stefano Guzzini’s elegant summary of the *problematique*; “if identity is heterogenous – and it usually is – then almost anything goes.”⁷⁰ Lebow’s critique serves well to illustrate this thesis’ decision to approach the research project from a more poststructuralist angle, much due to how this tradition more saliently engages with the issues Lebow points out. Firstly, in that no reified monolithic identity is ever assumed, instead it is precisely the co-

⁶⁶ Mitzen 2006d, 342

⁶⁷ Mitzen 2006d, 352

⁶⁸ See discussions in I. B. Neumann 2004; Jackson 2004b; Doty 2000; Holm forthcoming; Rossdale 2015

⁶⁹ Lebow 2016, 27

⁷⁰ Guzzini 2012a, 50

constitutive nature of an identity as a necessary ever-ongoing co-constitutive identity construction.⁷¹ To the second point, this is also in line with the poststructuralist view of the political contestation project, relating to how discourses are not fully given, but develops through political contestation, as reflected in Foucault's idea of the power/knowledge nexus.⁷² Regarding the third point, the linguistic turn has long argued precisely that a clear 'Unity-of Science' based definition of causality is a moot point within the social sciences, but that less rigid forms of causal implications may be possible.⁷³ Thus, with regards to the question of whether the identities and discourses of China and Europe that are presented by the Chinese policymakers and intellectuals is really just epiphenomenal, secondary notions serving instrumentally to legitimise policies and interests the actors would have followed in any case,⁷⁴ this thesis postulates that these concepts do indeed have constitutive effects on the policies that Chinese policymakers have enacted. The epistemological details of this approach will be treated more at length in Chapter 3, but in sum I argue that engaging more actively with poststructuralists' understanding of identity formation, brings to bear to the topic a theoretical tradition and the methodological toolbox that can saliently contribute to the key areas in which Lebow finds ontological security, as formulated by Mitzen, wanting.⁷⁵

Mitzen's conceptualization of state-level ontological security has been criticized for giving undue importance to the state level overall,⁷⁶ by for example Krolikowski, using Chinese foreign policy as a case to argue that Chinese ontological insecurity is

⁷¹ See eg. Dunn and Neumann 2016; I. B. Neumann 2004; Subotic 2018

⁷² Foucault 1993; I. B. Neumann 2001

⁷³ Hansen 2006, 25–27; Dunn and Neumann 2016, 44; Wendt 1998; Wæver 2003

⁷⁴ M. S. Andersen 2016, 47

⁷⁵ Lebow 2016, 23–34

⁷⁶ Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 33–34; Mälksoo 2015; Roe 2008

something only found on the individual level.⁷⁷ This critique in my view underestimates the importance of an ontological group-level self in order to sustain a large-scale polity in the first place, and secondly overestimates the level of homogeneity needed within a state for that entity still to be considered a salient analytical category. Krolikowski's point that as different groups in the population have different understandings and motives that simply do not line up to a coherent identity,⁷⁸ underlines the dangers of reification of the state, but also underestimates how this is precisely what is to be expected, and that this is why the state-level ontological security of a polity is a matter of constant reiteration and construction.⁷⁹ "All states are marked by an inherent tension between the various domains that need to be aligned for an imagined community to come into being. States are never finished entities, states are in permanent need of reproduction, always in a process of becoming."⁸⁰ The narrative approach to the question of identity formation, that will be detailed later in this chapter, thus also is an approach that addresses these issues raised, and reduces the risk of reductionist definitions of reifying cultures and political units, and that it explicitly recognizes and analyses the non-essentialized, and co-constitutive nature of identity formation.

One result of the view that polities also need a sense of ontological security for them to exist as an intersubjective reality amongst its individuals, is my stand that ontological security is a concern deeply emmeshed with the polities as emergent actors. Unlike Gidden's concept where ontological security is linked as a result of modernity, I follow Zarakol and others in arguing that ontological security is integral

⁷⁷ Krolikowski 2008

⁷⁸ Krolikowski 2008, 129

⁷⁹ Steele 2008b, 79; Wilhelmsen 2013, 33

⁸⁰ Campbell 1992, 12

to the creation of polities, also before the modern era,⁸¹ although arguably the rapidly accelerated pace of social change brought forth by the scientific and industrial revolutions and late-modern globalization have certainly aggregated the ontological security challenges faced by modern states.⁸² Intimately related to these debates on the ontological security dilemmas of large-scale polities, is thus the conceptualizations and crisis a state's identity may face.

As Ejodus argues in his erudite treatment of this aspect of ontological security theory, the tradition's omissions on clearly defining ontological crises, results in the absence of a viable conceptual distinction between ontological security and ontological insecurity.⁸³ Steele's contribution to ontological security theory also included pioneering systematic reflection on ontological security crises, defining them as unpredictable events disrupting the self-identities of a polity, and thus being of particular interest to scholars investigating the construction of these identities.⁸⁴ Key to this definition is regarding critical situations not as objective facts, but as part and parcel of social construction, as such I find this a more convincing line of argument as opposed to authors such as e.g. Dittmer and Kim, who arguably overemphasizes the role of objective economic indicators as the criteria for when an identity crisis does arise.⁸⁵ As Ejodus explains:

The key feature of critical situations is the inability of collective actors to bracket out the above-described fundamental questions about the unreliability of international order, the finitude of polities, the impermanence of relationships and the inconsistency of collective autobiographies. They are usually created by

⁸¹ Zarakol 2016

⁸² See Kinnvall 2004a; Giddens 1991

⁸³ Ejodus 2018, 883–84

⁸⁴ Steele 2008b, 12, 24

⁸⁵ Dittmer and Kim 1993c, 28–29

unpredictable events that break established routines and prompt polities to seek, more or less skilfully, answers to fundamental questions at the level of discursive consciousness.⁸⁶

Regarding these situations of crisis as key nodal points of the social construction of collective identities is thus precisely the reason for this thesis' focus on these episodes as the key cases for the diachronic section's analysis of the development of the role of Europe in China's ontological security seeking since the Opium Wars. Overall, this thesis will thus be based on an approach to the aggregation question that relates to the states in question as a distinct kind of polity, whose identifications are politically co-constituted, fluid and multiple in nature, but still constituted ontologically through constructed distinctions defining and delineating the polity as an entity separate from others and with a politically salient *raison d'être*.

2.2.2 *The Self and The Others*

This thesis' focus on the construction of a stable Chinese Self, necessitates analysis on the modes of Othering. The question of how the process of creating ontological security is mainly endogenously driven by internal and reflexive, or exogenously driven through external and relational processes, is a central debate in the ontological security literature, reflecting the broader theoretical agent/structure debates.⁸⁷ A number of IR scholars have emphasized the relational aspect of ontological security, namely inter-subjective processes of creating a stable self-identity mainly through

⁸⁶ Ejdus 2018, 892–93

⁸⁷ See Kinnvall, Manners, and Mitzen 2018, 252–53; Giddens 1991, 35–37; Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017; I. B. Neumann 2018b; For the classic treatise on ethnicity and boundary practices, see Barth 1998

routinizing the polity's relationship with others.⁸⁸ However, scholars such as Steele and Subotic differ on the extent to which the relationships with the Other is the main motivation in ontological security seeking, pointing to that there exists an internal drive for a polity to conform to the expectations it has of itself.⁸⁹ And that, as such, "the identities of states emerge from their own project of the self."⁹⁰ In line with the standpoint argued by e.g. Kinnvall and Zarakol, I agree with both parties to an extent, and will argue for the complementarity of these two factors, as the constitution of a stable identity of the self is a process in which both the Other and the Self play a part.⁹¹ An entity's project of the self is thus circumscribed and given directions by the broader social environment, whilst one's processes of Othering is co-constituted with the project of defining oneself as a self-same entity throughout time. In particular this middle-ground perspective is all the more relevant for the analyses of cases such as the Chinese one. As Zarakol points out in her comments to Steele's endogenous approach:

However, all his examples (e.g. the United States, Belgium) are Western states, which may be leading him to overgeneralize how such narratives about the 'possible self' are autonomously and endogenously generated. Since the nineteenth century, the 'possible selves' of many states around the world have been bracketed by comparisons to the West and fears about relative backwardness, and this preoccupation makes it very difficult to articulate aspirations about the state 'self' in a non-reactive manner.⁹²

⁸⁸ See, in particular, Mitzen 2006d; Mitzen 2006c; Rumelili 2015a; Katzenstein 1996; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017

⁸⁹ Steele 2008b; Subotić 2016; Delehanty and Steele 2009

⁹⁰ Steele 2008b, 49; This view has garnered some support in the psychological field based on research of small-group dynamics, that points to in-group identification being prior to out-group identification. See Allport 1979; Lebow 2012, 85–88

⁹¹ Zarakol 2010; Kinnvall 2004a

⁹² Zarakol 2010, 20

These identity drivers are also acutely relevant for the Chinese experience from the late Qing dynasty onwards. As Wæver points out in the case of Europe, in a theoretical move that also serves to further transcend the dichotomy between in-group reflexivity and external Othering; one may also define one's identity based not on an external other, but against a former iteration of oneself as the constitutive Other. I will argue that this 'temporal Othering', in Gustafsson's words,⁹³ is a particularly relevant approach in the case of China, with its long historiographical tradition.

A second aspect of the theoretization of the Self and Othering, closely related to the first debate is the query of whether and what type of Other is necessary to constitute the Self. Addressing the question of modes of Othering, the core process of this creation process of collective identification is the inclusion of the "we"-group through its delineation from the out-groups perceived as different.⁹⁴ Providing a most useful tool for such an analysis is Hansen's methodology of identifying the signs and terms that articulate the construction of identity.⁹⁵ Challenging the conception that the creation of the self necessarily entails the construction of one radically different other,⁹⁶ she argues in line with a number of other authors that it allows also for a set of degrees of difference and otherness.⁹⁷ The unpacking of the Other category to include a wide range of qualitatively different relations, opens for a more diversified and salient conceptualization of the Othering process as a web of graduated actors towards which one is defining oneself with, towards or against other actors as a

⁹³ Gustafsson 2019

⁹⁴ I. B. Neumann 2013; Giesen 1998; Wodak and Heer 2008; Wigen 2012; Koselleck 2004, 155–91

⁹⁵ Hansen 2006

⁹⁶ See Campbell 1992, 55

⁹⁷ Hansen 2006, 42; Todorov 1984; Rumelili 2007, 20–27

Radical Other, as is e.g. Campbell's main focus,⁹⁸ to various degrees of non-radical otherness, friendship, and sameness.⁹⁹ As authors such as Rumelili, Berenskoetter, and Mattern have emphasized, friends and special relationships can be as fundamental to ontological security as enemies.¹⁰⁰ As Zarakol argues, drawing on the classic sociological study by Norbert Elias, finding one's place as a group furthermore often entails engaging with a hierarchy of Others, some whom you Other as inferior, and some of which you may define as your superiors, and to which group you aspire to belong.¹⁰¹ As the empirical sections of this thesis will demonstrate, the post-Opium War Chinese ontological security seeking was similarly a deeply interrelated exercise of re-formulating a biographical narrative, a central co-constitutive feature of which was the definition of which of the various geographical and temporal others should be defined as what kind of an Other.

2.2.3 *Regarding Narrative*

Narrative was regarded by Giddens as one of the foundational features of his definition of the ontological security concept: "A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*."¹⁰² The definition of a narrative utilized in

⁹⁸ Campbell 1992

⁹⁹ For a discussion on the degrees of sameness, and the overlooked role of friendship in IR, see Berenskoetter 2007, 149; Wæver 1995; Berenskoetter and Giegerich 2010; Ringmar 2002; Browning 2002; Nordin and Smith 2018a; For discussions about defining the Other as an ideal for which one strives to be similar, see the relevant chapters in I. B. Neumann 2016 and; Wigen 2018

¹⁰⁰ Rumelili 2007; Mattern 2005; Berenskoetter 2007; K. M. Haugevik 2018; Ejdus 2018

¹⁰¹ Zarakol 2011; Elias and Scotson 1994

¹⁰² Giddens 1991, 54; This was symptomatic of a broader reappraisal of the role of narratives, from treating them as merely representational to analysing them as ontological, from focusing on storytelling as a mode of analytical representing and presentation, to a way of constituting lived reality into identity. See eg. Somers and

this thesis follows established practice, by regarding it as a form of discourse constituted through four main features; the constellation of relationality, embedded in time and space, through a process of selection constituted by causal emplotment.¹⁰³ Narratives do not simply list events, they tie them together and order them into a story, endowing the events with meaning as they are being identified as parts of an integrated whole.¹⁰⁴ Nietzsche's philosophical knowledge claim that "only something which has no history can be defined,"¹⁰⁵ is thus summarised by Jackson as deeply imbued by narrative: "From the ongoing flow of experience we select different lessons to learn by narrating that experience back to ourselves in terms of the language that we have inherited by being born into particular societies and social groups; that language, itself a product of previous attempts to summarize experience purposefully."¹⁰⁶ One of Steele's most important contributions to ontological security theory, is how he included, systematized, and operationalized this narrative aspect of identity that Giddens referred to, and applied it also to the level of states.¹⁰⁷

Steele's approach focuses on how narrative is the locus from which researchers can investigate the enabling and constraining role of self-identity, through discourse analysis of the biographical narratives polities tell about themselves, and how

Gibson 1993, 2; Patterson and Monroe 1998, 315–16; Bacon 2012; Mink 2001; Lebow 2012, 46–48; Forsby 2015, 105–7

¹⁰³ Somers 1994, 616; See also a more extensive definition in Patterson and Monroe 1998 as well as more in-depth discussions on the structure of narratives in; Barthes 1975; Genette 1983; Ricoeur 1990; Hayden White 2009; Somers and Gibson 1993; Fredric Jameson 1981; Bal 2009; G. Roberts 2001; Hinchman and Hinchman 1997a; Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2014

¹⁰⁴ See Hayden White 2009, 9; Gustafsson 2011, 42–43; Lawson 2012, 218; Hinchman and Hinchman 1997b, 16; Ricoeur 1990, 157; Lemon 2001, 127; Donnelly and Steele 2019

¹⁰⁵ Nietzsche 2006, 52

¹⁰⁶ Jackson 2010, 124

¹⁰⁷ Steele 2008b, 73

different tellings of these narrative open up different venues for action, an approach that constitutes a central basis of this thesis.¹⁰⁸ "The reason states have an ontological security is because they have a historical account of themselves that has been "built up" through the narrative of agents of the past, present, and the future."¹⁰⁹ This sense of narrative is then, by extension, a key underlying driver of the dynamics of international politics. As Coker points out, in summarising how strategic narratives are fundamental to understanding China-US great power competition, "The human race is a species of story-tellers (...) It is the stories that states and societies tell themselves and others that lead to conflict, or which allow a different, more peaceful part to be pursued."¹¹⁰ This narrated sense of a self in the world is, as Heidegger points out, always incomplete, contested, and evolving,¹¹¹ and to this ongoing identity formation project, as is a key insight of the Foucauldian tradition, power is co-constitutively embedded in the act of how "we construct worlds we know in a world we do not."¹¹²

In shaping the identity of the self, and thereby the distinction to the other and the outlook on the wider world, then, the shaping of the self's history stands pivotal. As Campbell points out, to this renegotiations of the past, narrative is central, as events acquire a status as real as they are remembered assuming a place in the context of a narrative, a process occurring relatively independent of the occurrence of the event itself.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Steele 2008b, 26

¹⁰⁹ Steele 2008b, 35

¹¹⁰ Coker 2015, 90

¹¹¹ Heidegger 2002, 67; Berenskoetter 2014; Laclau 1990, 89–91

¹¹² Onuf 2012, 38

¹¹³ Campbell 1998, 34–36

History is a collection of experiences and memory is the conduit through which we recall those experiences, but traumatic experiences disrupt the ability to channel certain events into a coherent narrative. Edkins (2003) notes how traumatic experiences "destabilize" linear time, thus requiring the latter to be "reinstalled" through narration - which is itself a political act.¹¹⁴

As the past holds power over politicians, however, politicians also hold power over the past. "[A]ctors will reconstruct the past as they debate the future, and as they act towards the future they are likely to (re)remember the past."¹¹⁵ The narrative deciding what we as a society remembers and forgets, and which meaning to bestow on the events is thus a battlefield into which a variety of actors invests large amounts of power and skill to advance their view.¹¹⁶ As any student of modern Chinese politics is acutely aware of, an integral part of the CCP's current political project is the process of selective remembrance and forgetting. For the purpose of strengthening the regime's legitimacy, enormous resources are spent on policing the forgetting of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, or the Tiananmen massacre, as well as utilising a wide mnemonic toolbox to emphasise a historic retelling of the party's exploits.¹¹⁷

Approaching the Chinese identity discourses through the narrative framework, then, allows for a more succinct analysis of the temporality of fundamental identity discourses, as political entrepreneurs always sought to anchor their idea of China in a particular reading of the past, and a particular vision of the future. The historical background chapter of this thesis thus also serves to give the reader an understanding

¹¹⁴ Steele 2008b, 72

¹¹⁵ M. Barnett 1999, 14

¹¹⁶ Müller 2002; Bell 2006

¹¹⁷ See eg. Callahan 2012a; Mitter 2003; Z. Wang 2008a; Duara 1996; Chong 2014; D. Wang 2005b; Economy 2017; Bjornar Sverdrup-Thygeson 2017; Moore 2010

of the historical context the various iterations of a modern Chinese polity arose from, and which historical events they were forced to re-represent in order to create a renewed foundational narrative for the Chinese polity. “Politics can then be understood as explaining who people are in order to shape and re-represent the acting collective. Such processes involve making a stream of diverse and surely internally contradictory events appear as ordered and relatively neutral—that is, to re-represent them in a way that aligns them to the stories that constitute the Self in question.”¹¹⁸ A key point of this thesis is then the analysis of how Chinese politicians has taken on the task of making new coherent Chinese histories of who they are, and Europe’s place in this. The inclusion of Europe as a focal point is important both because Europe played a particular role (from Chinese viewpoint) and, arguably, also salient because this still is a factor in China’s policies towards Europe.

There are two further aspect of the ontological security theory’s utilization of narratives that merits further detailing given their relevance for the empirical analysis ahead, namely the role of narrative emplotment, and the key importance of foundational narratives as part of layered discourses. Working from the two standard assumptions of narratives as an emplotted linguistic constitutive of social life, it follows that the scholarly community should pay more attention to the dynamics of these emplotment structures. These structures provide actors with differing ranges of pre-existing tropes and plots shaping their opportunities to tell a certain types of stories in certain ways,¹¹⁹ and making sense of the world through certain established structures, one of the most fundamental of which is the Aristotelian narrative arc of beginning, middle, and end.¹²⁰ Building on this basic trait of narrative, however, is a

¹¹⁸ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 76

¹¹⁹ Hayden White 2001; Somers 1994, 618; Hayden White 2009; Aristotle 2013, 26

¹²⁰ Kermode 2000, 36; Lebow 2012, 46–48

wide and varied field of narrative emplotment modalities and tropes that serves to shape the basic narratives various societies have told in order to make sense of themselves, inevitably tied to the rhetorical and literary modes of presentation found present in society.¹²¹ As such, one should be careful to assume the homogeneity of these social constructs. Lebow analyses, for example, the role of the Golden Age-narrative, an emplotment based on the idea of long-term civilizational and cultural decay, as an important mode of political narrative in pre-modern times.¹²² This is an emplotment of a political narrative that differs quite substantially from the nationalist and modernist narratives that became a dominant mode of political narrative emplotment in the expanding post-Enlightenment international order, structured around linear development universal history, the plot-line of progress, and the ideational tropes constituting nationalism.

As such, the emplotment of the foundational narratives sustaining the various polities, does not only vary in terms of its temporal plot-lines, but also with regards to which tropes are included in the narrative.¹²³ With regards to the narrative entrepreneurs seeking to reshape the Chinese polity from the late Qing-dynasty onwards, it should thus be kept in mind that they not only sought to reframe the ontological narratives of the Chinese polity, they also sought to do so as a direct result of the ideas of modernity, that propelled into global prominence a distinct and very different type of

¹²¹ Lévi-Strauss 1966, 257; I. B. Neumann 2011a, 87–88; Mink 2001, 219; Hayden White 2001; According to Hayden White 1975 identity narratives of the past necessarily entails the imposition of generic plot structures from the realm of fiction on to the sequence of historical events. The tropes and modes of emplotment, of which he labels four; Romance, Tragedy, Comedy and Satire; For a salient applied analysis of these narrative plots and national identity, see Khoury 2018

¹²² Lebow 2012

¹²³ For further discussions on the constituting factors of nationalism, see Hobsbawm 2012, 14–33; Calhoun 1997; Caṭṭopādhyāya, Chatterjee, and Chatterjee 1986, 38–44; Cash and Kinnvall 2017, 268; Fitzgerald 1995

narrative emplotment as the dominant mode. As Qin relates this to the Chinese post-Opium War identity crisis: "This is a century puzzle, a fundamental problem of identity. In the 2000-year Tributary System, China did not have such a problem, for the Chinese worldview contained nothing like sovereignty, nationalism, and internationalism."¹²⁴ Chief amongst these new emplotments relevant for the creating of a new and externally recognized polity, were the tropes of the linkages of state, ethnicity and nation embedded in nationalism.¹²⁵ Indeed, as the empirical chapters of this thesis demonstrate, a key challenge preoccupying China's political reformers was precisely how to, in Sun Yat-sen's words, create a nation out of loose sand. This challenge rose as the Chinese foundational narrative of the imperial dynasties, based on a trope of culturalism, crumbled under the pressure of modernization and new international norms prescribing that the legitimate identity of a polity should instead be based on the emplotted structures of nationalism.¹²⁶

The second point to be detailed further, and one of the main theoretical moves this thesis employs, regards the operationalization of the assumption that narratives are not created equal. A key point in this is how discourses are nested, as more foundational discourses establish the framework within which more particular discourses are being grafted. In this logic, the narrative mode is also embedded, as demonstrated for example in Krebs' analyses of the interplay between the dominant narratives and their derived sub-narratives, and how they drive US foreign policy; "New narratives of national security must demonstrate fidelity to more stable, still-

¹²⁴ Qin 2007a, 334

¹²⁵ Zarakol 2011, 50

¹²⁶ For details on the "Culturalism-to-Nationalism Thesis" in the scholarship on Chinese nation-building, see the key works of Duara 1996; Townsend 1992; Unger 2016; S. Zhao 2000; Sinkkonen 2014, 45–46; Carlson 2009; Yongjin Zhang 2001, 55–56

accepted foundational identity narratives.¹²⁷ Krebs convincingly argues that political arguments are based on dominant narratives, that contrary to what's commonly assumed, is strengthened rather than altered in times of crisis.¹²⁸ However, he also briefly acknowledges, albeit without addressing the suggestion in detail, that these narratives must be based on a 'foundational narrative', that one would assume is more intimately connected to the idea of ontological security. As such, this thesis focuses rather on the more fundamental political narratives, the foundational narrative, of a polity's identity. As Berenskoetter summarizes it: "The political potency of a national biography lies in its function to provide a community with a basic discourse, or master narrative, which guides and legitimizes courses of action and provides ontological security."¹²⁹

However, precisely by being fundamental, these foundational narratives necessarily open up for a wide range of potentially quite differing discourses to be constructed on a similar basis. This realization of the layered nature of discourses, is a key analytical move, however, it should be noted that the approach that some discourses and narratives are more fundamental than others does not entail any notion that they are 'deeper' or more profound, rather, to quote Wæver; "it refers to degrees of sedimentation: the deeper structures are more solidly sedimented and more difficult to politicise and change, but change is always in principle possible since all these structures are socially constituted. When a pressure is building up in a system – when the discourse does not easily handle a problem anymore – it is possible at first to make 'surface changes' which keep all the deeper levels intact, but (...) at some point a deeper change might be carried out"¹³⁰ Following up on this body of works, this project thus applies the concept of a foundational identity narrative as a key focal

¹²⁷ Krebs 2015, 35

¹²⁸ Krebs 2015

¹²⁹ Berenskoetter 2014, 279

¹³⁰ Wæver 2003, 32

point, through employing a three-tiered model for analysing the impact of identity on policies.

2.3 What China Can Do for Ontological Security

This thesis' expansion of the empirical base of ontological security theory through the analysis of China, also entails certain salient theoretical ramifications. I argue that as ontological security theory has proved valuable for exploring the case of China-Europe relations, the inclusion of this case does also offer salient contributions to the field of ontological security theory, and a number of the ongoing debates presented above. To the question of what the inclusion of this Chinese case can do for the development of ontological security theory, this thesis argues that it contributes to the theory development through two distinct avenues. Firstly, it is a good case for exploring certain extant concepts within the ontological security literature that although widespread, are yet underexplored in the theoretical debate. This relates in particular to the concepts of ontological security seeking and narrative entrepreneurs, and to the further the discussion of the role of the past and mnemonic structures in identity narratives.

Secondly, the case of China also demonstrates the importance of a number of case-specific concepts derived from the local context. These new concepts arguably do not only serve to strengthen the explanatory power of ontological security theory in the Chinese case, but by expanding the selection of relevant concepts and ontological security modalities, they also broaden the horizons of the geographically rather narrow case universe of the current literature on ontological security, and introduces a set of new concepts that although derived from the Chinese context should be relevant also for a number of other cases. I present three suggested contributions to

the ontological security literature, namely: universalism versus particularism as a basis for foundational narratives; the relevance of face and external recognition; and the extent to which materiality informs the ontological security status by engaging with economic functionality as one possible mode of ontological security seeking. Over the following five sub-sections I will present and expand upon these two concepts worthy of further exploring, and the three concepts constituting a conceptual expansion, respectively.

By raising this argument, this project thus enters into a broader debate about 'Global IR',¹³¹ as Chinese foreign policy has emerged as a pivotal case for the discussion of the degree of universality implied in Western-derived theoretical constructs.¹³² As with IR theory in general, the extant literature on identity has proved to possess a fairly pronounced tendency of focusing on a relatively homogenous group of cases, namely Western Westphalian nation-states.¹³³ Two of the most pronounced positions in this

¹³¹ For a good and comprehensive discussion of the non-Western centric theory development through the last 20 years, see eg. Acharya and Buzan 2007 as well as their follow-up article taking stock of the literature ten years later; Acharya and Buzan 2017; The debate surrounding the universality of Western-derived political theory frameworks, is arguably closely related to the broader IR debate related to the role of actor contextualisation, see the framework presented by Jackson and Nexon 2013, 553–58

¹³² See Xinning 2001; Xuetong Yan 2013; C. Hughes 1997; Noesselt 2015; Wæver 1998; C. Pan and Kavalski 2018; Hiim 2015, 209–10

¹³³ Traditional "mainstream" theories on international relations have long been criticised for being a scholarly practice "on, by and for" Western cases, as treated in key works such as Acharya 2014; Acharya and Buzan 2017, 347; Bilgin 2008; Buzan and Lawson 2014; Tickner 2012; It is, however, important to note that even within the constructivist school, the body of works deal predominantly with cases from the North Atlantic region. As detailed in the excellent quantitative overview by Bertucci, Hayes, and James 2018 of the body of articles sampled, 45% of the cases researched the North Atlantic region, with Asia a very distant second with 13,1%, and the other regions receiving even less scholarly attention still

broader debate can in short be described as one school of thought contending that the historical and political traits of China does not differ significantly from the general traits of states.¹³⁴ At the other end of the spectrum, a school of thought argues the case of China is too unique to be an applicable area for Western-derived generalized theories.¹³⁵ In essence, this thesis defines itself along the middle ground of this debate, but also strives to contribute to another dimension of this epistemological discussion of parochiality or universality, namely by arguing that whilst universalized theories may be saliently applied to the Chinese case, Chinese cases may also be generalizable to non-Chinese contexts.¹³⁶ In this, the thesis is echoing Kang and others' aim at strengthening theory-building based on the global political megatrend that is China's rise.¹³⁷ however, I will also echo Kang's timely caveats not only to inadvertently turn to Orientalist essentialization.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ See good overviews of this literature in e.g. Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003 and; Yuan-kang Wang 2010; C. Pan and Kavalski 2018; And for an overview of some key works of novel theoretical development along this end of the spectre, see e.g. Yuan-kang Wang 2010; S. Tang 2013; Nathan and Scobell 2015

¹³⁵ For an overview of the status of the debate, see the following: Callahan 2008a; Callahan and Barabantseva 2011; B. Wang 2017; For more detailed introduction to some of the key theoretical concepts employed, see the writings by scholars such as Qin 2005; T. Zhao 2005; T. Zhao 2019; Ren 2009; Xuetong Yan 2013

¹³⁶ In the Chinese scholarly community ontological security (本体安全/本体性安全) theory has yet to take hold within IR, most of the cited literature on the topic relates to psychology and sociology. Some scholars have sought to argue for its salience as a research tool, most notably G. He 2014; and G. Li 2010; Those very few Chinese works utilising ontological security as an analytical lens, have been limited to introducing the concept, applying it to Beijing's neighbourhood relations. See S. Wang 2016; Kong and Bao 2015; One contribution worthy of further attention is, however, the conceptual expansion to focus more on the temporal aspect and the role of goal-directed futures, in G. He 2015

¹³⁷ Kang 2003, 84; C. Pan and Kavalski 2018; Johnston 2012

¹³⁸ Kang 2003, 59; For the classic treatise on Orientalism, see Said 2014

This added value has a particular importance for developing a model of ontological security that can better explain China, but how the Chinese case can also contribute to strengthening the analytical application of ontological security theory overall. It has already been pointed out by Krolikowski how the case of China seems to diverge from the expectations based on Mitzen's conceptualization of ontological security.¹³⁹ In essence, in analysing the Chinese political models, I argue that universal models may be fruitfully applied, but one should also count in the factor that in explaining the actions of the Chinese Communist Party, one should not overlook the fact that it is, precisely, the *Chinese* Communist Party, with particular historical, cultural, and political residues making it something different from just *a* communist party, even though the latter is of course also a key analytical point.¹⁴⁰ Of course, however, it is important to distinguish between what are the specifics of the ontological security seeking modalities of China *per se*, what are rather general specifics of authoritarian one-party states; what are typical traits of states of the global south that modernized under conditions of empire and Western colonialization, and what are specifics of large, conglomerate "civilizational states."¹⁴¹ Arguably, the Chinese case serves to enlighten the literature along all of these analytically distinct lines, and more importantly through analysing the particularities of the Chinese 'venn-diagram', as all of these traits overlap into a combined political profile that in sum is quite unique to China.

2.3.1 *Ontological Security Seeking and Narrative Entrepreneurs*

Some of the key traits of the case of China, that makes it particularly suitable for analysing certain underexplored issues in ontological security theory, prime amongst

¹³⁹ Krolikowski 2008, 131

¹⁴⁰ I. B. Neumann 2011b, 469–70

¹⁴¹ Zarakol 2011, 149

which is the dynamic of ontological security seeking and the often-overlooked role of political entrepreneurs in times of identity crises. This thesis argues that China's ontological rupture and its aftermaths form a most suitable venue for addressing the critique raised against ontological security theory for being too preoccupied by stasis and stability over change and ontological "self-help."¹⁴² All the more so, as China, as a non-Western polity with a long tradition of centralized government, whose forced entry into the modern world of nation-states caused a fundamental ontological security crisis, in effect sought to address this through a wide range of attempted new political organization forms. As such, one of the main concepts utilized throughout this thesis will be that of ontological security seeking, as a signifier of the dynamic properties of the Chinese political entrepreneurs' efforts at addressing the ontological challenges encountered after the European encroachment added to the existing strains on the late Qing dynasty. As such, this relates to a core tenet of the ontological security literature's assumptions that states seek socially stable relationships with other state actors in order to secure their own sense of self. This thesis argues that an underexplored field of ontological security studies is the issue of states seeking quite the opposite; namely to fundamentally *change* their regularized relationships with other actors, and *adapt* the foundational narratives of the polity, in order to achieve legitimacy for the political project upon which the polity is constructed, internally and reflexively as well as internationally and socially.¹⁴³

As discussed earlier, Steele builds on McSweeney and Laing in approaching the aggregation dilemma of the ontological security approach through focusing on the political leaders that operate as the representatives of the state.¹⁴⁴ I find this to be a

¹⁴² Ejdus 2018

¹⁴³ See e.g. discussion in Browning and Joenniemi 2017 as well as similar argumentation motivating; Ejdus 2018; Subotić 2016; Zarakol 2011; Eberle and Handl 2018

¹⁴⁴ Steele 2008b, 33–34

salient approach to the cases Steele treats in his books, that is to say relatively established Western nation-states. However, in the case of China's efforts at establishing a modern national identity after the colonial era, the societal ruptures were so wide-ranging that a further scope is necessary. In Steele's cases, established nation-states sought to harmonise their foreign policy to the national identity narrative, whereas in the case of China much of the modern era was spent seeking to formulate and implement various versions of such an identity narrative in the first place. Thus, the focus should be widened to include the role of political head figures not only as leaders, but also as national narrative entrepreneurs seeking to construct within the available parameters a foundational narrative for the polity that can garner sufficient internal and external legitimacy to allow for an ontologically stable state to emerge and consolidate.¹⁴⁵

As Lebow very succinctly summarizes the extent to which state-building is an exercise in narrative-building, and something in which actors can engage in strategically: "In the modern era, states cannot survive or compete successfully unless they can command the loyalty of their citizens and build solidarity among them. The principal means of doing this is through autobiographical narratives of the state and its people."¹⁴⁶ For any individual, her identity self-biography is merely one out of a number that can potentially be told, this contingency is even more prevalent in social aggregates.¹⁴⁷ In line with the ontological approach adhered to in this thesis, though, the text will contend as a key point about this political contestation, that the underlying ontological security challenges can potentially be addressed through a

¹⁴⁵ Hagström and Gustafsson 2015; I. B. Neumann 1996; Suzuki 2007

¹⁴⁶ Lebow 2016, 131–32

¹⁴⁷ Giddens 1991, 55; Gilbert 2000, 48; M. Barnett 1999

number of narrative strategies.¹⁴⁸ “Although (...) political entrepreneurs can certainly manipulate identity narratives to mobilize populations for material gains, these narratives’ resonance oftentimes depends on their ability to appeal to many people’s sincerely felt understandings of self.”¹⁴⁹ As Subotić elegantly summarizes the process in her investigation of Serbian politicians’ handling of the territorial loss of Kosovo through a readjustment of the national narrative:

State narratives are constructed through an active and elaborate process that involves multiple political and cultural agents. Over time and with infinite iteration by narrative “entrepreneurs”—political leaders, elite intellectuals, education establishment, popular culture, the media—and everyday social practice, a particular state narrative template (of past events, or of the general place of the state in the international system) fixes the meaning of the past and limits the opportunity for further political contestation. A constructed narrative reaches a tipping point threshold when a critical mass of social actors accepts and buys into it as a social fact.¹⁵⁰

Constituting or readjusting these foundational narratives through a politically mediated process, takes on all the more importance in the times where the extant narratives have been forcefully challenged, resulting in an ontological security crisis. This realization entails that cases of ontological crises, and the ontological security-

¹⁴⁸ In this, the thesis parts way with such arguments as the idea that the ontological insecurities created by the CCP’s massive state-lead transformation of Chinese social life, could only be addressed through similar massive CCP-lead actions, as contended by Krolkowski 2018, 913–14; For further counterarguments to this point, see e.g. the argument by Marlow 2002 about society’s ability to seek to address identity ruptures in the absence of state action; For another example of how two very different narratives has been employed to deal with the same underlying ontological security issues, illustrating the dynamic nature of addressing ontological crises see. Çapan and Zarakol 2019

¹⁴⁹ Lerner 2019, 5

¹⁵⁰ Subotić 2016, 615

seeking political behaviours that tends to follow, are amongst the key subjects of study for scholars of ontological security.¹⁵¹ The breakdown of a given foundational narrative through various forms of societal trauma, causes a radical break in the routinized identity structures on which ontological security is based, and thus opens the field for potential contestation of these.¹⁵² One of the key focal points of this thesis is then the analysis of the changes in the Chinese identity narratives that resulted from the political contestation at those key points in modern Chinese history that constitutes the four main cases of the diachronic section.

2.3.2 *Modalities of Modernity and the Importance of the Past*

The other opportunity the case of China offers to further expand on an existing conceptual discussion within ontological security theory, relates to how it contributes to a small, but growing, body of scholarship on the particularities of ontological insecurity in those traditional major centres of non-Western civilizations with a

¹⁵¹ For an overview of the literature, as well as an in-depth theoretical treatise on the concept of ontological security crises, see Ejdus 2018; as well as the relevant sections in Berenskoetter and Giegerich 2010; Browning and Joenniemi 2017; Subotić 2016; Zarakol 2010; Kinnvall 2018; Doty 1996a; Based on the same postulates, there is currently a growing literature focusing on the key role of creating new identity narratives in peace processes. See Rumelili 2015a; Khoury 2018; Rumelili and Todd 2018; Khoury 2016

¹⁵² Innes and Steele 2013, 17–18; There are of course a number of avenues for ontological security self-help, dependent on the particular discursive contexts. These may range from the avoidance strategies in the case of Israel and ontological dissonance complexities, as argued by Lupovici 2012; to the state sticking to old routines in spite of negative consequences, as covered by Mitzen 2006b, or straight out denial of the events challenging the old foundational narratives, as described by Zarakol 2010

traumatic entrance into the periphery of the Westphalian state system.¹⁵³ As argued by Zarakol in her account of the particularities of the ontological crises brought forth by the stigmatized position of non-Western Empires in the modern era:

They had a different experience because they had to recreate themselves as “modern” states against a backdrop of an emerging international society of states that had already made the transition organically. (...) perhaps for the first time in world history, (autonomous) emulation of competitors took on a deeper meaning – in embracing the Western European state models, these agrarian empires were also enveloped in a certain new worldview, one that is specific to and the essence of modernity.¹⁵⁴

This thesis finds that in China's case as well as in the cases of Turkey, Japan, and Russia, not only did the ontological security crisis challenge the extant foundational narrative of the current ruling dynasty, it coincided with the rise of modernity that would challenge the emplacement structure of the agrarian empire's Mandate of Heaven.

As related to in the section on narratives, the past is a key constituent feature of a foundational narrative, as narrative entrepreneurs seek through a number of mnemonic practices to anchor the present to a particular view of the past.¹⁵⁵ The argument raised is that the experience of being relegated to an excluded periphery of the new international “family of nations” creates a particular form of memory that

¹⁵³ See Vieira 2018; Zarakol 2010; Çapan 2016; Cash and Kinnvall 2017; Bayly 2015; Zarakol 2011; Akchurina and Della Sala 2018; For postcolonial approaches to similar identity dynamics, see e.g. Kinnvall 2016; Çapan 2017; Fanon 1986

¹⁵⁴ Zarakol 2011, 38

¹⁵⁵ See Müller 2002; Leira 2017; Mälksoo 2015; Assmann 2011; Gustafsson 2011; For treatises on the Chinese government's use of such practices, see e.g. Callahan 2006b; Callahan 2009

often tends to shape the narratives of those polities having gone through it in particular ways.¹⁵⁶ It would seem that China shares some of the traits of these other non-Western empire with memories of colonial trauma, in that they are more concerned with their identity narratives being intersubjectively acknowledged by foreign actors, as described in the cases of Japan and Turkey; “Both countries joined European international society in the nineteenth century as stigmatized outsiders. The insecurities created by that inter-national environment have been built into the national identities of both states.”¹⁵⁷ This aspect of Chinese ontological security seeking can also be particularly salient for a broader set of cases, as a number of works points to similar issues of insecurity of identity being a notable feature amongst other countries who went from being imperial power centres to a peripheral role at the onset of the global Western-lead systems.¹⁵⁸

As Neumann points out, in order for a narrative to be able to provide group cohesion and identity it needs, in some way or other, to resonate with the cultural context within which it is situated narrative itself is intimately tied to not only pre-existing narratives, but also to the rhetorical and literary modes of presentation found present in society.¹⁵⁹ One is not given a *tabula rasa* in crafting national narratives.

The making of selves is a narrative process of identification whereby a number of identities that have been negotiated in specific contexts are strung together into one overarching story (...)

¹⁵⁶ I. B. Neumann 2011b, 464

¹⁵⁷ Zarakol 2011, 4

¹⁵⁸ Meissner 2006, 3–4; Miller 2013

¹⁵⁹ Lévi-Strauss 1966, 257; I. B. Neumann 2011b, 471–72; Mink 2001, 219

The forging of selves, then, is a path-dependent process, since it has to cram in a number of previously negotiated identities in order to be credible.¹⁶⁰

Historical narratives are thus shaped from the semantic structures available to us, in order to bestow meaning and direction upon the past, constituting a conceptual tool to grasp a reality of which we can never successfully conceive. Hansen emphasises the three fundamental aspects of identity; spatial, temporal, and ethical.¹⁶¹ However, as she goes on to argue, the idea of the spatial delineation has historically been structured around the focused on the organising structure of the nation state.¹⁶² Thus it leaves the question open as to how to best analyse the political entities in the non-West where the organising principle of the nation state emerged considerably later, and in a different configuration of historical circumstances, and were indeed the historically dominant modality of thinking about political spatiality was not the emplotments related to the modern nation state, but centred around different modalities of narrating political legitimacy, such as the Chinese dynastic system's focus on the Mandate of Heaven, Tianxia and other structures of meaning.

I thus concur with Berenskoetter's critique of much of the extant literature on national narratives as too often overlooking the temporal arc of a narrative linking past and future, in favour of the narrative as an event rooted in the here and now.¹⁶³ As Erik Ringmar poignantly pointed out in describing the temporally interlinked nature of identity; "We can be someone today since we were someone yesterday and since we

¹⁶⁰ I. B. Neumann 1999, 218–19

¹⁶¹ Hansen 2006, 41

¹⁶² Hansen 2006, 42

¹⁶³ Berenskoetter 2014; Berenskoetter 2011

will be someone tomorrow.”¹⁶⁴ Without shared stories of the past, anything but fleeting group identities would thus be very difficultly attainable. “The possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide.”¹⁶⁵ How people experience the past is intrinsic to their perception of the present, as such history is central to the construction of a society.¹⁶⁶ These historical narratives provide the stories necessary to connect the individual to the collective and the collective to the past.¹⁶⁷ How people experience the past is intrinsic to their perception of the present, as such history is central to the construction of a society,¹⁶⁸ as the narrative arc is necessarily leading from a particular retelling of the past, through a particular perception of the present, and on towards a distinct vision for the future.¹⁶⁹ As He underlines, additionally, the arc of ontological security is also based on a stable vision of which future to reach for.¹⁷⁰ The co-constitutive ties between a polity’s ontological security, historiography, and narrative takes on added importance in the case of China, where the mnemonic literature is informed by a historiographic tradition, and records stretching uninterruptedly back to 841 BCE.¹⁷¹

The Chinese case is then, again, a salient one to explore these theoretical implications further, not the least as the historical experience of the shaping of the horizons of

¹⁶⁴ Ringmar 1996, 76–77

¹⁶⁵ MacIntyre 2013, 256

¹⁶⁶ Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy 2011, 177; Bellah et al. 2007, 153; J. H. Liu and Hilton 2005

¹⁶⁷ Hinchman and Hinchman 1997b, 14–18; Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003; Gustafsson 2011, 42

¹⁶⁸ Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy 2011, 177; Bellah et al. 2007, 153; J. H. Liu and Hilton 2005

¹⁶⁹ Hinchman and Hinchman 1997b, 14–18; Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003; Gustafsson 2011, 42; Ringmar 1996

¹⁷⁰ G. He 2015, 64–65

¹⁷¹ Tu 1991, 147

experience is arguably fundamentally different in the case of the Sinic polities as opposed to the European ones. As well summarized by Zhang:

At the root of the fierce contest between Imperial China and the European society of states was mutual rejection of each other's institutional arrangements and underlying assumptions about how a world order should be organized. In this violent contest, the metavalue complex that informed the constitutional structure of the Chinese world order disintegrated. Imperial China was thus confronted by a dual challenge at the turn of the twentieth century. One was how to build down the empire into a state. And the other was how to build up China (from its largely local and provincial basis) into a nation and a state as conceptualized by the invading Europeans so as to prevent China from becoming 'a mere geographic expression'¹⁷²

The European influx at the end of the Qing dynasty then, however, entailed a radical expansion of the horizons of possibility that was suddenly forced upon an ailing dynasty. As Qin has summarized the conundrum this entailed for the coming attempts at re-founding the Chinese polity: "In the 140 years from 1840 to 1980, China had always faced the problem of its relationship with the international system, but never had an appropriate solution to it. In fact, during those 140 years, China had been an outsider, trying, hesitating, and staring into a strange and sometimes hostile universe. The Qing Dynasty failed to solve it; neither the later Chinese governments."¹⁷³

This Chinese modality of a broader phenomenon in international relations, will be further analysed through the proceeding thesis, with a focus on three strands, firstly the role of external recognition dynamics. Secondly, the potent role the memories of

¹⁷² Yongjin Zhang 2001, 61

¹⁷³ Qin 2007b, 334

colonial subjugation for the various political narratives constructed in the aftermath of these events, a topic that already has seen a wide array of eminent scholarship, as studies on China's "new nationalism" are saliently addressing the role of the discourses on China's "Century of humiliation."¹⁷⁴ Finally, a third way in which this general ontological security *problematique* has been addressed by narrative entrepreneurs in China is the role played by the *ti/yong* discourse as a tool for transcending the experience of functional scientific and industrial backwardness, a discourse that is both quite particular for the Chinese case and arguably still relevant today. However, as it is still generally underexplored, I will be addressing this issue separately below, amongst the three new concepts I suggest including into the ontological security approach based on the specifics of the Chinese case.

2.3.3 *Ti/Yong, Minben, and Functionality*

Having presented these two extant ontological security concepts for which I argue the case of China is particularly well suited to explore further, I will here go on to detail three concepts derived from the particular Chinese local context, and contend that these new concepts allow to analyse the case of Chinese ontological security seeking with more salience. The first such conceptual expansion, that has till date been given little attention in the ontological security theory, seeks to address the, theoretically tricky, issue of the role of material success, economic performance, and perceived competence.¹⁷⁵ From the very outset, the ontological security crisis of imperial China was to a substantial extent driven by the fact that the supreme civilizational authority

¹⁷⁴ See Callahan 2009; Z. Wang 2012; Callahan 2004b; Gries, Steiger, and Wang 2016; D. Wang 2005a; Z. Wang 2008b; Moisi 2009; Y. Zheng 1999; S. Zhao 2000; Sinkkonen 2013; Gries 2004; C. R. Hughes 2006b

¹⁷⁵ The term "performance" is utilised here in its politico-economic sense of a metric of organisational capacity and material output, not in the sense denoting gender identity performativity, as in the works of Butler 2011, 188–94

of the Celestial Court was challenged by a materially and technologically superior outsider.¹⁷⁶

As detailed in later chapters, one of the main responses to this ontological security crisis was to bifurcate the idea of supremacy into two separate categories, claiming that the Qing dynasty could, and should, use (yong) the barbarian technology, whilst still asserting the supremacy of the imperial social and political values, regarded as the civilizational essence (ti). In other words, as the idea was summarized, taking “Chinese studies as essence, and Western studies as function (中学为体西学为用)”.¹⁷⁷ The *ti/yong* formula came immediately after its conception under heavy critique, in particular from the ranks of the Chinese reformers, that argued for the conception to be a contradiction in terms, an argument that has dominated also the historiography around the subject in posteriority.¹⁷⁸ In Levenson’s magnum opus on Chinese intellectual history, the concept is dismissed as a fallacy.¹⁷⁹ However, as Hughes has eloquently summarized it, focusing on the *ti/yong* concept’s internal inconsistencies from the vantage point of Aristotelian logic, is tangential to the main purpose of this idea, which instead “needs to be understood as a political act that goes back to the attempt by Qing Dynasty officials to mobilize the population by making tradition capable of harnessing the forces of nationalism as they entered China in the late nineteenth century. (...) In the process, the concept of Chinese national essence is reduced from Confucian universalism to become a malleable object of political loyalty for the nation.”¹⁸⁰ However, the fact that the *ti* and the *yong* dimension was intimately related in the industrial era was a point it became ever harder to escape after a number

¹⁷⁶ Suzuki 2009a, 89–113

¹⁷⁷ C. R. Hughes 2011b; Ding W. and Chen 1995

¹⁷⁸ C. R. Hughes 2011b, 119–20; Joseph Richmond Levenson 1958, 60–66

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Richmond Levenson 1958, 61

¹⁸⁰ C. R. Hughes 2011b, 119

of humiliating military defeats, and as such the new Westernizing reform movements argued increasingly persistent that the only way of achieving progress in the *yong* dimension was to also alter the *ti*-dimension.¹⁸¹

Of course, in analysing the ontological security dimension of Chinese foreign policy, it is the “*ti*” (体)-dimension, a polity’s definition of what constitutes its character, that is the object of analysis, as indeed the character is a constituent part of the Chinese word for ontological security, 本体性安全. However, this thesis argues that a key trait of Chinese ontological security seeking is closely tied up with economic and technological performance, and as such a brief look at also the concept of ‘*yong*’ is necessitated. Material and technological progress became intimately connected with the ontological security of the Chinese state, as indeed one of the main impetuses behind Deng Xiaoping’s reform programme was him witnessing the higher living standards amongst Chinese living in Hong Kong and Singapore, indeed during his famous Southern Tour, he explicitly relegated the question of capitalism versus communism as secondary to the main issue if which of them could provide higher living standards.¹⁸² In Zhang Weiwei’s influential polemic on the CCP’s political system’s edge over Western democracies, one of the core lessons he summarizes as essential to the long-standing Chinese tradition of tying the heavenly mandate to the welfare of the populace. “Historically, the concept of the mandate of heaven was essentially about *minben*, or to what extent, the government could meet the pressing needs of the people. If the government failed to do so, then the foundation of the state would be shaken, and the emperor would lose his mandate of heaven.”¹⁸³ This concept of *minben* was also, as will be detailed later, at the heart of Sun Yat-sen’s political program of reforming the Chinese polity.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ C. R. Hughes 2011b, 127–28

¹⁸² K. Deng 2014, 144–46; Mühlhahn 2019, 499–506; J. Wong 1998

¹⁸³ W.-W. Zhang 2016, 144

¹⁸⁴ Sun 1927

This idea about performance, in material terms, is something that is not generally covered in the identity literature. Hansen notably analyses the temporal, spatial and ethical dimensions of identity construction, whereas Max Weber already at the outset of modern studies of what bestows legitimacy on a polity's ruling class did not include performance as one of his three ideal-types.¹⁸⁵ However, as pointed out in the literature on Communist regimes, these three ideal types leave out one important source of legitimacy of particular importance for the Chinese Communist Party, namely that of socioeconomic performance.¹⁸⁶ "For communist and other authoritarian systems, socioeconomic or "performance" grounds of this kind have typically been seen as the single most important basis upon which they may seek legitimization."¹⁸⁷ In China, furthermore, there is a long tradition of the ruling class' ability to deliver wealth and welfare to be closely connected to the 'Mandate of Heaven' from whose authority the emperors' legitimacy was derived.¹⁸⁸ The inclusion of this aspect, and the striving to seem successful in material terms as an added element of ontological security could be a useful addition to analysing non-Western cases, in reflecting on how the fundamentally changed condition of modernity has taken on a very particular ontological meaning for China and other countries of the global South given the way it was brought to the countries courtesy of imperialism. Economic success can thus be regarded as a potent tool, particularly as countries increasingly found a niche in asserting superiority through commercial rather than military means, such as in the case of Japan: "The new state identity delivered ontological security by allowing the Japanese people to hold onto their hierarchical

¹⁸⁵ Weber 1919; Beetham 1991

¹⁸⁶ See S. White 1985, 463–64; Zhong 1996, 204–7; Rigby 1982; Dittmer and Kim 1993a, 29

¹⁸⁷ S. White 1985, 463

¹⁸⁸ D. Zhao 2009

worldview and their view of Japan's right to a high stature without utilizing military strategies.”¹⁸⁹

This strive to ‘catch up’ with the west technologically and economically, and struggling with the degree of political and value-changes that may or may not entail, is indeed a running thread of Chinese modern history, from the foundries of the Self-Strengthening Movement to the backyard furnaces of Mao’s catastrophic ‘Great Leap Forward’. “For almost two centuries before 1978, other leaders of China, like Deng, had been trying to find a way to make China rich and powerful. The imperial system, which had been established at roughly the same time as the Roman Empire, had been extraordinarily successful.”¹⁹⁰ As a very notable example, the largest challenge that the CCP has been met with after Mao, was the Tiananmen protests in 1989, following a period of runaway inflation, and sharply reduced popular belief in the CCP’s economic competence and performance.¹⁹¹ Xi Jinping, in his symbolically important first official sojourn as party leader, visited the Chinese National Museum’s grand exhibition on the Road to Rejuvenation together with the rest of the Politburo’s Standing Committee. This exhibit showcases a clear narrative, very much focused on legitimization based on economic performance, that ends on a triumphant note on display cases full of high tech, space equipment, and mobile phones stacked to demonstrate wealth increase amongst the population. As such, one cannot avoid noting the centrality of economic performance in the CCP’s main showpiece of their national narrative.

¹⁸⁹ Zarakol 2011, 194

¹⁹⁰ Vogel 2011, 10

¹⁹¹ D. Zhao 2009, 424

2.3.4 *Guanxi, Relationality, and Universality*

The Chinese concept of *guanxi*, has been treated in a number of literatures other than IR, from sociology to business studies.¹⁹² This thesis argues that it is a concept that can be a useful lens to take into consideration with regards to the mode of how relationships and recognition are brought to bear on Chinese ontological security. In particular this is relevant given that, as demonstrated in the synchronic section of this thesis, arguably the key point of identity conflict between the EU and China in the last decades have been intimately tied to situations in which European countries have applied their universal understandings, most notably of human rights, impact on their bilateral relationship with China. *Guanxi*, (关系) has been described as a “fundamental web of interpersonal relations permeating Chinese societies.”¹⁹³ The term literally translates into ‘relations’ or ‘relationships’, however, the rationale for implementing the concept as a separate analytical category reflects the extent to which the term denotes in its narrow sense, the consciously maintained “particularistic ties” based on ritualistic cultivation of reciprocal, hierarchically organized obligation.¹⁹⁴ This sets the phenomenon apart from other forms of social network concepts such as Bourdieu’s social capital.¹⁹⁵ Thus, “the crucial difference is that these norms of reciprocity are

¹⁹² For a review of the literature within these fields, see e.g. Barbalet 2017; See also Jacobs 1979; and Wellman, Chen, and Dong 2002

¹⁹³ Wellman, Chen, and Dong 2002, 222

¹⁹⁴ Jacobs 1979, 238–39; Gold, Guthrie, and Wank 2002, 6–9; Hwang 1987

¹⁹⁵ Bourdieu 1986; For an excellent review of the contending schools of thought on whether *guanxi* is uniquely Chinese, see Gold, Guthrie, and Wank 2002, 8–19; Hwang and Han 2010; Ledeneva’s treatise on similar social dynamics in the case of Russia is particularly interesting in this regard, given the country’s Judeo-Christian philosophical tradition, and the shared communist experience with the PRC Ledeneva 1998; In utilising the concept of *guanxi* for this thesis’ analyses’ it is also implied that this text disagrees with Ong’s argument that *guanxi* is a term externally imposed on Chinese culture by Western academics, see Ong 2003, 180–81; There is a range of literature suggesting there is a tendency for Chinese to in general follow

much more socially situated than they are in the Western context. This reciprocity is not one of universalistic exchange between autonomous actors but one of socially situated obligations.”¹⁹⁶ Despite the term *guanxi* (关系) being constituent part of the Chinese term for international relations (*guoji guanxi* 国际关系), only very recently has this concept been treated within the IR canon, and scholarship linking the Chinese *guanxi* concept with ontological security studies is still wanting. However, the overlap between the Chinese entry as a great power on the world stage, and the ‘relational turn’ in IR theory pioneered by Jackson & Nexon in 1999,¹⁹⁷ have given rise to an increasing number of treatises on the issue, including from a number of Chinese authors who regard this approach as a key starting point for implementing traditional Chinese concepts into the IR canon.¹⁹⁸

In terms of potential additions to ontological security theory this thesis argues can be saliently drawn from the concept, is that of the difference between polities whose ontological security is founded with a more pronounced focus on seeking recognition

relational thinking, as opposed to American generic-based modes of thinking about issue-linkages. See Z. Pan 2016; Womack 2008

¹⁹⁶ Hwang 1987, 968

¹⁹⁷ Jackson and Nexon 1999

¹⁹⁸ Amongst the key proponents of the idea that the relational turn lays bare a deficiency in relation-based analysis of international relations that cannot be fully addressed without taking into account Confucian relational traditions, is the scholar Qin Yaqing, arguing for a “relational theory of IR” based on relational governance and non-exclusive dialectics rooted in traditional Chinese culture: Qin 2007c; Qin 2016; Qin 2018; Qin 2009; A similar line of argument, although going not as far in describing Chinese relationality as a uniquely Chinese cultural trait is F. Zhang 2015; Analysing relational logic through empirical case studies is C. Shih and Wang 2019; Building on the idea of a Chinese ontology of relations, Zhao has sought to fold it into the traditional Chinese concept of “All under Heaven” T. Zhao 2006; Amongst other key proposals for introducing Chinese-derived relational concepts to IR, is the introduction of friendship relations, as eloquently presented by Nordin and Smith 2018b; and Nordin and Smith Forthcoming; For an excellent snapshot of the current state of the theoretical debate, see Kavalski 2018

from others based on a universalist view of the polity's fundamental values, versus a polity that seeks ontological status recognition more based on parochial relationality, of which this thesis will define modern China as the latter type. In other words, the empirical material suggests that the Chinese diplomatic tradition is focused extensively on the importance of *coupling* as the modus operandi of relations. Rather than seeking ontological security through the identification of universal rules, the former is sought through stabilising bilateral relationships. This analysis corresponds with the patterns detailed in the works of e.g. Chih-yu Shih:

By contrast, we will argue that Chineseness depends on social recognition. (...) US foreign policy concerns about relationship are assessed and manoeuvred to suit the purpose of certain general principles embedded either in liberalism or hegemonic stability. (...) For example, the approach of Chinese strategists in handling border disputes with India, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Vietnam, Myanmar, and North Korea without subscribing to any particular standard is notable.¹⁹⁹

This corresponds with Ruggie's definition of bilateralism as founded on specific reciprocity, that compartmentalises relations into separate dyads.²⁰⁰ Of course, all polities will to an extent be basing their conception of ontological security on a combination of universalist and relationship-specific principles, but the analysis of this thesis is corroborating the idea that Chinese ontological security to a larger extent is based on recognition of particular roles in bilateral relationship than the more general rules-based principles on which Western countries, such as in Europe, tends to be based on, a trait that is closely related to the dynamics of *guanxi*, and its diversified relationality. As argued by Qin Yaqin; "The Confucian worldview differs

¹⁹⁹ C. Shih and Huang 2015, 6–7

²⁰⁰ Ruggie 2002, 110

from that of Western societies in that it sees the world as one of relations rather than atomistic and discrete entities. (...) As rationality is the most characteristic concept of Western societies, relationality provides the foundation of the Chinese social world.”²⁰¹

This relational dyadic approach, as Rozman’s constructivist analysis terms it,²⁰² is arguably reflected in a number of Chinese foreign policy practices.²⁰³ China’s behaviour in multilateral forums tends to focus on the non-interference and sovereignty issues rather than seeking any broad universal application for what the CCP defines as Chinese values, China traditionally being the Security Council’s top abstention country.²⁰⁴ Even the high-profile Chinese-led multilateral organizations, such as the FOCAC, China’s BRI initiative, or the 16+1 forum with East- and Central European countries, diverge from the American-created Bretton Woods institutions by being mainly platforms for bilateral relations between China and the relevant member countries rather than creating a common architecture.²⁰⁵

Depending on the social circumstances, an actor can be accommodative and generous (as China seems to be in its interactions with East European or African countries, for instance) and assertive and vengeful (as China seems to act in the South China Sea) all at the same time. The role-centric framing of guanxi underpins not only its malleability (i.e., that it can be used for multiple and diverse purposes), but its potential to engender resilient connections in the context of recognizing and influencing emergent opportunities.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Qin 2018, 149–50

²⁰² Rozman 2013b, 176

²⁰³ See Putten and Shulong 2012; Bang 2017; Kavalski 2018; C. Shih and Huang 2015; Coker 2019

²⁰⁴ Wuthnow 2013, 11–29; Ferdinand 2014

²⁰⁵ Jakóbowski 2018; Contessi 2009; Carrozza 2019

²⁰⁶ Kavalski 2018, 407

As the case of Norway's Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo, treated in a later chapter, demonstrates, China's protests were overwhelmingly related to the bilateral relationship between China and Norway, whereas Chinese protests in cases where the Peace Prize was awarded to political dissidents of countries other than China have been absent.

In the literature written, from both the postcolonial Western, as well as the Chinese academic circles, it is however striking to note that in all of the debates about diversified relationality as an argued key cultural Chinese trait, the literature exists in almost complete isolation from the well-established body of works on how this form of particularistic ties is a defining trait of an empire.²⁰⁷ As defined in Nexon and Wright's empire ideal type, distinguishing it from nation-states and other polities based on homogenous relations between centre and periphery: "Empires, in contrast, involve heterogenous contracting: cores develop distinctive bargains with each periphery under their control."²⁰⁸ As such, it may rather be a reflection of long imperial traditions, followed by authoritarian rule with only a very short democratic intermezzo. However, referring to the ongoing debate on the topic this investigation argues that whether particularistic sociological traits or universal imperialist heritage is the main background, the modus operandi is particular enough to deserve special attention. A potentially broader utility for this concept, beyond Chinese foreign policy, is thus all the more reason to explore and implement this concept into this thesis' broader framework.

²⁰⁷ See Nexon and Wright 2007, 257–59; Tilly 2018, 3; Cooley 2005, 8–10

²⁰⁸ Nexon and Wright 2007, 759

2.3.5 *Mianzi, Recognition, and Status*

Finally, a concept that relates strongly to this preference for bilateralist differentiated relationality, is the Chinese concept of face (面子 *mianzi*).²⁰⁹ A staple of business books and vernacular psychology, this concept is nevertheless one that, as Buzan argues, deserves to be subject of serious theoretical attention: “The E[nglish] S[chool] has not thought about ‘face’. Yet, ‘face’ might count as a primary institution of international society in East Asia. And in a world in which China is one of the most powerful states, ‘face’ will almost certainly be an important aspect of diplomacy more generally.”²¹⁰ Sociologist David Yau-fai Ho defines face (*mianzi*) as:

The respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself from others, by virtue of the relative position he occupies in his social net- work and the degree to which he is judged to have functioned adequately in that position as well as acceptably in his general conduct (...) In terms of two interacting parties, face is the reciprocated compliance, respect, and/or deference that each party expects from, and extends to, the other party.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Hwang and Han 2010, 481; The complexity of the concept of face does also extend to the Chinese vocabulary designating it, as summarized by H. C. Hu 1944, 45–49 the concept translated as “face” springs from two Chinese words, namely “mianzi” and “lian”, annotating slightly different, but overlapping, conceptual meanings, with mian and lian being described as reminiscent of the relationship between “personality” and “title”, respectively. Thus for the purpose of this thesis the main concept analysed is that of “mianzi”, which is the most utilised with regards to such social status positionality most relevant for international relations. For details, see; D. Y. Ho 1976, 867–69; Hwang and Han 2010, 481–82; B. T. E. Ho 2015; Hwang 1987

²¹⁰ Buzan 2018, 468

²¹¹ D. Y. Ho 1976, 883

As Ho was keen to emphasize, this idea of face is, when defined at a high level of generality, a universally human concept,²¹² however, he goes on to argue that in Chinese society the concept takes on a more dominant role, that is meaningfully different from the concept's role in the Western world, by the particular emphasis given to the relational reciprocity rather than the focus on the individual that dominates in Western societies.²¹³ "Chinese face is tightly linked with vertical relationships and close others. Its operation follows a compelling principle of reciprocity. In contrast, Western face emphasizes the separateness of an individual."²¹⁴

The utilization of the key Chinese term of face here, then, is that it denotes a particular kind of ontological security seeking, based on a particular set of social structures that differs meaningfully from the Western honour concept,²¹⁵ to deserve recognition and analytical attention in its own right. As Ho notes in his analysis of the concept, different standards of behaviour, in a very different sociocultural context, are applied to judge face as opposed to honour.²¹⁶ Thus, with regards to ontological security, the proposed way of answering to Buzan's call to better include face as a concept into international relations theories, is arguably to recognize it as a particular mode of external recognition seeking, by the way of focus on ritualized ontological security through bilateral role relations rather than universal rules.

²¹² D. Y. Ho 1976, 881; For a key treatise analysing Western "face work", see Goffman 2005, 5–32; For reflections on face dynamics amongst Native Americans, read Mauss 2002, 50

²¹³ D. Y. Ho 1976, 882; For an overview of the literature dealing with face as a particularised cross-cultural dynamic, see e.g. the review in J. Y. Kim and Nam 1998, 522–24; or the review of the relevant literature within the psychological field in Hwang and Han 2010, 480–91; See also the body of works summarised in Bond 1991

²¹⁴ Hwang and Han 2010, 481

²¹⁵ Steele 2008b, 98

²¹⁶ D. Y. Ho 1976, 877–78

As observed empirically in the analysis of contemporary Europe-China relations, there are two distinct features of Chinese foreign policy for which the utilization of face as an analytical concept is particularly salient. Firstly, the dominant presence of apology diplomacy as an onus of Chinese foreign relations, and secondly, the role of ritualized recognition. The presence of apologies as a mainstay in Chinese foreign relations can hardly have been left unnoticed by any China-hand, as long-winded negotiations over the precise wording of apologetic declarations have taken centre-stage in a number of high-profile foreign policy crises.²¹⁷ However, as argued there are traits implied in the face concept that goes beyond being simply a translation of the English concept of prestige. The face concept entails a different approach to hierarchical relationality that results in political disputes surrounding these issues take on a particular dynamic. As summarized by Gries;

The form an apology takes depends critically upon the relative status of the parties involved. The kind of apology necessary to rectify an offense an inferior commits against a superior is greater than that required of an offense committed between equals. (...) An apology may not be possible, therefore, if there is disagreement over the relative status of the parties involved. If both parties claim to be the superior in a hierarchical relationship with each other, there can be no agreement on the extent of the apology necessary to rectify the offense.²¹⁸

This interlinking of diplomatic apologies with bilateralist differentiated relationality, thus opens for a dynamic that instead of emphasizing universal remorse towards individualized principles, puts the onus on the respective bilateral relationship, so that entwined with an apology is in effect also a statement on the relevant relational hierarchy between China and the state in question, an issue that seems to have

²¹⁷ Khong 2019, 136

²¹⁸ Gries 2004, 89

exacerbated tensions at multiple points over the later years, as will be demonstrated in the empirical chapters.

The role of apology diplomacy as entwined with issues of status hierarchy and face thus ties directly to the interrelated issue of ritualized recognition as a salient factor in analysing Chinese foreign policy.

Representations of the 2001 U.S. spy-plane collision over the South China Sea are a case in point. To Beijing, it was much more than simple violation of Chinese sovereignty: It was seen as a moral problem, another in a long line of humiliations that China has suffered since the Opium War. Resolving this problem did not involve military retaliation or economic reparation so much as symbolic recognition: China demanded a public apology from the United States.²¹⁹

Drawing upon Ringmar's account of the importance of public recognition as a key factor of the process of continuously producing relational identities, this approach utilises the insight that, much like persons, polities also "ask our audiences to *recognize us* as the kind of persons that our stories identify."²²⁰ In line with Zarakol's argument presented earlier, China's case, like that of Turkey and Japan, thus also demonstrates a particular need for exogenous recognition.²²¹ The history of the modern Chinese polity have been deeply emmeshed with recognition-seeking efforts, both with regards achieving the formal-legal recognition as a state in the first place, and later through seeking recognition for its various socio-political registers amongst a foreign public.²²² It could be argued that in the case of China, this request for recognition is even more politically salient, based on the cultural traditions of 'face', and not the least

²¹⁹ Callahan 2004b, 202

²²⁰ Ringmar 1996, 81

²²¹ Zarakol 2011

²²² Holm and Sending 2018

how this cultural trait works in tandem with the particular Chinese identity narrative that has been constructed as deeply emmeshed in the idea of redressing the past wrongs that imperial China suffered through. As Wang Zheng has summarized it in his treatise on Chinese nationalism and China-US relations:

When an incident is perceived as an act of bullying and humiliation, because the central myth and the legitimacy of the government are highly dependent upon maintaining China's "national face" it becomes natural and understandable that the government needs to be tough. (...) The Chinese political elites are responsible for maintaining China's national mianzi (face) in its dealings with other nations. Because the CCP has built its legitimacy on a reputation as the righter of past wrongs, it cannot afford to allow the country to be humiliated again.²²³

Directly related to this question of external recognition, is the growing literature on status concerns in Chinese foreign policy,²²⁴ that ties into a broader focus on status concerns in international relations.²²⁵ One key insight derived from the developments in this literature, with particular application in the Chinese case, is Freedman's argument that status insecurity is not only found with regards to one's social peer group, but may just as potently be derived from temporal forms of self-evaluation.²²⁶ Pye does in his work on the topic even claim that "The Chinese sense of greatness is of a different order and magnitude from that of all other cultural traditions."²²⁷ This tenuous sense of status, or as Coker, phrases it "the juxtaposition of pride and

²²³ Z. Wang 2012, 189–90

²²⁴ For two of the most erudite treatises on the issue, see Y. Deng 2008; Xuetong Yan 2006

²²⁵ Røren and Beaumont 2018; Larson and Shevchenko 2010b; Wilson 2019; Ward 2017; Larson 2015; Khong 2019; O'Neill 2001; Renshon 2017; Y. Deng 2004

²²⁶ Freedman 2016

²²⁷ Pye 1992, 52

patriotism on one hand, and the Party's deep insecurities on the other,"²²⁸ remains a key driver in the identity dilemma of modern Chinese politics, and has proved susceptible to developing into grievance-nationalism, on the basis of a historical narrative dwelling on resentment.²²⁹ Arguably the status insecurity here quoted is deeply related to the Chinese ontological security crisis, driven by perceived deficiencies along both the social and temporal scale.

This results, amongst other things, in a particular Chinese emphasis on the importance of being given face through ritualized modes of recognition as a large power. As exemplified at various points throughout this thesis these recognition rituals, can take the form of the long-standing Chinese efforts at policing international press reports about the country, as the CCP has long demonstrated to have thin skin for media coverage from abroad, even from countries a fraction of their size.²³⁰ Furthermore, it results in a strong drive for seeking ontological security through being given face by being properly recognized according to their perceived status with regards to the rituals of established, Western-derived, diplomatic protocol, such as giving large emphasis on the dates of a country's recognition of China, and giving particular value to official visits or other established practices through which status recognition is being communicated in the international society.²³¹

²²⁸ Coker 2015, 129

²²⁹ Coker 2015, 128–29; Callahan 2009; Y. Deng 2008; Z. Wang 2008b; Wolf 2017

²³⁰ For an example from China-Norway relations in the 60s, see Øgrim and Nilsen 2015, 46–58

²³¹ Ringmar 2002; For one example of how a face-giving state visit became the key point in US-Chinese diplomacy in the buildup to the First Gulf War, see the details as relayed in the memoires of Bush and Scowcroft 2011, 412–14; Lampton 2014, 214; B. T. E. Ho 2015, 311

2.4 Conclusions

In sum, an investigation of the identity factor in China-Europe relations necessitates the application of a salient, stringent, and dynamic theoretical framework. As this chapter has detailed, I contend that the rapidly growing literature on ontological security provides precisely that. This is based in equal parts on the approach's conceptual clarity in exploring the political effects of identity struggles, and its flexibility in implementing conceptual contributions within the framework. As such, I seek to engage with ontological security through drawing on the theory's strength in analysing China-Europe relations, but the thesis will also argue that the case of China in itself can contribute to the development of ontological relations. Amongst the contributions that can be garnered from this effort at analysing Chinese Europe-policies through the framework of ontological security, is the belief that there are a number of things that ontological security as an approach can do for China. One of the main strengths of the approach is that it allows for a theoretically coherent avenue for engaging with salient analytical concepts from the area studies literature on Chinese nationalism and foreign policy.

Furthermore, this thesis also argues that the China-Europe case as analysed in this thesis is particularly suited for contributing to ontological security theory, both because it is a particularly good case for exploring certain existing concepts in the theoretical approach, that although widespread remains somewhat underexplored. These two extant concepts, namely that of the role of narrative identity entrepreneurs, and the impact of mnemonic policies and modalities of modernity introduction, are universally derived concepts of immediate relevance, in particular for countries outside of the Euro-Atlantic area, and carries also a particular relevance for the Chinese case that makes this thesis' focus particularly well suited for further exploring these issues. Furthermore, this case is also contributing to the development of

ontological security theory through expanding the universe of ontological security-relevant concepts, through drawing from the Chinese particular context three key concepts reflecting important and distinctive modalities of Chinese ontological security seeking, namely the effects of basing a polity's foundational narrative on universalism or particularism, the relevance of external recognition and face, and the extent to which materiality informs the ontological security status by engaging with economic functionality as one possible mode of ontological security seeking. When designing a doctoral research project around the theoretical approach of ontological security, it is imperative to reflect upon the epistemological basis for this school of theory, and how it impacts of the chosen set of methods. The following chapter will thus detail and discuss the epistemology inherent to ontological security, and how this thesis' derived methodology and methods have been designed within this paradigm in order to allow for a solid and salient analysis of ontological security as a factor in the relations between China and Europe.

Chapter 3: Epistemology and Methods

3.1 Epistemological and Theoretical Discussion

Having detailed the ontological security approach, and the contribution it can make to studies on China-Europe relations, the following chapter delves into the epistemological details of this thesis' analysis through addressing two deeply related key questions; *on which basis* does the ontological security approach base its knowledge claims, and *how* will this investigation proceed in practical terms in order to establish such knowledge. Engaging in social science is a process aiming at systematically producing empirical knowledge about a certain set of social arrangements. Key to this process is a conscious and reflexive approach to the epistemological assumptions on which basis the scientific claims about the social world will be grounded.

As such, having presented the main tenets of this thesis' research project, and the ontological security approach, this chapter's aim is twofold: Firstly, to clarify in more detail the fundamental ontological and epistemological position of this thesis. As Jackson points out, regarding the knower and the known as co-constitutive does raise a particular set of questions with regards to the process of knowledge production.²³² Secondly, in the main section of this chapter, the focus will be on the operationalization of these theoretical assumptions, and on how the ontological security analysis is undertaken in order to address in a systematic manner the epistemological opportunities and challenges that arises from the chosen theoretical

²³² Jackson 2010

approach, discussing the matters of analytical operationalization, case selection, and source selection. Laying out the practical rationale of the investigation, this section will be detailing and summarising the research design of the project, the methods utilized, and the methodology the following empirical chapters of this thesis will be predicated upon. Engaging with the experienced reality with the intent of producing valid knowledge, necessitates that claims to validity must be founded upon an account of the fundamental ontological ‘wagers’ which the claims are based upon.²³³ As this thesis presents an analysis of Chinese discourses on identity and the ontological security of the self vis-a-vis Europe, the core of this conceptual discussion will be on the epistemological theory and practice of discourse analysis. In particular, the following sections discuss and contextualize some of the challenges facing a thesis utilising discourse analysis as part of an analyticist research project.

3.1.1 Analyticism and Discourse

When asked by his disciple Zi Lu what his first priority would be as ruler of a country, Confucius replied that the foremost duty at hand would be to “rectify names”²³⁴, going on to explain that “If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success.”²³⁵ Exemplifying thus how our words are pervaded by politics, Confucius’ reply draws attention to two fundamental epistemological axioms, one of which I will argue for, and another I will argue against; Firstly, he recognizes how language and power are related entities in the world of politics. This focus on proper rituals and ways of ordering the world through incorporating the human experience in a set of rites and prescriptions for correct handling of the human

²³³ Jackson 2010, 22–23

²³⁴ Dainian Zhang and Ryden 2002, 461

²³⁵ Confucius 1893, 263–64

experience, is thus symbolic of the Confucian motivation to bring order into the political world through bringing order to the narration of the world.

The second and more fundamental issue Confucius' quote draws attention to is the relationship between human experience, as expressed through language, and 'the truth of things.' In the following section I expand and contend the argument that the relationship between experienced reality and language is not just descriptive, but co-constitutive. This is a defining epistemological orientation of the poststructuralist ontology, that is to say a view on the nature of reality that rejects that there is a reality autonomous of discourse: "The key word here is autonomous: it is not that nothing exists outside of discourse, but that in order to exist for us, phenomena have to be grasped through discourse."²³⁶ A such, language, filtering our perception of reality, is not so much about the relationship between a concept and its reference, as the relationship between various socially produced concepts.²³⁷ Bartelson, amongst others, explores and demonstrates, using the concepts of 'fire' and 'sovereignty', how there is no eternal essence to these phenomena, and as such the inquiring gaze should be directed at how the concepts are produced socially.²³⁸ Consequentially, this thesis will focus not trying to hunt down what 'eternal essence' the word Europe is, but on how the concept of Europe has been constructed and related to in various Chinese discourses. As such, in Jackson's terms, this thesis is built on the analyticist

²³⁶ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 9; See also Saussure 2011

²³⁷ An increasing body of scholarship is starting to explore how even basic sensory impression of the world may be shaped to some extent by discourse, as to use Mauss' terms, the intersection of the human neurological, biological and social systems interacts with each other. See e.g. Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2010; Chua, Boland, and Nisbett 2005; Mitterer et al. 2009; I. B. Neumann 2014; Boroditsky 2001; Link 2013, 130–40; Lakoff and Johnson 2008; Lakoff 2008; P. Kay and Kempton 1984; Kahneman 2011, 53–55; World Bank 2015; Thibodeau and Boroditsky 2013; Mauss 1973, 72–73

²³⁸ Bartelson 1995, 2–5

methodological approach, defined by a phenomenalist, monist understanding of ontology.²³⁹ Thus, this thesis joins with a quite extensive scholarship on world politics that, in Jackson's words, "proceeds not by proposing falsifiable hypotheses or transcendentally specifying indispensable elements of social and political life, but instead by postulating an ideal-typical account of a process or setting and then utilizing that ideal-type to organize empirical observations into systematic facts."²⁴⁰

In terms of the social constitution of the world, however, one point to bear in mind is that the concepts, or representations, through which we bestow meaning to reality, are not created equal. A key to the co-constitutive understanding of the human perception of reality is that it is not, as some of the cruder critiques may claim, a relativist position for which material realities are inconsequential. "There are a number of biological and social traits that line the boundary between the sexes [...] Few can be counted as unchangeable. However, some are more difficult to alter than others. It is easier to neutralize the gender-specific aspect of the sign "unremunerated domestic labor" than "childbirth"."²⁴¹ Arguing that everything in principle is fluid is thus not equivalent to saying that everything is fluid to the same degree, or to disregard the materiality altogether.²⁴² Thus, as Hansen argues, the onus of the poststructuralist approach "is not to disregard material facts but to study how these are produced and prioritized."²⁴³ As such perceptions were explored and developed in Europe through the post-structuralist movement of the 20th century, an increasing body of scholarship has contributed to our understanding of the nexus between

²³⁹ Jackson 2010

²⁴⁰ Jackson 2010, 151

²⁴¹ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 121–22

²⁴² Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 108

²⁴³ Hansen 2006, 22

language and the constitution of reality, one of the most fundamental analytical tools being the concept of discourse.

Foucault, the key figure in the development of poststructuralist theory, would in his works define, although in a rather loose manner²⁴⁴, a discourse as system for the production of truth.²⁴⁵ In this is implied the core features of how a discourse enables and limits what statements we may make, thus constituting our perceptions of reality.

²⁴⁶ “It constrains what is thought of at all, what is thought of as possible, and what is thought of as the ‘natural thing’ to do in a given situation.”²⁴⁷ As the social and material aspects of the world are thus constituted through discourse, the reverberation of a change in the discursive frameworks through which our perceptions are being negotiated carries potent impact on to the political arena. I will throughout my thesis adhere to the definition of discourse as articulated by Jennifer Milliken, designating it as “an ordering of terms, meanings and practices that forms the background presuppositions and taken-for-granted understandings that enable people’s actions and interpretations”²⁴⁸. Thus, this thesis will be in concurrence with Derrida’s statement that there is nothing outside of text.²⁴⁹ This ontological position, that delimits poststructuralist research from that of Critical Discourse Analysis, entails that practice is an inherently intertwined part of the discursive. “As long as people act in accordance with established practices, they confirm a given discourse.”²⁵⁰ Thus, for this thesis, practices such as the reorganization of the Chinese bureaucratic routines for receiving foreign envoys in the late 1800s, is an integral aspect of the discursive

²⁴⁴ I. B. Neumann 2001, 17

²⁴⁵ Foucault 2002, 121

²⁴⁶ Bartelson 1995, 70; Dreyfus and Rabinow 2014; Wæver 2003

²⁴⁷ I. B. Neumann 2008, 62

²⁴⁸ Milliken 1999a, 92

²⁴⁹ Derrida 2016, 158

²⁵⁰ I. B. Neumann 2002, 637

changes of this era.²⁵¹ The mainstay of my methodological approach will however consist of analyses of written material, given that states, being the main objects of my analysis, as Hansen points out, are very verbal entities. "States communicate widely, both domestically and internationally, leaving very little foreign policy action that is entirely non-verbal."²⁵²

From the assumption that discourses are pivotal in mediating our perceptions of the world follows that discourses are imbued with societal power, constraining how people categorize and think about the world, and as such providing preconditions for action.²⁵³ Public language matters immensely, because as language is not a neutral instrument, different vocabularies allow for different kinds of activity.²⁵⁴ The defining traits of discursive frameworks are how they define which subjects are authorized to speak and act, the relations in which the actors see themselves and others, and the terms of how they handle an issue area.²⁵⁵ How we define us against the other, entails weighty ramifications for our actions against them. The cliché that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter, is relevant because the definition of an entity as either of these two alternatives entails a very different bandwidth of legitimate foreign policy actions.²⁵⁶ Behaviour becomes meaningful, and intentions and motives are ascribed to foreign entities in accordance with what discursive identity-structure they are inscribed in, as our perceptions of reality is based on our social information.²⁵⁷ As such, Campbell points out, when realising how discourses shape and constrain policy

²⁵¹ Callahan 2009; I. B. Neumann 2002, 200; Fairclough 2001, 18–20

²⁵² Hansen 2006, 23

²⁵³ Dunn 2008, 80–81; I. B. Neumann 2008, 62; Connolly 1993, 30; Wetherell 2001, 289–90

²⁵⁴ Shotter 1993

²⁵⁵ Keeley 1990, 92; Milliken 1999b, 228

²⁵⁶ Hansen 2006, 6

²⁵⁷ Hopf 2002, 6

choices, this entails that political research should embrace the study of how certain representations of reality became the dominant discourses in a political society.²⁵⁸ In short, given that the core of my investigation can be formulated as a range of 'how'-style research questions, I argue the discourse analysis approach provides for insights that are hard to achieve using a different set of research methods. As argued by Dunn and Neumann, discourse analysis is a research strategy that ought to be applied to a suitable type of research questions in order to be a salient approach. "Both 'what' and 'why' type research questions are ill-suited for discourse analysis because they either ignore the discursive realm or take it as an unproblematic given. In contrast, discourse analysis is exceptionally well-suited for answering 'how' or 'how possible' questions."²⁵⁹

3.1.2 Epistemological Clarifications and Limitations

The method of discourse analysis is thus inherently related to a particular ontological and epistemological view that regards social reality as co-constituted through language, and as such it necessarily differs from positivist research projects on certain key issues of systematic enquiry, such as validity and predictability. Over the next paragraphs, some core features of scientific enquiry, and how they relate to the epistemology of this thesis, will be discussed. To utilize Jackson's conceptual vocabulary on the philosophy of science, one may distinguish between four research methodologies, neo-positivism, critical realism, analyticism, and reflexivity, based on your postulations with regards to two fundamental "wagers" of philosophical ontology; on the relationship between the knower and the known, and on the

²⁵⁸ Campbell 1992, 4–9

²⁵⁹ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 126

relationship between knowledge and observation.²⁶⁰ This dissertation is built on the analyticist methodological approach, defined by a phenomenalist, monist understanding of ontology.²⁶¹ In other words the ontological wager, underpinning the research is firstly; the postulate that as the mind remains constitutively intertwined with the world, so the researcher is embedded in the social world they study, and the production of knowledge is constitutive of the world, and secondly; that knowledge claims should be based on systematic empirical observation.²⁶² Thus, in Jackson's words, this thesis joins with a quite extensive scholarship from differing 'schools' of IR theory, together with a number of other approaches to world politics "that proceeds not by proposing falsifiable hypotheses or transcendentally specifying indispensable elements of social and political life, but instead by postulating an ideal-typical account of a process or setting and then utilizing that ideal-type to organize empirical observations into systematic facts."²⁶³

Given the analyticist orientation inherent to this thesis' discursive methodology, then, researchers belonging to more positivist strands that contest the ontological importance of social construction, may be likely to point out limitations regarding the validity, and even more so the reliability and replicability of such investigations.²⁶⁴ However, it would likewise be in the nature of the discursive methodology to refute these exogenous claims, on the grounds that such allegations are missing out on the

²⁶⁰ Jackson 2010, 35–38

²⁶¹ Jackson 2010

²⁶² Jackson 2010, 114

²⁶³ Jackson 2010, 151

²⁶⁴ For critical voices, see e.g. Østerud 1996 and; Keohane 1988; For a good summary of the key points of the debate, see Milliken 1999b

very nature of what is to be researched.²⁶⁵ It deserves emphasis that although the discursive methodology differ from for example neo-positivist orientations in terms of the philosophical postulates about ontology, this does not in any way entail that “anything goes”, rather to again quote Jackson it is equally important that based on the philosophical postulates identified “our conclusions follow rigorously from the evidence and logical argumentation that we provide.”²⁶⁶ Rather, the value of rigorous, systematic research procedures are arguably all the more important in the case of ongoing recursive social processes that often appear as more difficult to operationalize than does positivist research designs for causal relationships between distinct material variables.²⁶⁷ As Dunn and Neumann emphasizes:

Of course, the reliability of any discourse analysis should stand up to external empirical checks. Here, we are making a distinction between empiricism as a method (skills of verification, close textual attention, proper sourcing, referencing, and so on) and as a philosophy of knowledge (the illusion of delivering fact, truth, and a knowable reality). While we personally reject the latter, we greatly value the former.²⁶⁸

In terms of the criteria for good qualitative analysis, the concept of “trustworthiness”, coined by Lincoln & Guba, provides a consistent framework for a wide range of qualitative approaches, that is also relevant for discourse analysis.²⁶⁹ They base their argument from the axiom that the traditional framework utilised, Popperian falsification etc., is predicated on a “naïve realism” that does not fully account for the socially constructed aspects of reality. Thus, the criteria of validity, reliability and

²⁶⁵ Bryman 2008, 501; Fierke 2015, 15–25

²⁶⁶ Jackson 2010, 22

²⁶⁷ K. M. Haugevik 2018, 46; Lincoln and Guba 1986

²⁶⁸ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 101

²⁶⁹ Lincoln and Guba 1985; Lincoln and Guba 1986

objectivity are epistemologically moot. However, the underlying issues remain, namely the necessity of establishing a systematic paradigm to ensure the truth value, the applicability, the consistency, and the neutrality of a research project. In the positivist tradition, these methodological challenges are sought met through the criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, respectively.

The suggested “naturalistic” research paradigm addresses these issues through detailing what has become a widely accepted “parallel” paradigm where the goal of “trustworthiness” is established through systematic attempts at ensuring the credibility (in place of internal validity), transferability (rather than external validity), dependability (roughly paralleling reliability), and confirmability (in lieu of objectivity), of a qualitative enquiry.²⁷⁰ Adhering to these rules of how to undertake a ‘trustworthy’ qualitative analysis, I have strived to ensure the trustworthiness of this thesis’ research project through seeking to ensure credibility by drawing my material of analysis from a wide and coherent selection of relevant texts.²⁷¹ In addition, my experience as a student in and of China has provided me a certain cultural competence necessary for a more precise interpretation of the material.²⁷² This latter point is all the more important in designing an analyticist research project, where a key concern is the realization of the researcher’s social situatedness, and the potential effects of this on the analysis.²⁷³ In terms of dependability and confirmability, I follow the standards

²⁷⁰ Lincoln and Guba 1985, 289–331

²⁷¹ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 380.

²⁷² Leander 2008, 13

²⁷³ For an excellent, comprehensive discussion of this important feature of scholarly analysis, and the methods suitable to address this, see C. B. Neumann and Neumann 2015; For concerns regarding author situatedness and Orientalism, I concur with Gries 2004, 10–11

of open research, and provide extensive direct quoting from my sources, leaving the readers to cross-check my discursive conclusions.²⁷⁴

As the fundamental assumption of the analyticist framework of my discourse analysis is that it is impossible to study a social phenomenon outside of the meaning it is given in discourse, measuring positivist generalisable causality thus becomes a moot point.²⁷⁵ Instead, by postulating an ideal-typical account based on a thorough interpretivist reading of the specific case, the observations can be analysed to allow the researcher to distinguish between the adequate, the coincidental and the incidental factors that lays behind the outcome of this single case.²⁷⁶ The goal of discourse analysis is instead to investigate the processes of creating meaning, the meaning that is one of the preconditions for action to take place.²⁷⁷ As excellently summarized by Ole Wæver:

In a specific political culture there are certain basic concepts, figures, narratives and codes, and only on the basis of these codes are interests constructed and transformed into policies. Basing a study on this level rests on three assumptions: 1) these codes put relatively narrow limits on possible policies; 2) the codes are sufficiently inert so that they can be seen as 'causal' factors in relation to policies (together with other causes) and so that one can study the way they are transformed as an effect of changing political constellations; and 3) it is possible to locate the most important discursive space in which the actor in question is operating.²⁷⁸

It is important to note that one cannot from a certain discursive reality make predictions about a specific policy to be undertaken, given that the room for actions

²⁷⁴ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 129

²⁷⁵ Hansen 2006, 25–27; Wendt 1998, 105

²⁷⁶ Jackson 2010, 150–52

²⁷⁷ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 44

²⁷⁸ Wæver 2003, 30

and reinterpretations usually is large enough to allow for a wide range of options, however discourses define the framework and structure the political space within which policies are undertaken.²⁷⁹ However, as Dunn and Neumann point out, one of the key contributions of discourse analysis is to demonstrate the continuity of structures of thought over time, which entails that

As a given representation establishes itself in the discourse, one should go back to find “pioneer texts” that foreshadow it. This allows us to make a prediction: if a new main representation of Europe surfaces in Russian discourse during the next years, more likely than not it will be churned out of material that is already present in the discourse.²⁸⁰

Discourse analysis may thus be used to point forward to likely changes in the conditions for political action in the future.²⁸¹ However, “discourse cannot determine action completely. There will always be more than one possible outcome. Importantly, discourse analysis aims at specifying the bandwidth of possible outcomes.”²⁸² A discourse analysis thus may say something about the conditions present for formulation and action on foreign policy, but might not say anything directly of the specific processes.²⁸³

3.2 Methods and Research Design

Based on the epistemological assumptions described above, this section details the derived research design and the analytical choices made in order to investigate the

²⁷⁹ I. B. Neumann 2001, 51; Hansen 2006, 212

²⁸⁰ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 120

²⁸¹ I. B. Neumann 2013

²⁸² Dunn and Neumann 2016, 4

²⁸³ Hansen 2006, 28; M. S. Andersen 2016, 41–45

project's research questions. This thesis' two-pronged approach of combining a broad and fundamental diachronic analysis with a more narrow and detailed synchronic analysis, implies that a wider range of methodological approaches will be utilized, although undertaken within a common theoretical framework.

3.2.1 Analytical Approach

The task of a discourse analysis is in essence to "work with what has actually been said or written, exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality"²⁸⁴ The discourse analysis methodology utilized in this project draws heavily upon the common three-step method, as detailed by e.g. Dunn & Neumann. This entails, in broad terms, firstly; delimiting the sources on which the analysis will be based. Secondly, reading the source material, and identifying the main representations in the relevant texts. Additionally, in order to further analyse the main representations found in the discourse, I have utilized Hansen's methodology of investigating the implicit linking of representations into various relations of sameness and difference, a method that is particularly well suited for analysing the development of a political entity's discourses delimiting a Self from an Other, a key point of my research project on Chinese ontological security. Hansen advocates a methodology of identifying the signs, terms, that articulates the construction of identity.²⁸⁵ In the classic example of a European Balkans-discourse, this approach is demonstrated through showing how the construction of the Balkans is made through linking it to signs like "violent, irrational, underdeveloped" etc. while differentiating it from the "controlled, rational, developed" etc. identity of Europe.²⁸⁶ Thirdly; taking the main representations, one

²⁸⁴ Jørgensen and Phillips 2011, 21

²⁸⁵ Hansen 2006, 37–42

²⁸⁶ Hansen 2006, 42

then seeks to uncover how these are layered, and how changes have occurred at various layers of the representations forming a given discourse.²⁸⁷

In practical terms, the main analytical steps of this project have been firstly to delineate the relevant cases, before moving on to defining the relevant range of texts. Both of these two methodological moves are treated in more detail in the following sections. After having delimited the cases and the relevant texts and textual monuments, in accordance with the framework drawn up by Neumann & Dunn and Hansen, as detailed earlier, there are two further main analytical steps I have undertaken, namely; mapping the representations in the discourse, and identifying the layering of discourses. In mapping the representations, I go through the relevant textual material, in chronological order. For larger subsections of the corpus of texts, since there is an immense amount of writing from Mao's hand *not* directly relevant for Europe, I employ an initial relevance screening method, data searches or contents overviews,²⁸⁸ to narrow the textual selection further. In addition, I draw upon secondary sources to identify the key general texts that provide the important ideational background for the Europe-specific texts. From there I go through the texts mapping and analysing the utterances, specifically looking for statements that tie specific signifiers to the nodal points of "China", "Europe" etc, and how these signifiers reflect the process of linking and differentiation, as detailed by Hansen, that defines degrees of Otherness, and links the Self of the past to the Self of the future. In order to analyse the continuities, changes and ruptures,²⁸⁹ in Chinese discourses on Europe, then, I have sought to map out and categorise the representations of Europe, and how these relate, positively or negatively, to the developing representations of Chinese identity.

²⁸⁷ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 8

²⁸⁸ K. Haugevik 2014, 60

²⁸⁹ Salter and Mutlu 2013, 113–14

Inventorying these representations over time helps contribute to a “map” of the discourses being analysed, as discussed below. The more such things may be specified empirically, the better the analysis. The ideal is to include as many representations and their variations as possible, and to specify where they are to be found in as high a degree as possible.²⁹⁰

To this mapping is also implied noting the specifics of these utterances, the actors giving voice to them, and the wider social context the discourse is embedded in. This inventory of representations then forms the basis for the next analytical step.

The last of the analytical stages concerns the layering of the discourses, in other words to analyse which representations are more fundamental, and to detect and demonstrate changes in these. “Not all representations within a discourse are equally lasting. They differ in historical depth, in variation, and in degree of dominance/marginalization in the discourse. A final task for the discourse analyst is to demonstrate this.”²⁹¹ As the preceding section have demonstrated this thesis holds that no discourse emerges from a vacuum,²⁹² and as such the basic underlying discourses are of importance, and particularly so in investigating narrative crises such as in the historical case of China. As summarized by Hansen:

Basic discourses are identified through readings of texts, but it should be stressed that ‘basic discourses’ is an analytical distinction of an ideal-type kind. (...) The analytical value of basic discourses is rather that they provide a lens through which a multitude of different representations and policies can be seen as systematically connected and that they identify the key points of structuring disagreement.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 116–17

²⁹¹ Dunn and Neumann 2016, 121

²⁹² Krebs and Jackson 2007; Jackson 2006, 72

²⁹³ Hansen 2006, 46

As such, based on the inventories from the earlier analytical step, I aim at identifying the dominating discourses, distinguishing them from alternative and less important ones. Following on from this theoretical foundation, this thesis will at its core be preoccupied with identifying and analysing Chinese discourses, based on a three-layered model, distinguishing between foundational narratives, the main discourses derived from these, and the policy-related impetuses derived from these main discourses.

This three-level discourse analytical model will for the diachronic section be focused on tracing the long lines of the development of Europe's role in the most basic of the discursive levels analysed, namely what is termed the foundational narrative. As detailed in the theory chapter, by taking the foundational narrative as the most basic discourse, this analytical category forms the basis of the identity discourses of a Chinese polity. These foundational narratives are defined and distinguished through their basic articulation of key identity representations, that sets out a particular idea of what a Chinese polity should be. This entails that the narratives construct the basic parameters of their vision of what the polity should be based upon, in terms of spatial, temporal, and ethical identity. This also includes the inclusion of different Others with different degrees of radical difference as co-constitutive of the identity narrative of the nation.²⁹⁴ It should be pointed out that the analytical goal of the mapping and analysing the shifting Chinese narratives through the diachronic and synchronic parts of this thesis, is not to claim the sole existence of only one foundational narrative in the contemporary discourse.²⁹⁵ Rather, the goal is to analyse the dominant narrative addressing Chinese ontological insecurity at key points of the country's political history, thus to allow for tracing the continuities and changes in these.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ Hansen 2006, 46–47

²⁹⁵ Delehanty and Steele 2009

²⁹⁶ Çapan and Zarakol 2019, 3

A key analytical question of this thesis is thus to investigate which role Europe played in the various Chinese foundational narratives that shaped the political arena of China in the years after the Opium Wars. I will thus in this thesis' diachronic section look at how the Chinese polity, through being ontologically challenged at a level beyond the American experience in Krebs' works,²⁹⁷ was forced to engage in introspection and reformulation of even its foundational narrative. This analysis focuses on four key events of Chinese state-building after the Opium Wars, tracing and analysing the changes to this foundational narrative in the key political and philosophical texts of these eras. Drawing on the works of Neumann and Wæver,²⁹⁸ this thesis does, however, also seek to answer the challenge raised by e.g. Subotic to further explore the working of narratives in ontological security seeking, and detailing how a number of different discourses with starkly diverging policy implications could rise from what was essentially the same foundational narrative.²⁹⁹ This diachronic analysis, being a novel contribution to the literature, furthermore provides the necessary conceptual understanding and analytical depth for the following synchronic section. Summarising the research design of this thesis through paraphrasing Hansen's words; it is important when analysing the basic discourses structuring a country's foreign policy, that one also utilises secondary literature to engage with the conceptual history of the key signifiers in the current day debate.³⁰⁰ In the case of this thesis, however, such a comprehensive analysis of the Chinese concept of Europe had yet to be written, and as such one of the goals of this project was to write one, in order to then be able to analyse the contemporary Chinese discourses with more depth.

²⁹⁷ Krebs 2015

²⁹⁸ I. B. Neumann 2013; Wæver 2003; See also Forsby 2015

²⁹⁹ Subotić 2016, 624

³⁰⁰ Hansen 2006, 47

As such, the synchronic section will in addition to the level of foundational narratives, also expand the analysis to the next discursive layer, namely investigating which main discourses were based on the foundational narrative at any given time. “Every new layer adds specifications and variations on the deeper one, but one cannot take a gradual change at, for instance, the third layer and say that it starts to weigh heavier than the second one; either one is still inside the frame set by the prior ‘choice’ at the first and second level.”³⁰¹ Thus, through investigating China’s Europe policies as expressed within the narrow timeframe of current-day relations, with few fundamental changes to the foundational narrative, these sections seek to investigate the dynamics of the main discourses predicated on the specific foundational narrative of Chinese identity that became predominant in the post-Cold War era, how these drew on the foundational identity narrative in more dynamic and interchanging ways.

These main discourses then, build on the fundament of the foundational narrative, and are defined by the identification of key subject positions in the Chinese political discourses of Europe, that are less fundamental and thus more plastic. As such, the changing main discourses of EU as a common rising power pole, or Europe as a threat to socialist values, are both predicated on the same foundational narrative of China as a radically separate civilization from Europe. As a third analytical layer, this section also analyses the political repercussions of these main discourses on concrete political events. As the Chinese perception of ontological security is based on the foundational narrative, and the foundational narrative forms the predicate for the derived Chinese main discourses of Europe, so the conduit of ontological security concerns into political actions lays in how these main discourses shape the political landscape. As further discussed in the theoretical chapter, these more volatile main discourses do in their turn shape particular avenues for political action, and have through the last decades provided differing policy impetuses for the development of Europe-China

³⁰¹ Wæver 2003, 32

relations. This impact of the identity factor in the formulation and implementation of China's policies towards Europe over the last two decades, is then the main focal point of this thesis' synchronic section.

As a general point, given the ambition to analyse the Chinese discourse related to a concept as dynamic and changing as that of 'Europe', in particular over such a long timespan, it is necessary to clarify what exactly is the analytical category I will be assessing. The definition of Europe is contentious today, even geographically, exemplified by the number of Eastern European countries arguing over on which territory the midpoint of Europe is situated - and it was no less so two hundred, or two thousand, years ago. Utilising Koselleck's methodological strategy, my investigation analyses the development of the discourses on Europe both semasiologically and onomasiologically.³⁰² In other words I will be analysing not only the representations related to the Chinese words for 'Europe' (歐羅巴洲, 欧洲, etc), but also be including the semasiological perspective through engaging with the range of other terms that through the years have been utilized to relate to polities situated on the European continent, broadly defined.³⁰³ This entails both alternative concepts used for the region as a whole (e.g. 大秦), and more importantly also the various states

³⁰² Koselleck 2004, 110

³⁰³ With regards to the country that borders both the EU and China, Russia and the Soviet Union is a very unique and interesting case, but has for the purposes of this thesis been defined as not a part of Europe. Imperial China had an established relationship with Russia before the other Europeans would arrive in China over sea from the South. To this follows the enormous influence played by the later Soviet Russia in shaping the identity of the People's Republic of China, as well as the country's political and economic system. This singular position implies that the case of Russia for Chinese identity development is best analysed separately, or indeed in a thesis of its own. Cf. Kirby 1997, 451; Westad 2012; Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson 2012a; Westad 1998; Lo 2009

in this area, be that the modern term of the Netherlands (荷兰), or the imperial era references to the Red Haired Foreigners (紅毛番).

Similarly, I will be utilising the equivalent approach in my definition of the other main subject position treated, namely that of “China”, defined in current geographical terms, although in order to balance this heuristic utilization with an appreciation of the differences between imperial and nation-state type of polities, I will be referring to the various reigning dynasties as such, in keeping with the common historiographical tradition.³⁰⁴ Whereas the Chinese heartland has a deeply rooted tradition for centralized rule that sets it apart from Europe in terms of defining it as a polity, there is nevertheless historiographical debate surrounding the cultural, spatial, and temporal delineation of what through different times should be defined as constituting China. This debate is particularly prevalent, as is natural, in the cases of the “non-Han conquest dynasties” of the Yuan and the Qing, and with regards to the peripheral parts of the empire, notably Tibet and Xinjiang.³⁰⁵ As will be treated in subsequent chapters this debate was present from the beginning, as part of the early efforts at building a nation-state on the basis of the Chinese empire, and as such is particularly relevant with regards to the Qing dynasty, that became the last heirs of the dynastic tradition after the revolts following the Opium Wars.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ As a key text collection for the classic historiographical tradition, see Twitchett and Fairbank 1978

³⁰⁵ For an excellent overview of this historiographical debate, see Crossley 2000, 4–46; See also Dikötter 2015, and for more in-depth treatises on how this relates to the two most contentious current border provinces, Tibet and Xinjiang, see Cheney 2017; Millward 2010; J. Leibold 2007

³⁰⁶ For an erudite primer to the historical debates on “New Qing history”, and the debates political overtones, see the review by Waley-Cohen 2004

One further important clarification to be made with regard to my discursive research is that, in line with the differentiation between signifier and signified treated above, my analysis has as its subject the discourse itself, and does not aim to explain the motivations of the actors, whether they themselves believe their statements, or to judge the truth-claims of statements made.³⁰⁷ My concern is the discursive structures made and propagated, and how these serve to frame and constitute present policy issues. The locus of discourse analysis is to investigate the discursive conditions allowing certain policies to be formulated.³⁰⁸ “What interests us is neither what individual decision makers really believe, nor what are shared beliefs among a population (although the latter comes closer), but which codes are used when actors relate to each other.”³⁰⁹ In effect, the Chinese discursive structures are in the last instance properties neither of the Chinese people, nor of the Chinese politicians, but of the Chinese political arena.³¹⁰

3.2.1.1 Quantitative Triangulation

The synchronic section of the thesis will also introduce a supplementary level of analysis, namely by corroborating some of the key conclusions of the discursive readings with a quantitative content analysis.³¹¹ Having secured a database of over 30 000 documents from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on China’s relations with the EU and singular European countries, the contents of these have been analysed quantitatively as a means of triangulating the conclusions of the main, qualitative, analyses. Given the contingency of words and their social context, and the

³⁰⁷ Wæver 2003, 26

³⁰⁸ I. B. Neumann 2001, 115; Swidler 2001, 75

³⁰⁹ Wæver 2003, 26–27

³¹⁰ Wæver 2003, 27

³¹¹ Bryman 2008, 280–83

fact that frequency of use does not necessarily entail discursive importance,³¹² this thesis does not base its research on this methodology. Rather this layer of analysis is treated as a heuristic device to help triangulate and corroborate the qualitative analysis conclusions regarding the discursive changes identified.³¹³ As such, the method is only applied to the diachronic section, where the timeframe is narrow enough that that meaning of a term can be ascertained as relatively stable, thus avoiding the mistake of tracing the use of a term over a longer time period during which its social meaning and discursive context may have changed substantially. Furthermore, the Chinese political language is arguably particularly suited for this content-analysis method, given the extent to which the party-system signals policy changes and political priorities through the employment of a number of rhetorical signifiers (*tifa*) on all levels of the official rhetoric.³¹⁴

MFPRC.gov, EU and all European Countries, Subdirectories:	No. of Documents:
发言人有关谈话 (Related Remarks from the Spokesperson)	263
外交掠影 (Diplomacy Media Review)	536
相关新闻 (Related News)	5949
重要文件 (Important Documents)	252
重要讲话 (Important Speeches)	128
驻外报道 (Reports from the Diplomatic Stations)	23284
Total Sum:	30412

Figure 1: MFPRC documents on Europe, 2000-2018

³¹² Hansen 2011, 362

³¹³ Salter and Mutlu 2013, 116

³¹⁴ Link 2013; Callahan 2016, 228; Johnston 2013, 13; Shambaugh 2013, 218–20; Schoenhals 1992; Brady 2009, 90–103

In practical terms, this method of quantitative triangulation entails identifying through the discourse analysis of the speeches and texts, a number of key signifiers, words, *tifa*'s, or similar, that have become key representations of certain political ideas. These key signifiers are then run through the database of collected key documents, speeches, and diplomatic dispatches, using the resulting data to triangulate and illustrate longitudinal changes in discourses.³¹⁵ This entails using Tablau Desktop to analyse the documents in the database, and establishing the document frequency of the relevant terms, namely counting the number of documents that contains at least one mention of the term. The results are presented as a percentage denoting the share of documents containing the term, out of the total corpus of documents in the database.³¹⁶ This percentage serves to reflect the pervasiveness of a concept relative to the size of the corpus. In order to better illustrate visually the changes in the discourses, the analysis is presented graphically through a dichotomous approach that illustrates the discursive trends by showing the positive or negative relationship between two related key terms, presented as line graphs tracing the occurrences of these terms over time. In the figures are also included markers denoting the date of Hu and Xi's ascension as General Secretaries of the CCP.

The database in question consists of 30 412 documents, accessed openly through the Chinese MFA, pertaining to the PRC's relations to the various European countries covered in the case studies, as well as to the EU as a whole, for the years 2000 to 2018.³¹⁷ (See fig. 1) This includes whitepapers, diplomatic communiques, speeches from the Chinese leadership as well as from the relevant ambassadors, public transcripts of summit meetings and relevant press conferences. In total this body of data provides a

³¹⁵ Williams 2014; Seale, Ziebland, and Charteris-Black 2006

³¹⁶ In formal terms, the formula is DOCS[w/Term] divided by DOCS[w/oTerm]. For more details on the database and the scraping process of collecting it, see Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson and Walker forthcoming (Draft)

³¹⁷ Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson and Walker forthcoming (Draft)

quite complete overview of the publicly available texts from the Chinese Foreign Ministry on the country's European relations. As illustrated in fig. 1, a majority of the documents falls within the category of reporting on the public diplomatic activities of the relevant Chinese embassies and consulates. This entails that the main body of texts analysed consists of public speeches, media, and notes from political and diplomatic meetings. Thus, the database provides a good overview of the pervasiveness of a certain term's use within the Chinese diplomatic corps's communications with European partners.

3.2.2 *Case Selection*

In terms of delimiting the range of material for the discourse analysis, a key decision in investigating such a broad topic as that of Chinese representations of Europe through the modern era, is the case selection; which periods to select as the main focus for the research. To this point should be made the clarification that the aim of this thesis is not to produce yet another historical survey of China, but to focus on a number of key historical events in order to draw analytical conclusions about the development of Chinese identity discourses vis-a-vis Europe. Through concentrating the investigation on these historical intersections of political, economic, and societal rupture, a more in-depth view of the developments relevant to Chinese ontological security is made possible.

An added challenge in regard to identifying the key cases to analyse, is the thesis' goal of seeking to understand the role of ontological security in China's Europe policies, through combining synchronic analysis with diachronic analysis. The terminology being based on de Saussure's conceptual apparatus for linguistics, diachronic refers to the development of concepts over time, whilst synchronic analysis is a cross-section

of the concept and its utilization at a given point in time.³¹⁸ As discussed, the thesis will contend that drawing upon such a combined temporal range allows for a more in-depth understanding of the concepts, as how they evolved, remain relevant for how they are embedded in the political discourse today.³¹⁹ The focal points of the analysis are distinguished by being the moments where the importance of articulating a stable identity became particularly pivotal, as core political actors sought to formulate the justification for political state- and nation-building projects.³²⁰ It could be argued that this logic of case selection opens for the “doctor’s dilemma”-critique that the focus on cases of crisis and disruption, instead of on periods of political and discursive stability, biases the overall analysis. However, although this is a worthy venue for future research on the topic, as is solidly established in the literature, it is the moments of disruption that are the most salient in terms of analysing the identity of a polity. “These moments of crisis engendered discussion, debate, directives, and other forms of discourse that provide a source of “data” from which to examine the representational practices that attempt to reaffirm or reconstruct identities.”³²¹ In such cases the struggle over formulation and reformulation, continuity and change in national identity discourses becomes particularly consequential, precisely by being in flux. These are key moments when ontological security seeking constitutes both causes and effects of the attempts at constructing and/or reconstructing the Chinese state.

This research will thus be centred on a discourse analysis of Chinese policy documents relevant to Sino-European relations. With regards to the diachronic mapping of key periods through which to analyse the continuities and changes in Chinese discourses on Europe, my four main focal points are: The first phase of the Self-Strengthening

³¹⁸ Saussure 2011

³¹⁹ Koselleck 2004, 217

³²⁰ Bartelson 1995, 8

³²¹ Doty 1996b, 13

Movement taking place ca. 1861–1872 as Chinese reformists sought to integrate European technology and knowledge in order to defend against the imperialist powers. Secondly, the Early Republic Era (ca. 1910-1915), when a new Chinese state, and national identity, was articulated and sought realized, in particular through the writings of Sun Yat-sen. Then, as the third main case, the early days of CCP's New China (ca. 1945-1955), when the Chinese Communist Party, with Mao at the helm, built and articulated the current party-state after their victory in the civil war in 1949. Finally, the years of Deng Xiaoping's reforms (ca. 1975-1990), when the Chinese society underwent a monumental transformation and opening up to the outside world. I thus seek to map out and categorise the representations of Europe, and how these relate, positively or negatively, to the developing representations of Chinese identity.

Moving from this basis on to the synchronic strand of this thesis, the study will further delimit the research to three case studies; the first being the crucial phase in the China-EU relationship starting with the relationship agreement to in 2003, and investigating the political process around the still ongoing EU embargo of arms sales to China, with particular attention to the high-profile negotiations to bring it to an end in the early 2000s. Second, the fallout between China and its European partners following a number of incidents in 2007 and 2008, cases of key political nodes of contention include the Dalai Lama's visits to France and Germany and the aftermaths of these events, that ended with a diplomatic crisis and the cancellation of the 2008 China-EU Summit. The third case is an analysis the case of Chinese policies towards the UK after their receipt of the Dalai Lama, and Norway in relation to the Nobel Committee's award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, and the following boycott lasting from 2010 to 2016, as well as tracing the discursive changes resulting from the change of the Chinese leadership and the rise of Xi Jinping to power.

These cases are selected based on two main criteria, aimed at contending the case for respectively the existence, and the political relevance of the ontological security factor

in China-Europe relations. Firstly, as thesis can be defined as a plausibility probe, the cases are selected based on general secondary literature and knowledge of the political context as “crucial cases” for probing the existence of an ontological security driven “identity factor” in China’s Europe policies.³²² Secondly, in order to ensure this research’s claim to political relevance, the cases selected are key political events in China-Europe relations these last 20 years. As such, they are also “hard cases” in the sense that if the identity factor is present in the discourses and practices of these key political cases, it should indeed hold as an argument for its overall relevance as a factor in China-Europe relations.³²³

3.2.3 *Source Selection*

Following on the historical and geographical delimitations above, at the core of every discourse analysis research design is the selection of texts within the given focal point. Given that it would be a hopeless undertaking to read everything related to the issue, a certain set of guidelines of text selection has been followed in order to enable the fullest possible degree of saturation. Disregarding Foucault’s rhetorical point that a researcher should “read and study everything”,³²⁴ the mechanisms of intertextuality and the “diminishing returns” inherent in discourse analysis entails that it is possible to conclude that one has read enough.³²⁵ Milliken offers a good tool for assessing such saturation in defining that a useful analysis can be said to be complete when one in adding new texts finds that these fit into the theoretical categories already generated. “This is also a partial response to the issue of reliability of discourse analyses, i.e., that

³²² George and Bennett 2005

³²³ Subotić 2016, 616

³²⁴ Quoted in Malmvig 2006, 40

³²⁵ I. B. Neumann 2013, 3; Wæver 2003, 42

the interpretation offered has been checked and reworked until it fits with and explains consistently texts that were not originally part of its empirical base".³²⁶

Tying into this methodological reasoning, is the assumption that not all texts are equally important. No piece of writing is imbued with meaning only by and of itself, meaning is constituted as a text explicitly or implicitly builds upon other texts and implicit understandings of culture and codification. As all texts are woven together in a web of other writings, sharing a textual space referencing other texts, what Kristeva³²⁷ defines as "intertextuality", there are certain texts that forms the central nodes in this web.³²⁸ These canonical textual "monuments,"³²⁹ that are frequently quoted and functions as points of reference in the intertextual debates, will need to be given appropriate attention as keys to the discursive formation. Identifying and analysing these key texts are thus a core part of my research effort. "Elements can be considered major if they are new - not having previously appeared in print - since any new element, even one made at the extreme margin of the debate, may at some later stage move towards its centre. (...) Similarly, an element is major if it is already occupying a central place and is thus part of a frame of reference which is widely shared."³³⁰

As Said would argue, "Foucault believes that in general the individual text or author counts for very little; empirically, in the case of Orientalism (and perhaps nowhere else) I find this not to be so"³³¹ This is emblematic of the importance of identifying these key texts, that constitute the nodal points of a discourse. As such, when a

³²⁶ Milliken 1999b, 234–35

³²⁷ Kristeva 1980, 66

³²⁸ Hansen 2006, 82; Foucault 2002, 145–47

³²⁹ S. S. Andersen 2013

³³⁰ I. B. Neumann 2013, 8

³³¹ Said 2014, 23

politician is delivering a keynote speech, no matter which issue is addressed, concepts cannot be fully conjured up from thin air. The rhetoric will necessarily be dependent on pre-existing representations within the existing discourses. As such the main contribution of this thesis will be found not in the originality of the sources treated, but in the systematic rereading of these key sources within an original framework of understanding.

Based on this epistemological framework, this thesis will in terms of practical implementation take as its vantage point the methodological approach of Hansen,³³² according to whom there is a set of main decisions to clarify in order to design a discourse analysis. Firstly, one needs to decide whether to define as your object of study only the official foreign policy discourse, or if the scope should be expanded further to include political opposition, the media and marginal discourses. Thereafter one needs to make choices along three additional dimensions: “first, whether one or multiple Selves are examined; second, whether one makes a study of one particular moment or a longer historical development; and third, whether the analysis is based on one event or multiple events.”³³³ In the following sections I will go through how my thesis is structured according to this framework of research design.

For my thesis the main objective is to research on how Europe is represented in terms of ontological security in the rhetoric of the Chinese government, and Chinese political entrepreneurs, and as such my focus will be delimited to what Hansen designates the model 1 of textual selection.³³⁴ To this is implied that my discourse analysis will mainly be based on official foreign policy discourse, focusing on political leaders with

³³² Hansen 2006

³³³ Hansen 2006, 75

³³⁴ Hansen 2006, 57

official authority to sanction foreign policy, those central in executing these policies, and the authoritative and semi-authoritative news outlets through which the official discourse is being communicated to a broader public.³³⁵ The narrow focus on policy makers does constitute a limitation of this investigation, and including analyses of the broader public discourses, including interviews with policymakers and diplomats, would indeed constitute a welcome complement to this study.³³⁶ Nevertheless, such a broad analysis lays outside the scope of this thesis, and may instead be the subject of further study. To this point is also related the theoretical ad methodological choice of utilising written sources, and not including interviews, surveys, or focus groups as part of my research. In the established tradition of discursive research, interviews are rarely included, with the sole focus being on the interpretation of texts.³³⁷ In the case of an analysis of China within the framework of a model 1 analysis, this approach is arguably particularly salient. This thesis focuses on Chinese official foreign policy discourses, for which official Chinese texts is the best source. Given the constraints of the Chinese party-state system, interviews with officials tend to replicate official statements decided centrally.³³⁸ The elite-level focus of this investigation is thus, furthermore, particularly salient in the Chinese case, given that throughout most of China's modern history, the country has been distinguished by particularly centralized top-down rule.³³⁹ "In other words, at the end of the day it is China's political leadership that narrates Chinese state identity and formulates China's grand

³³⁵ Swaine 2012

³³⁶ Hansen 2006, 57; Bartelson 1995, 8–10; I. B. Neumann 2013

³³⁷ See eg. I. B. Neumann 2013; Callahan 2009; Campbell 1992; Hayden White 2009;

Said 2014

³³⁸ Callahan 2012a

³³⁹ Swaine 2012; Lawrence and Martin 2013, 10–11; Nathan and Scobell 2015, 37–59; Saich 2018

strategy.”³⁴⁰ Furthermore, within the CCP’s political system, the particularly document-based culture of governance, increases the relative importance of analysis of elite-level textual material.³⁴¹

What concerns the number of Selves to be analysed, namely the choice of how many states or other foreign policy subject one wishes to examine, the study is designed as a single case analysis of the Chinese Self, how Chinese representations of Europe are constituted in relations to this Self, and how this is projected internally and externally as part of Chinese policies towards Europe. In terms of the second and third additional dimension, the ambition of this research is to combine an analysis of current political relations with Europe, with a basis in an in-depth understanding of the historical development of Chinese identities. As such the two constituent parts of the thesis is analysed along two different and complimenting approaches to the temporal dimension and the event dimension.

For the diachronic analysis, guided by the rationale of investigating fundamental level narratives and discourses of Europe in China’s identity formation, the approach is akin to a history of ideas-mode of analysis where the temporal dimension is a broad timespan, ranging from the mid-1800s Opium Wars until the 1990s. To this is also added a historical background survey of the main Chinese discourses on Europe from the early days until the late Qing dynasty, but the main focus remains on the post Opium War era. This time period is accessed and analysed through four key events in Chinese history, the rationale for the selection of these four events is given in more detail later. For the synchronic section, the temporal dimension is delineated to the years from 1996 till today. Given the limited timescale of this part of the investigation these cases are analysed as a whole, without subdividing them into discreet event-

³⁴⁰ Forsby 2015, 36

³⁴¹ Lawrence and Martin 2013, 10–11

based subchapters, although the discourse analysis will be presented in the context of the main economic, political and social events of the era.

The designation of my thesis to focus on discursive frameworks propagated by political actors, delimit the relevant texts to those with the most potential to define such structures, namely leading political actors.³⁴² Hansen posits three further criteria, namely that texts should be selected based on them being “characterized by the clear articulation of identities and policies; they are widely read and attended to; and they have the formal authority to define a political position.”³⁴³ Ole Wæver argues the texts selected for discourse analysis should be public texts, as this is what makes them relevant to the political arena,³⁴⁴ this notion is all the more true in my case, where the focal area is precisely on the disseminating of narratives towards a the wider public, both foreign and domestic.

The latter point also emphasizes a related challenge in discourse analysis research, how to identify discourses that are less manifest? To efficiently and saliently be able to identify “submerged” discursive structures one will need to go back in time, reading into a comprehensive body of texts, and be keenly aware of that the most fundamental structures can also be amongst the most anonymous.³⁴⁵ Repeated statements of similar representations are, however, also methodologically important, in this case it takes on a particularly important hue as a central modality of modern Chinese political discourse is the repetition of slogans as a matter of political positioning.³⁴⁶ Nevertheless, given that repetitive quotes do not make for a well-structured thesis text, as a rule I provide examples in-text of these key representations,

³⁴² Wæver 2003, 42

³⁴³ Hansen 2006, 85

³⁴⁴ Wæver 2003, 26–27

³⁴⁵ C. R. Hughes 2005, 253

³⁴⁶ Schoenhals 1992; Shambaugh 2013, 216–20

whilst listing in the footnotes where key repetitions of such discourses can be found. Such particularities of a given discourse in a given language, such as Mandarin, are of course a wider issue to take into consideration.

Realising the importance of language naturally entails the realization that different languages, and the communication of concepts within and between them, matters.³⁴⁷ As such, whilst doing discourse analysis of Chinese sources it is important to account for, and be aware of, the inherent particularities of the language. This entails, for example, the structure of the ideographically based Mandarin written language, whose grammar patterns necessitates that particular attention be paid to context, especially with regards to the classical texts analysed in the diachronic sections of this thesis. Equally so, one should posit the cultural competence to be able to decode general traits of Chinese discourse and argumentation, such as the tendency to have a text proceed from the general to the specific. Given that the main body of texts analysed for the contemporary sections of the project will be official statements, it is also necessary to relate to the particular vocabulary and language structure of Chinese government lingo.³⁴⁸ Whilst this is a relevant concern for any analysis of government discourse, Chinese government language in particular have developed from ancient court Chinese to a stylized iteration of Communist Party power, the key feature of which is the repetitions of, often purposely vague, slogans known as 提法 (*tifa*), that serves as signposts for political direction and demarcates official positions on key questions, and as such take on extra importance in a discourse analysis.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Wigen 2015

³⁴⁸ Link 2013, 244; Gries 2004

³⁴⁹ Link 2013; Schoenhals 1992

A related methodological concern which applies to this research is related to the degree to which the political power implicit to language takes on a particular hue in the Chinese case, where the Communist party explicitly regulates public discourse to a far larger degree than in more pluralist societies, and given that censorship and other obstacles to free speech to various degrees was present in most of the historical and current cases I seek to analyse.³⁵⁰ For example, the approach of investigating a country's discourse through the analysis of parliamentary debates, that has been successfully undertaken in a number of treatises,³⁵¹ is not a salient approach in the case of the PRC's rubberstamp and only intermittently congregating, People's Congress. However, given that the focus of the proposed research is precisely on the Chinese authorities' efforts at underpinning their legitimacy through ontological security-seeking, this factor is not a major hindrance for the analysis, although it contributes to a political arena where discourses emerges and circulates in particular ways. Furthermore, as the official discourse, like all other discourses, is situated within a wider intertextual web of references, it will of course be necessary to move beyond a too narrow focus on official policy statements in order to obtain a proper understanding of them. "[W]hile an organizational starting point in official discourse might seem rather conservative, it is simultaneously pointing to the inclusion of a multitude of texts and genres."³⁵² This also entails drawing on the range of secondary writing on the topic of China's troubled path to modernity, utilizing this rich literature to compliment this thesis's narrower focus on the identity-security nexus in Chinese political discourse.

³⁵⁰ Schoenhals 1992; Shambaugh 2013; Link 2013

³⁵¹ Wigen 2018; K. M. Haugevik 2018; M. S. Andersen 2016

³⁵² Hansen 2006, 60

I will thus undertake a discourse analysis of the relevant textual material; policy documents, political books and pamphlets, political manifests, think tank reports and speeches by high ranking officials, seeking to discern the dominant discourses and narratives, interpreting the Chinese representational processes in order to trace changes in the co-constitutive process of identity-formation.³⁵³ Regarding the first section of the thesis, the diachronic approach entails reading predominantly Chinese-language texts, written both in classical and modern Chinese. In the case of the, synchronic, second main section, the reading will entail both analysing Chinese texts projected towards a European public, as well as materials which mainly are a part of the domestic Chinese discourse of Chinese relations towards the relevant actors. Thus, in practical terms, for the early historical background section the key textual monuments were identified through the reading of English and Chinese secondary sources on the topic. The main source of Chinese views of Europe in the period up to the Ming dynasty, were the various Chinese dynastic histories, imposing works of historiography that forms the backbone of historical research on sources from these eras.

The main diachronic sections consist of analyses of a far larger body of texts, these analyses are as laid out in the theory section, concentrated around textual monuments, with particular focus on the body of works of the key intellectual and political leaders of the era. This reflects this thesis' focus on the interconnected nature of narrative shaping and political practices, in an era of disruptive reformation efforts of various Chinese polities. English and Chinese secondary texts have been used to triangulate and to hone in on primary textual monuments. In the case of the Mao and the Deng eras, the works of both of these CCP leaders has long been readily available, both in book form and in digital formats. These anthologies can be roughly subdivided into two main categories; those of the *wenxuan* or selected works, that are (particularly in

³⁵³ Hansen 2006

Maos's case) volumes of the key texts and speeches setting forth the key strands of their ideologies and policies. Secondly, the *nianpu*'s, that are collections in a "diary" format, that details the comings, goings conversations and speeches of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping throughout their political careers, resulting in an extensive body of day-to-day routines and, for my case particularly interesting, diplomatic interactions with foreign officials. With regards to the *wenxuan* volumes, all the relevant pieces were considered as monumental, and for the *nianpu* books, I undertook a computer assisted search after terms like 欧洲 (Europe), 欧盟 (EU), 德国 (Germany), etc., in order to read those sections where e.g. Mao or Deng had mentioned these European polities, or were meeting and conversing with any representatives of these.

For the synchronic section, the range of available literature within the parameters of a Hansen model-1 style discourse analysis, was even broader than for the preceding chapter, as a result of both the increased information flow from the Chinese leadership in general, and the fact that this section specifically sought to trace discourses at a more fine-grained level. In line with the analytical framework outlined earlier, there are two main categories of textual material that is analysed. First, there is the key Chinese documents on their relations with their European partners, the key bilateral documents, easily available at FMPRC.gov.cn, together with the EU-China Summit Joint Statements that provides a fascinating longitudinal overview of the vagaries of the relationship. Second is the large corpus of relevant speeches, both on the Chinese ontological narrative in general, and with regards to Chinese foreign policies, and policies towards Europe and European countries. Of these there are three main sources, namely for the general context, the relevant top leader's *wenxuan*, key leadership speeches in relevant bilateral fora, and other relevant speeches, found at FMPRC.gov.cn, the official and very comprehensive webpage of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3.3 Conclusions

In sum, this thesis argues that Europe is one of the arenas where China seeks to constitute a new international identity, and that this quest for ontological security is an under-researched factor shaping Beijing's policies towards Europe. Based on the epistemological framework and the methodological strategies described here, my thesis will apply ontological security as the main analytical framework for addressing the research question. As such, this chapter has detailed the research design utilized in order to saliently apply this theoretical lens to the case of China-Europe relations, based on the fundamental epistemological and ontological assumptions this theoretical framework is predicated upon. In order to saliently illuminate the research question of this thesis, a discourse analysis approach was chosen because of this methods' usefulness in analysing how Chinese identity vis-a-vis Europe has been constructed in China after the Opium Wars of the mid-19th Century, and how these ideational structures are framing current policy approaches in Sino-Europe relations. In the case of Europe's role in Chinese ontological security seeking, this thesis thus argues for the relevance and importance of enquiring into how the relationship between China and Europe, both entities co-constituted in a socially mediated framework of understanding, is constructed in the evolving Chinese discourses of the Chinese national Self, and the particular Other that Europe represents. Through understanding the development of the Chinese discursive structuring of Europe, one also analyses the background for the Chinese construction of ontological security, and how this in turn shaped China's interests and actions in its relations with Europe.

For this purpose, the analytical framework detailed above will be applied to the case of China-Europe relations over the following two main parts of the thesis. The diachronic section will, as described, focus on Chinese ontological security seeking by analysing how narrative entrepreneurs sought to reconstitute a foundational narrative

for the Chinese polity at key political moments throughout the last two centuries. This provides the necessary conceptual depth for a more salient analysis of contemporary discursive changes, as it traces the development of the Chinese idea of Europe, and how it related to the evolving Chinese foundational narratives of themselves. The following synchronic section, then, follows on from the tracing of the long-term foundational narratives of the Chinese state, but focusing on a considerably narrower temporal timeframe allows this section to proceed to a more detailed analytical level. Thus, it includes the tracing of the foundational narratives into a three-layered analytical approach: First, it seeks to verify and trace the fundamental narratives forming the base of Chinese ontological security, establishing that these were indeed framing the debates of the era. Second, these chapters strive to detail the more specific main discourses derived from the fundamental narratives, at the level of the concrete contemporary political and diplomatic issues of the time. Third, it seeks to explore the political repercussions of these discourses and how the identity factor served as a salient element in key political issues of contemporary Sino-European relations.

Part II: Diachronic Analysis

Chapter 4: Diachronic Section Introduction, and

Historical Background

4.1 Introduction to the Diachronic Section

In engaging with ontological security as a factor in the EU-China relationship, this thesis argues that a longitudinal analysis is necessary. The role of Europe has been deeply emmeshed with Chinese ontological security crises for over a century. As these crises still reverberate today, an effort is needed to investigate the roots of the Chinese discourses of Europe, and how these have developed together with the foundational narratives of the Chinese polity itself. Based on this predicate, this section of the thesis is a diachronic investigation that traces the development of Europe as a concept in key Chinese political and diplomatic texts. Furthermore, it analyses the emergence of Europe as a nodal point in the Chinese political discourses, and how the idea of Europe has been constructed by key Chinese political entrepreneurs seeking to restate the foundational narrative of China in response to the ontological security challenges brought forth by European colonialist influences, and the onset of modernity.

A meaningful analysis of the current day concepts, thus, should be rooted in an in-depth understanding on how these concepts, and their position in the relevant discourses first came into being, as well as their development through the contingencies of history.³⁵⁴ As Hansen formulated it as a key methodological move for a good discourse analysis:

³⁵⁴ Foucault 1984, 76–99

Once the key representations have been selected one might turn to the third methodological point, which is to draw upon available conceptual histories of the representations chosen. Current representations might not repeat historical articulations slavishly, but they would have to relate themselves thereto. (...) A structured reading of conceptual history provides, where applicable, important knowledge on how constructions of identity have been argued in the past and thus a good indication of where 'discursive fault lines' might be located in the present.³⁵⁵

In the case of this thesis, the lack of extant conceptual histories to draw upon entailed that I have had to include the creation of such, as a part of the process of analysing the concept of Europe in Chinese political discourse. Although a range of eminent scholarship exists that have analysed the political and economic influences of Europe during various discrete moments of ancient Chinese history³⁵⁶, and a number of texts have engaged with the identity struggles of the Chinese state throughout the modern period,³⁵⁷ there exists to the best of my knowledge no substantial work undertaking a history of ideas on the Chinese concept of Europe. This thesis contends that undertaking such a diachronic analysis in itself is valuable, and contributes to a gap

³⁵⁵ Hansen 2006, 47–48

³⁵⁶ Amongst the scholarship addressing the role of Europe in pre-1840 China, particular note is deserved for e.g. Lafleur 1998; Mungello 2013; Brook 2009; Q. Zhang 2015; Wills Jr 2010; Hevia 1995; The aftermath of the Opium Wars has given rise to a far broader literature on the impact of Europe on early modern China. Of particular relevance for this thesis are Svarverud 2007a; Yongjin Zhang 1991a; Suzuki 2009b; Polacheck 1992; Jessie G. Lutz 2012; Y. C. Wang 1966; Mitter 2004; C. yueh Hsu 1960; Hao and Wang 1978; S. Kirchner 2013; Guha 2014; E. S. K. Fung 2010a; G. Xu 2005a; C. R. Hughes forthcoming; Luo 2008; S. Zhao 2004; The establishment of the PRC and the onset of the Cold War meant that most scholarly focus of this era has been directed towards China's relations with the superpowers or the Global South, of the few works engaging with Europe's role are Albers 2016; Moncada 2010; Patten 2012; Westad 2017a; Mark 2017

³⁵⁷ Dittmer and Kim 1993c; Hunt 1993b; Doctoroff 2016; Callahan 2006b; H. Wang 2012; C. Huang and Shih 2014; Suzuki 2014; Callahan 2012a; Z. Wang 2012; Meissner 2006; Rozman 2013a; Rozman 2011; Y. Deng 2008; C. Shih and Huang 2015; Curtis 2016; R. Wong 2013; Mingming Wang 2014

in the current literature that engages with the political and historical analysis of China's engagement with the European-derived international system after the end of dynastic rule brought on by the late colonial era. Beyond this, however, this diachronic section is also an essential fundament for a salient analysis of China's view of Europe. Thus, this first section of the two-pronged research strategy of this thesis, is aimed at both filling a gap in the extant literature, and utilising such newly created analysis as a building block for the second, synchronic, strand of the thesis.

As such, the forthcoming Chapters 4-6 constituting this section will, after a historical background on the emergence of the concept of Europe in the annals of the Chinese Empire pre-1840, focus on a set of historical junctures that carry particular significance in the ongoing Chinese effort to achieve ontological security after the Opium Wars marked the traumatic beginning of China's modern era.³⁵⁸ Considered by the Chinese as the starting point of the "Century of Humiliation,"³⁵⁹ the Opium Wars started out as British retribution for a Chinese crackdown on their involvement in lucrative opium smuggling, the First Opium War lasting from 1839 to the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, and the Second Opium War, with French involvement on the British side, from 1856 to 1860. Through repeated military defeats of the Chinese imperial forces showcase the technological superiority of the European militaries.³⁶⁰ The resulting peace treaties heralded a number of what the Chinese termed 'unequal treaties,' cementing European dominance over the commanding heights of China's trade, economy, and politics.³⁶¹ This sudden defeat eventually led to the implosion of the Qing dynasty. However, whereas dynasties had collapsed numerous times before in Chinese history,

³⁵⁸ E. S. K. Fung 2010b

³⁵⁹ Z. Wang 2012; Callahan 2009, 31–60; Callahan 2006b; Callahan 2004b; Dou and Shen 2002; Scott 2008b

³⁶⁰ H. Mao 2016; Polacheck 1992; Lovell 2015; Hao and Wang 1978

³⁶¹ On the role of the "unequal treaties" as a rallying point for early Chinese nationalism, see E. S. K. Fung 1987; D. Wang 2005a

only for a new dynasty to rise again within a similar ideological and political framework, this time the ontological challenge to the old dynastic system dealt a blow to the entire cosmology it was based upon. In the years following, Chinese political entrepreneurs would then seek to re-establish a foundational narrative for a new kind of Chinese polity. This process would coalesce to come to the fore at four eras of modern Chinese history, which form the focal points of this thesis' diachronic section.

These four main focal points are, respectively: The first phase of the Self-Strengthening Movement, taking place ca. 1861–1872, as Chinese reformists sought to integrate European technology and knowledge in order to defend against the imperialist powers. Secondly, the Early Republic Era (ca. 1910-1915), when a new Chinese state, and national identity, was articulated, in particular through the writings of Sun Yat-sen. Then, as the third main case, the early days of the CCP's New China (ca. 1945-1955), when the Chinese Communist Party, with Mao at the helm, built and articulated the current party-state after their victory in the civil war in 1949. Finally, the time of Deng Xiaoping's reforms (ca. 1975-1990), when the Chinese society underwent another monumental transformation, a period bookended by Maoism at one side and the end of the Cold War at the other. These focal points are selected on the basis of being moments where the importance of articulating a stable identity became pivotal, as key political entrepreneurs sought to formulate the discursive justification for their state- and nation-building projects. I will thus seek to map out and categorise the representations of Europe, and how these relate to the developing foundational narratives for the various iterations of a renewed Chinese polity.

4.2 The Historical Background of the Chinese Image of Europe

In accordance with the rationale of a diachronic study, namely the investigation of the *longue durée* of discursive developments and identity formation, the remainder of this chapter provides a historical background of how Europe first became a part of Chinese discourses. Extant literature dealing with the imposition of the modern international system upon China in the wake of the Opium Wars and the pressure of the European imperialist power, often tend to overstate the degree to which Europe and Europeans were a *tabula rasa* to the Chinese elite.³⁶² However, almost two thousand years of stories and accounts of lands of the Western sea, had set the stage for how the traders, missionaries and colonizers of the European nations would be viewed by the Imperial court. This chapter thus seeks to map out how Europe came to appear on the radar of the Celestial Empire, through which pre-existing discursive frameworks these lands were being regarded, and how the early development of a concept of “Europe” would slowly coalesce and develop alongside changes in the Chinese ideational and political circumstances. Given the sparse number of textual material scattered over a millennia-long time-period, this chapter will not engage in the more in-depth discursive study that follows in the main diachronic chapters on the development of the Chinese view of Europe in relation to Chinese identity. Instead, this chapter’s aim is to give an overview of the historical and discursive context of the early development of Chinese representations of Europe. Of particular interest, is that the representations of the European ‘Other’ as an ideal, or as an enemy, representations around which key Chinese policy debates of the 20th Century would evolve, turns out to both have long lineages traceable back to earlier dynastic eras of the Chinese empire.

³⁶² See for example; Scott 2008b, 13–16; Peyrefitte 2013; Ford 2010, 110–14

The early Chinese concept formation of Europe consists of two particularly interesting features. Firstly, the formation of an idea of Europe was more a process of discovering Europe, than a process of relating to the presence of it. Whereas many of the other civilizations and empires, such as the Turkish, the Persian, or the Russian, would develop with the presence of the European continent and cultures readily accessible and acknowledged on the periphery,³⁶³ the Chinese experience of Europe was thus of a different kind.³⁶⁴ Being spatially situated on the other extreme of the Eurasian continent, the Chinese civilization's formation of a concept of Europe came about in a manner where discovery and knowledge infusion played a larger part in acknowledging the European continent, than it did for the other major cultural centres along the Eurasian heartlands.³⁶⁵ Secondly, due to a range of geographical and political reasons, the Chinese 'discovery' of Europe took place not so much in first-person, unlike the European experiences during the Age of Discovery, but by being introduced to the continent second hand. The range of middlemen, ranging from Syrian jugglers to Arab traders, and eventually a growing stream of European merchants and missionaries, would relay to the Celestial court their versions of a part of the world that continued for the longest time to be unseen by Chinese eyes. As will be illustrated in more detail in later sections, the representations of Europe that met the colonial powers, as a barbarian power roving the Southern Seas, was in fact a relatively recent phenomenon. Earlier understandings of Europe, treated as a half mystical continent, had also resulted in a competing discourse of Europe as a brotherly civilization *en par* with China itself. These two fundamentally divergent representations of Europe, emphasizing respectively the Otherness or the Sameness of Chinese and European ideals, is a discursive fault line that re-emerges also throughout the more current-era chapters of the thesis.

³⁶³ I. B. Neumann 2016; Wigen 2015; Mancall 1984, 21

³⁶⁴ Ng-Quinn 1993; Schwartz 1968

³⁶⁵ The historic details of this period are eminently covered by a wide range of historic literature. See e.g. H. Mao 2016; Waley 2005; Polacheck 1992; Lovell 2015

4.2.1 *Romans, Legends, and Ideals*

It was only during the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) that fleeting information about Europe would filter through to the scholars of the Chinese imperial court. During this dynasty, two centralized empires, Han China to the East and Rome in the West, exerted their rule over a vast share of the global population, but were only indirectly in contact through long-spanning trade networks across Eurasia.³⁶⁶ It is however in this period that the idea of a geographical and political entity, or entities, to the far West is starting to emerge. A significant conceptual development in Chinese philosophy constituted an important background for the reports about a large kingdom past the “Western Seas” (西海). The influential theories of the Chinese scholar Zou Yan, ca BCE 350-270,³⁶⁷ outlined a world consisting of nine continents of nine regions each, divided by large oceans, with the Chinese world rather than being at the centre of the known world, was instead conceived as occupying only one 81st of the world’s territory.³⁶⁸ In terms of how the world within the seas was ordered, both conceptually and administratively, the Han dynasty conceived of the world as divided into five major concentric zones, radiating hierarchically from the central zone of the direct royal domain outwards through the two outer non-Chinese inhabited areas, the controlled zone (要服), and the wild zone (荒服), designated for the inner and outer barbarians, respectively.³⁶⁹ Chinese envoys were sent to prospect in the west in order to probe the threat from the outer barbarians, and through their reports based on

³⁶⁶ Frankopan 2015, 18–19; Ball 2016, 154–55

³⁶⁷ Needham 1956, 232

³⁶⁸ Y. Yu 1986, 377

³⁶⁹ Y. Yu 1986, 379

second hand-information, the Chinese court became aware of lands farther to the west, more specifically from the constituent parts of the Roman Empire.³⁷⁰

The first allusions to the what can be identified as Rome, is found in the annals of the 'Grand Historian', Sima Qian. In his *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shi ji* 史记), from the first century BCE, it is described how an embassy arrived from the King of Parthia, which "offered to the Chinese court large birds-eggs, and jugglers from Lijian."³⁷¹ In a separate section he was also referring to how *Lijian* (犁靬), an old name for what was later to be known as *Da Qin* (大秦), was to be found several thousand *li* west of Parthia. It is widely accepted that what the Chinese sources refers to as *Da Qin* was the Roman empire, although mainly the Eastern provinces.³⁷² It was, however, only centuries later, during the Song dynasty (960 CE-1279 CE), that sources emerge that provide details about this country to the extreme west. The Book of the Latter Han (后汉书), an official history of the Eastern Han dynasty, 25 CE-220 CE, contains a separate section on the *Da Qin* kingdom, in the chapter detailing the geography and history of the regions to the west of China. The section is one of the earliest textual monuments on Europe, in that it would become a regular feature, and a source referred to, in subsequent scholarly works.³⁷³ Summarising the Chinese knowledge at the time, Rome was represented as a sprawling empire across the sea. "The country of *Da Qin*, also called *Lijian*, is situated in the Western part of the Western Sea. Its territory is several thousand *li*, it contains over four hundred cities, and of dependent states there are several times ten."³⁷⁴

³⁷⁰ Y. Yu 1986, 461

³⁷¹ Sima 94AD, 81, a5

³⁷² Hoppál 2011; Pulleyblank 1999

³⁷³ Hirth 1885, 15

³⁷⁴ Fan 445AD, 81–82

Descriptions of this grand kingdom to the west is further relayed and added to, through a range of the 24 classical works of Chinese dynastic history,³⁷⁵ such as the Book of Wei (魏书) and the Book of Jin (晋书), as well as in other historical, and as such also geographical treatises, such as the Brief History of Wei (魏略) and the Book of Song (宋书).³⁷⁶ There are also a certain number of additional texts mainly reproducing the information from these main sources.³⁷⁷ In Hirth's magisterial work of 1885, the ancient Chinese annals describing the lands of ancient Rome and Byzantium were compiled, forming the fundament for later discussions on the issue.³⁷⁸ Whereas scholars' main focus on these accounts have been to seek and identify the geographical and historical realities behind these accounts, for the purpose of this thesis, the main interest is in recognising that Europe first registered on the Chinese record as an entity of the unknown.

As such, the first concepts found in the Chinese cultural sphere about the European region, were functioning as a fairly empty canvas on which the early Chinese scholars could project fundamental qualities of both how they understood the outside world, and how they understood themselves. Of particularly eye-catching significance is the term given to this far West kingdom, namely the *Da Qin* (大秦), or the Great Qin. At around the same time as the word China was entering the European lexicon, based on Roman transliteration of the Qin dynasty, the Chinese themselves would ironically be

³⁷⁵ The annals of the Han dynasty refer, furthermore, to an envoy arriving in 166 CE representing Andun (安敦), the king of Da Qin, the name presumably referring to the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius. However, he is considered to be a merchant talking up his credentials, rather than an official envoy from Rome. See Needham and Wang 1954, 197; Ball 2016, 152; Y. Yu 1986, 460–61

³⁷⁶ Leslie and Gardiner 1996; Hill 2009

³⁷⁷ Hirth 1885, 23

³⁷⁸ Hirth 1885

referring to the Romans using the very same term.³⁷⁹ As the Wei Shu would explain; "The inhabitants are tall and of bright complexion, somewhat like the Chinese, because of this they are called Da Qin."³⁸⁰ The annals repeat this point, that these inhabitants and their kingdom are referred to by the character *qin* (秦), because they are similar to the Chinese themselves. Shiratori, argues that the Chinese essentially conceived of this land as a populated by a lost band of Chinese.³⁸¹ The first role of the European continent in a Chinese discourse, was thus as a half mythical image of themselves, reflected in a grand and well-ordered civilization at the other edge of the world.

The relative obscurity in which the European landmass rested, naturally made descriptions of it a fertile ground for exotic speculations. The annals also conjure up a range of exoticisms about these foreign lands, of dwarves and amazons.³⁸² However, a key feature about the records of the Da Qin, is that it is treated not as mythical, but as real. Not otherworldly, but geographically situated in detail, although only reachable through extreme exertion.³⁸³ The classical accounts of Da Qin describes a country that is large, orderly, civilized and peaceful. In a sense, it is a reflection of China, only better. This view is closely linked to a wider Chinese literature discussing the ideal states of government, in a period of profound political upheaval, and the construction of the first centralized imperial dynasties.³⁸⁴ The tidings of a vast empire to the west was, it would seem, a welcome canvas on which to project these ideas. As the following quote demonstrates, this is a notion of a country, Chinese in character,

³⁷⁹ S. Chen 289AD, i16

³⁸⁰ R. Zhao 1225, r10

³⁸¹ Shiratori 1972

³⁸² Ma 1317, q52

³⁸³ Lafleur 1998, 47

³⁸⁴ Lafleur 1998, 44

large, affluent, and well organized through a strict hierarchical structure both bureaucratically and geographically.³⁸⁵

The country is peacefully governed, and dwellings are scattered over it like stars. The royal capital is divided into five cities, each with five squares of a 60 li circuit. The king resides in the middle city. In the city there are established eight high officials to rule over the four quarters [of the country], but in the royal city there are also established eight high officials who divide among themselves the government over the four cities.³⁸⁶

The basic tenets in the first discourses about the European continent found in the classic texts, is thus of a country similar to China, whose ruler was in both the political and geographical sense the nave around which the country was organized. However, this ruler is meritocratically chosen and conferring closely with a set of important advisors.³⁸⁷ In addition, the description details a ruler that would follow the Chinese key political ideals of the Mandate of Heaven to a fault, stepping graciously and virtuously aside should one of the traditional signs of the withdrawal of the mandate occur. “When a severe calamity, or untimely rain-storms, visits the country, the king is deposed and replaced by another. The one relieved from his duties submits to his degradation without murmurs.”³⁸⁸ Additionally, the annals provide a reason for why such a twin empire would be so reluctant to extend a hand across the Eurasian landmass, as the texts refer to the Parthians blocking Da Qin’s efforts at sending embassies to China.³⁸⁹ In Hansen’s terms, then, the earliest Chinese representation of European polities, is that of an empire linked to China through signifiers of similarity; “civilized”, “well-ordered”, “moral”, “abiding the rules of Heaven”, signifiers that separated them in common from the “barbaric”, “chaotic”, “immoral”, and

³⁸⁵ Lafleur 1998, 49

³⁸⁶ S. Chen 289AD, 87

³⁸⁷ Fan 445AD, f18

³⁸⁸ Fan 445AD, f20

³⁸⁹ Hirth 1885, 62

“disobeying” barbarian states and tribes of the outer zones immediately surrounding the Chinese heartland. The fundamental representation was of a twin empire sharing the same civilizational values, but even more successful in living up to them.

The idealized representation through which one related to what was known of the European continent, persisted to some extent throughout the following centuries, although as historians were compiling the official histories if the Tang dynasty (618-906 CE), around the year 1000 CE, a notable change can be traced. The descriptions shed much of its former references of a political utopia, in favour of a somewhat more precise reckoning of distant events, as the representation of the European continent took one more step away from the realm of mythology towards a description of an actual, although distant, political entity. This time, the reference point is Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire, although regarded to be the same country as the Da Qin from centuries back, as news of the fall of Rome never made it to the annals of the Chinese empire. References to the symbolical geography of the realm of Da Qin is no longer found in these later histories, and the emphasis on the just and benevolent nature of the ruler and their ministers are tuned down.³⁹⁰

One important change of nomenclature is found in the official histories written about the succeeding Sui and Tang dynasties, as the name Da Qin from the written sources of the Sui Dynasty onwards gives way to a new main term for the lands at the Western extremes of Eurasia, namely *Fulin* (拂菻). As Hirth argues, it would seem this name originates from a Chinese misunderstanding about early Nestorian missionaries' insistence on the city of Bethlehem as their main reference point in the West.³⁹¹ In both official Chinese histories of the Tang dynasty, the Old Book of Tang (旧唐书)

³⁹⁰ Xu Liu 945, 88

³⁹¹ Hirth 1885, 230–31; Keevak 2008

completed in 945 CE,³⁹² and the revised New Book of Tang (新唐书) written during the later Song Dynasty, the descriptions of the Fulin formerly known as Da Qin, mainly followed the established pattern.³⁹³ Included are also quite detailed descriptions of proclaimed customs and rarities regarding the country, such as the plant lambs, that are presumably inspired by Central Asian cottonfields “There are lambs which grow in the ground. The inhabitants wait till they are about to sprout, and then screen them off by building walls to prevent the beasts which are at large outside from eating them up. The navel of these lambs is connected with the ground.”³⁹⁴

In the *Song shi* (宋史) history of the Song dynasty, written in the 13th and 14th centuries, the depictions of the land to the West are more precise, and concurrently less idealized.³⁹⁵ Whereas other, less central texts, from this period mostly parrot the main dynasty histories referred to earlier, it should be noted that in Ma Duanlin’s massive work published in 1273, the *Wenxian tongkao* (文献通考), the lands to the West seems to have been regarded as tangible enough to the writer that he engages in one of the first critical engagements with the sources on the Western lands. He thus concludes based on his argument that unlike what the official histories assume, Da Qin and Fulin are indeed two different countries. “If we hold together the two accounts of Fulin as transmitted by the two different historians [...] I suspect that we have before us merely an accidental similarity of the name, and that the country is indeed not identical with Da Qin.”³⁹⁶ Indeed, in a later Chinese world map from the 16th Century, Da Qin is represented across the Western Sea as one of many countries of half-legend, such as

³⁹² Twitchett 2002, 196

³⁹³ Ouyang and Song 1060, 90

³⁹⁴ Ouyang and Song 1060, 91

³⁹⁵ Hirth 1885, 57, 78

³⁹⁶ Ma 1317, q93

the lands of the pygmies.³⁹⁷ As the Song dynasty (960-1279) fell to the Mongol invasion, the ensuing opening-up of the vast distances of central Eurasia, facilitated increased communication and travel across the continent.³⁹⁸ Chinese sources thus mention Westerners coming to the Khan's court to offer tribute and trade, namely a notice made in the annals of June 6th, 1261 that the court received in audience an embassy from the *Falang* country (发郎国).³⁹⁹ The name Falang (发郎), also transcribed as *Folangji*(佛郎機), is likely to have simply been borrowed from the Arabs who used this as a general term to refer to the "Franks" of Western Europe.⁴⁰⁰ These Northern-Europeans made, however, little impact on the Chinese as a whole.⁴⁰¹ The great sea-change in the Chinese understanding of Europe would only arrive later; with the arrival of Catholic missionaries to the imperial court.

4.2.2 Presenting Europe

From a situation of only very sporadic, and mostly second hand, information about Europe being accessible, the mercantile and religious expansion of a range of European nations during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), meant that the sources of knowledge about Europe multiplied. This new knowledge flowed to China along three main sources; through European merchants, via the missionaries particularly those at the court, and through written works published in Chinese by Europeans.⁴⁰² The first continuous points of direct contact between Chinese and Europeans came

³⁹⁷ Unknown artist 1532

³⁹⁸ Beckwith 2009, 201; Yule 1866

³⁹⁹ Shinji 1960, 46

⁴⁰⁰ Franke 1966, 54–55

⁴⁰¹ Marco Polo, on the other hand, does not figure in Chinese sources, and there is ongoing controversy whether he was even at the Khan's court, although there is little doubt of the impact his writings had in Europe. See Wood 1996; Haw 2006

⁴⁰² Franke 1966, 59; G. Zhang and Wu 2006, 300–302

with the early European seafaring powers establishing themselves in the Southeast, with Macau as the main point of the Portuguese presence. This establishment did not happen in a manner that the Chinese found particularly endearing, as the historical sources note a range of troubles and armed involvement.⁴⁰³ However, this allowed Chinese intellectuals like Zhang Xie to talk to European and other seafarers directly, and vet them about their backgrounds.⁴⁰⁴ In this treatise *Dong Xi Yang Kao* (东西洋考), or *Notes on the Western and Eastern*, Zhang credits the seamen he talked to. He also notes that amongst the other peoples in Southeast Asia a new group of peoples had arrived, with which there earlier had been no contact, but who claimed their land was to be found by the realm of Fulin. Noting these people's dark eyes, red hair and large noses, their section of the book is labelled as concerning the "Red Headed Foreigners", noting that they said they were coming from a country named Holland (*Helanguo* 荷兰国).⁴⁰⁵ Being only one small group of foreigners amongst the large pool of foreign and regional influences in Southeast Asia, though, their presence was largely neglected.⁴⁰⁶

In terms of influencing the Chinese view of Europe and Europeans, a far more important factor in these early years of formative experiences, was the influence of Christian missionaries, and in particular the Jesuits present in the Chinese court. In the official history of the Ming dynasty, in the section listing foreign countries and these contacts with the Chinese, the following note on the country of Fulin deserves particular attention.

We have sent officers to all the foreign kingdoms with this Manifesto except to you, Fu-lin, who, being separated from us by the western

⁴⁰³ X. Zhang 1617

⁴⁰⁴ Brook 2009, 267

⁴⁰⁵ X. Zhang 1617, vol. 6

⁴⁰⁶ Twitchett and Mote 1998, 340

sea, have not as yet received the announcement. We now send a native of your country, Niehku-lun, to hand you this Manifesto. Although We are not equal in wisdom to our ancient rulers whose virtue was recognized all over the universe, we cannot but let the world know. Our intention to maintain peace within the four seas. It is on this ground alone that We have issued this Manifesto.⁴⁰⁷

Firstly, this text illustrates how Fulin had stepped out from the shadows of legend to such an extent that the newly enthroned Hungwu emperor was seeking to spread his claim for legitimacy also there. Europe was now considered a relevant, although very peripheral, arena for Chinese succession politics. The second main point to be gathered from this text is the name of this envoy, who marks the first entry of emissaries and missionaries from the Catholic church, and the religious order mainly responsible for introducing the Chinese public to Europe, the Jesuits.⁴⁰⁸ The Jesuits' achievement meant that information about Europe now came not only in the form of stories about obscure red-haired people trading and pirating on the peripheries of the Empire, but was presented to the Chinese scholarly elite from the heart of the Imperial court.⁴⁰⁹

The *Ming shi*, completed in 1739 as the official history of the Ming Dynasty, thus gives a considerably more detailed description of the continent to the Far West. Next to the chapter of Fulin, copying earlier descriptions, one now also finds, in addition to chapters on the *Folangji* (Portugal), Spain, and Holland, a separate chapter on Italia (意大里亞). Italy is described as a country by the Great Western Oceans, that formerly had no contact with China, but from where came Matteo Ricci, the man who made the Map of Ten Thousand Countries, claiming the world was divided into 5 main

⁴⁰⁷ T. Zhang 1739

⁴⁰⁸ Brook 2010, 174

⁴⁰⁹ Mungello 2013, 16; G. Zhang and Wu 2006, 340–42

continents, the second one of these named the continent of Europe, *Ouluoba zhou* (歐羅巴洲). This is one of the very first times the name “Europe” is represented in an authoritative Chinese source.⁴¹⁰ The resulting compilation of knowledge is, on clear display in the *Huang Qing zhigong tu* (皇清职贡图, Portraits from the Tributary Offices of the Imperial Qing). Compiled at an imperial request of 1751, and listing the foreign countries of the world. In volume one, detailing the foreign countries with official relations to the Qing emperor, it is starkly demonstrated in visual terms the degree to which Europe had been de-mythologized amongst the literati.⁴¹¹ One would after pictures of Korean noblemen, see a very faithful rendition of a man from the barbarian country of the Great West Sea, complete with rapier and powdered wig, after which follows a leaf depicting a Swedish woman.⁴¹² Europe had been diversified into countries, and normalized into becoming part of the recognisable world of human beings. However, although this demonstrates that fairly substantial knowledge on the topic had been dispatched, there was still considerable confusion as to the difference between the country of *Da xiyang*, *Xiao xiyang*, and the various European countries.⁴¹³

The information on Europe that was produced and disseminated by, in particular, Ricci and Aleni, was very much an idealized image tailored to their needs for proselytising in an empire regarding themselves as the centre of the world.⁴¹⁴ This idealized discourse of Europe was a new idea that was accepted by certain sections of the courtly elites. This discourse of Europe and Europeans was, however, in sharp contrast to the discourses that was formulated by more sceptical personae amongst the Chinese literati, based on traditional Sinocentrism, and bolstered even further when observing the marauding Portuguese and Dutch seafarers in the South. Thus,

⁴¹⁰ T. Zhang 1739, vol. 326.28

⁴¹¹ Fuheng 1759

⁴¹² Fuheng 1759, 1:95

⁴¹³ Fuheng 1759, 1:120

⁴¹⁴ Brook 2009, 286

two very different discourses of Europe were in play in China at the same point. It is interesting to note that for a substantial amount of time there existed considerable confusion on whether the referent objects of these two discourses were even the same; if the Portuguese traders were indeed from that harmonious continent the Jesuits referred to. The missionaries themselves preferred to do little in order to clarify the confusion.

The challenges Christian missionaries first met with, when arriving at the Celestial Court to spread a cosmology centred in Europe, is well illustrated in the dry comments from one of the writers of the History of the Ming:

"[A] native from the great western ocean came to the capital who said that the Lord of Heaven, Ye-su, was born in Ju-tê-a [Judæa] which is identical with the old country of Ta-ts'in [Da Qin]; that this country is known in the historical books to have existed since the creation of the world for the last 6,000 years; that it is beyond dispute the sacred ground of history and the origin of all worldly affairs ; that it should be considered as the country where the Lord of Heaven created the human race. [11] This account looks somewhat exaggerated and should not be trusted."⁴¹⁵

Proselytizing to the elite of the Celestial court of the Middle Kingdom that the metaphysical centre of the world was to be found far outside of their borders, was no easy task. However, Ricci's strategy was to take advantage of the relatively open intellectual environment of the Ming court, and seek to convert them through communicating a picture of Christianity and the Christian lands of Europe, that emphasized commonality between Confucianism and Catholic faith and philosophies.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ T. Zhang 1739

⁴¹⁶ C. D. K. Yee 1994; Mungello 1989

The image of Europe that was spread in both oral and written form, was an image sharing deep commonalities with China, but with a crucial difference in how the European nations, through the Catholic faith, had succeeded in fulfilling Chinese ideals to a larger extent than what the Chinese themselves had. These books that introduced Europe to the Chinese public, in their own language, would go on to become textual monuments that were amongst the most central of the few sources upon which the Chinese perceptions of Europe was based.⁴¹⁷ A leading Chinese scholar on the affairs of foreign countries, and Catholic convert, Xu Guangqi, would exemplify this in his writings. "Xu's Europe—Ricci's Far West—was shaped by the context in which Ricci used it to narrate his relationship with China: a relationship that expressed both commonality and polarity (...) both are bound to the same commitments to good order and moral conduct ('rites and music'). But this is also a relationship of difference, as China, unlike Europe, is shown to be unable to meet the subsistence needs of its people."⁴¹⁸ In the end it is this view of commonality that, argues Brook, allows Xu to integrate his view of an idealized Europe with his China-centeredness. Europe was simply offering ideas to help and supplement Chinese practices in striving for the same common goals and ideals.⁴¹⁹

This same discourse was propagated further by Giulio Aleni, whose detailed treatises had even more impact on the Chinese discourses that did Ricci's, through his *Zhifang Waiji* (Records of Areas outside the Administered Realm) of 1623, as well as the later account of Europe in *Xifang Dawen* (Answers to Questions about the Western Region). Europe was again described as an admirable utopian society, a pinnacle of Confucian virtues, painstakingly described as the second pillar of civilization, which also entailed

⁴¹⁷ Mungello 1989, 15; Brook 2009, 268

⁴¹⁸ Brook 2009, 277–78

⁴¹⁹ Brook 2009, 280

talking down the grandeur of the world's other large civilizations centres, such as India.⁴²⁰ Overall, the Jesuits, and their Chinese followers amongst the literati at court, constructed a representation of Europe as a continent that was unitary enough to be comparable to the Chinese empire. Under the auspices of such a Confucian-Christian synthesis, Europe and China were still united as the two pillars of civilization, around which were scattered various barbarian and semi-barbarian peoples. This narrative, of course, drew on the same discursive constructs that had earlier constructed Da Qin and Fulin as a mirror-civilization across the seas. The Sinocentric worldview was thus altered to include Europe, under the understanding that Europe in essence was Chinese as well, and at times even more accomplished in achieving, through Christianity, the perfection of Chineseness. "Last but not least, the good image of Europe was sought dissociated from the sea-roving Fo-lang-chi [Folangji] (from 'Firanghi', or Franks, the Arabs' name for the Portuguese) who had already earned themselves a bad reputation in China."⁴²¹ The reason for trying to steer clear of connections with the European traders, the discourse about whom fell squarely within the standard view of the barbarian peoples to the South, should be fairly clear.

The tensions present in the representation of Europe as an ideal same, was however a difficult discourse to hold stable. Although the Chinese themselves did not have first-hand experiences of Europe, this utopian version was more difficult to swallow when the continent was no longer as legendary as in the Han dynasty, but was communicated by the continuous presence of foreign scholars arguing in favour of a foreign faith. The Chinese scholar Dong Han, writing in the mid-1600s, was not at all convinced, when writing about the missionaries' presence:

⁴²⁰ Luk 1977

⁴²¹ Luk 1977, 66

The assertions he makes are all more or less like this, fantastical and exaggerated and without any basis whatsoever. To allow these little monks to come from across the ocean and bring their heterodox doctrines into the Chinese realm [zhonghua] and then to permit them to build temples where they can live and to support them with lavish official salaries is to delude people's minds and cause them to turn their back on the true Way. Who is responsible for this?⁴²²

Such strains of thought were to become increasingly normal in the Chinese public discourses towards the end of the Ming dynasty.⁴²³ The main sources for Chinese anti-Christian feelings was based on Confucian religious scepticism, belief in Chinese superiority, and Chinese fear of political subversion.⁴²⁴ Driven in part by Buddhist monks, but arguing on a Confucian basis, the text *Shengchao poxie ji* (聖朝破邪集, Collected Essays Exposing Heterodoxy), was an early publication in this strand, that in 1640 argued for the fundamental incompatibility between Chinese traditions and Christianity.⁴²⁵

Chinese scholars and officials were also increasingly connecting the dots between the missionaries and their countrymen trading in the South. As Zhang summarizes this development: "Artillerymen and four cannons validated the material connection that Shen Que and other enemies of the Jesuits had been trying to establish between the missionaries and the Folangji, a connection that the Jesuits had been at pains to hide."⁴²⁶ As earlier mentioned, the Southern traders was designated to the pre-existing representation of Barbarians from the South. As such this barbarian subject position made it even harder for the Jesuit to uphold and reproduce the representation of an utopian Europe. Thus, the second representation of Europe, that would increasingly

⁴²² Brook 2009, 283

⁴²³ Brook 2010, 102

⁴²⁴ Mungello 2013, 53–55

⁴²⁵ Becker and Stanley 2013, 99

⁴²⁶ Q. Zhang 2015, 317

find traction, would be based mainly on differing signifiers. Whereas the Chinese self-representation, and as such their ontological security, overall remained in spite of the challenges to this from the Manchu conquest, China as “civilized”, “moral”, “religiously righteous”, and “superior”, was in this representation contrasted with the Europeans as “barbarians”, “immoral”, “heathens”, and “inferior”.

As such, two conflicting, and irreconcilable, representations of Europe would struggle for dominance in the Chinese elite discursive sphere; one idealized, furthered by the Jesuits, seeking to find a common ground between the ‘world’s two great civilizations.’ The second was the descriptions of the European merchants and pirates in the South, these being radically different from the Chinese, merely another tribe of untamed Barbarians coming from the South. However, the already ongoing debate in literati circles about the unity of East and West, or the distinctiveness of ‘Chineseness’, would soon take on an entire new meaning, as the increased European mercantile and imperial expansion into Asia, contributed to making the latter representation dominant.

The Qing dynasty, founded by the Manchu in 1644 after their invasion across the Great Wall, eventually firmly adopted the Sinocentric world view.⁴²⁷ From being regarded as barbarians themselves, they were to jealously defend their position as rulers of the pinnacle of civilization, surrounded by other barbarians.⁴²⁸ Ironically, the Qing dynasty was thus steeped in ontological insecurity from the very start, and it can be argued that precisely the closing of the intellectual sphere brought forth by this, made the dynasty even more unprepared for the ontological challenges the European encroachment would later entail.⁴²⁹ In the following years an increasing, although still

⁴²⁷ Fairbank and Liu 1978, 173

⁴²⁸ Mungello 1989, 18

⁴²⁹ Elman 2009, 191–92

very limited, number of Western foreigners would seek audience at the court of the Celestial emperor. No longer only in a role of missionaries, but as emissaries from the seafaring nations of Portugal, the Netherlands and the UK. These emissaries were regarded as similar to the other seafaring barbarian nations arriving to China from the South seeking to offer tribute in exchange for favours and trade rights. Foreigners from the European countries were thus sought physically contained in conditions close to house arrest on Macau and in Canton (Guangzhou), and the diplomatic envoys were sought integrated into the existing Chinese tribute system. This set of ritualized relations with foreign countries, was a system of tributes along which the key tenets of Chinese relations with the other countries in the region was ordered, based on the ideals which had been developed into a considerable corpus of traditions by the end of the Ming dynasty.⁴³⁰

The famous edicts of the Qianlong emperor, written in response to the Macartney expedition sent by King George III in order to seek European-style diplomatic relations and trading rights, thus showcase the discourse regarding Europe as merely a jumble of distant, small, barbarian, people. As the Qienlong emperor thus emphasised in his letter to the British king George III:

⁴³⁰ The classic historical view of the imperial Chinese tribute system was defined in large parts by the treatises of Fairbank and Teng 1941; Mancall 1968; and Schwartz 1968; For an excellent treatise on the dynamics of the tribute system at the outset of the Chinese implementation into the Western-based legal order, see Svarverud 2007a, 8–12; Although the tribute system is still regarded as a defining trait of imperial China, later works have criticised the traditional conceptualisation for overly reifying the institutionality and positive effects of the practice, as well as overlooking the limited presence of also non-suzerain traditions. See in particular Perdue 2015; Hevia 1995; Callahan 2012b and; Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson 2012a; For a good overview of the current state of the scholarly debate, and the usage of the tribute system terminology in current-day Chinese politics, see S. Zhao 2015

Europe consists of many other nations besides your own: if each and all demanded to be represented at our Court, how could we possibly consent? The thing is utterly impracticable. (...) If you assert that your reverence for our Celestial dynasty fills you with a desire to acquire our civilization, our ceremonies and code of laws differ so completely from your own that, even if your Envoy were able to acquire the rudiments of our civilization, you could not possibly transplant our manners and customs to your alien soil. Therefore, however, adept the Envoy might become, nothing could be gained thereby.⁴³¹

The discourse treating Europe as a unitary continent sharing common virtue and civilizational aspirations with the Chinese, thus lost out to the inclusion of the European countries within the discursive structure regarding foreign barbarians.⁴³² The foundational narrative of Mythical Europe had given way for the narrative of Barbarian Europe.

4.3 Conclusions

In tracing the historical background of the Chinese concept of Europe, two general traits are notable in light of the forthcoming chapters, in that they formed the context for the Chinese ontological security crisis that was to come. First, the history of ideas briefly rendered here demonstrates China's separate position compared to Turkey, Russia, or Iran, and how their political culture far more separate from direct interactions with the European continent. Furthermore, the Chinese were second-hand receivers of knowledge. They were not discovering Europe, but being presented to it by the European themselves, seeking to propagate an image of Europe that

⁴³¹ Qianlong 1793

⁴³² Gentzler 1977

furthered the Europeans' various agendas. Secondly, it is interesting to note that from the very first rumours of a civilization at the opposite end of the Eurasian continent found its way into Chinese written sources, that image was deeply entwined with the Chinese definition of their Self, and their ongoing political and philosophical discussions. The relative Chinese separateness from the European continent, and the resulting anchoring of the idea of Europe in Sinocentric cosmology, were key background factors for the ontological security crisis that emerged after the Opium Wars.

On the basis of this *longue durée* of Chinese representations of Europe, there were a number of important developments in 18th and 19th Centuries that carried particular weight in shaping the Chinese discourses to where it was at the eve of the great disruption in the mid-1800s. As this background chapter has demonstrated, the role Europe played for Chinese ontological security changed notably over the course of a few centuries, as the concept of Europe took on a variety of radically new meanings and got emmeshed into a complex interplay of internal and external economic and political developments. As seen, the ancient mythical narrative of Europe, would give rise to two distinct set of narratives informing the scholarly community from the late Ming dynasty onwards; namely the one, widely propagated by Jesuit missionaries, of China and Europe as brotherly civilizations sharing a universal, syncretic cosmology, and the second subsuming Europe into the classic Sinocentric discourse as barbarians from afar. In a sense, one can here trace the fault lines of the competing cosmologies, one centred on the Imperial capital and China, the other on Western-derived universalist concepts. The tensions around these two constructs is arguably echoed in Chinese ontological discourse even today.

Throughout late Ming and the Qing dynasties, though, increasing hostility to Christians in China would degrade both the status of the Jesuits, and the knowledge of Europe that they sought to spread. Nevertheless, the works written by the Jesuits

would have an impact that would survive a relative hiatus, and become one of the main sources for the Chinese view of Europe, when a scholarly scramble for knowledge about Europe followed at the end of the 19th Century. When the Qianlong emperor formed a vast manuscript library, both Alani's treatises of the world, and the comprehensive world map of the Jesuit Ferdinand Verbiest, were included.⁴³³ As the editors of the library commented on his *Chih-fang wai chi*: "Its descriptions are mostly strange and unascertainable, and must contain many exaggerations. But the world is so large that nothing is really impossible. We include this book for the record and to broaden the mind with strange matters."⁴³⁴ The discourse of Europe in China had at that point seen the discourse of Europe as another barbarian state become dominant at the Chinese court. Significantly, the stabilization of the representation of Europe as merely another inferior, barbarian and morally peripheral set of entities, easily subsumed into the existing Chinese/barbarian distinction of Chinese cosmology, meant that the repeated defeats and later subservience under the industrialised European countries, would be even more destructive of the Chinese cosmology and the ontological security of traditional Chinese identity. This challenge to the ontological security of the traditional Chinese world order, and the Chinese polity itself, would give rise to repeated political and philosophical convulsions over the coming century. As will be detailed over the coming chapters, Europe would as a result emerge as a nodal point for the various Chinese attempts at re-establishing an ontological security narrative for a reformed Chinese polity.

⁴³³ Golvers 2003

⁴³⁴ Quoted in Luk 1977, 81

Chapter 5: Re-Establishing Ontological Security in a Eurocentric World – Diachronic Analysis of the Early Modern Era

5.1 Introduction: The Ontological Rupture

From the mid-1800s onwards, China's idea of Europe moved from a matter of peripheral Chinese academic interest to being acutely relevant for the future of the Chinese polity, as the imperial system collapsed in the midst of an ontological security crisis brought on by the European influx. A crisis that still reverberates in the country today. Faced with an increasing number of military and political defeats, sustaining the foundational narrative of the Qing dynasty's traditional Sinocentrism became increasingly difficult towards the end of the 19th Century. This fundamental ontological security crisis would set the stage for a number of political projects to re-establish some sense of ontological security for a Chinese polity, for which a reformulation of the discourse of Europe was central. The next century of Chinese history, from 1840 to 1949, would witness tremendous changes on all levels of societal life, and a chaotic succession of attempts at reformulating the Chinese identity in ways that would re-secure the ontological status of a Chinese polity. The Chinese concept of Europe would naturally go through a process of fundamental reassessment in this period, and the role of the European continent became essential in the efforts to handle this fundamental ontological rupture. These efforts were ranging from the denial of the need to reformulate the traditional identity narrative, to a number of efforts at transforming the identity and practices of the Chinese polity, based on capitalist or Marxist thought derived from the European countries themselves.

The tumultuous years following the First Opium War of 1839 were distinguished by a number of external and domestic crises.⁴³⁵ These contributed to a somewhat tortuous process of realization amongst Chinese decision-makers and literati that the European powers had moved from a scholarly curiosity, to a peer competitor in the island kingdoms in China's near abroad, and had finally become a fundamental challenge to the Sinocentric world order, not only on a military, but also on a political and ideological level. This rupture of the fundamental identity narrative of the Chinese Empire was driven by military defeat first at the hands of the Western imperialist powers. Later on, arguably even more significant, was the additionally humiliating defeat at the hands of the Japanese 'little brother', whose relative openness to the technological and political systems of Europe and the USA had provided the military edge to hit an endogenous blow to the centre of the Sinocentric system.⁴³⁶

The two most consequential examples of Chinese ontological security-seeking in light of this shattered worldview will be treated in this chapter. As such this chapter's main purpose is to link current day China-Europe relations with the *longue durée* of the Chinese concepts of Europe, through focusing on how these have influenced the various inflection points of the modern Chinese polity in the repeated attempts at reformulating its ontological security basis throughout the last century. The first such case of ontological security seeking, is the rise of the Self-Strengthening Movement (自强运动), ca. 1861–1895, a coalition of intellectuals and policymakers that sought to preserve the Qing dynasty and the traditional Confucian political order through

⁴³⁵ The historic details of this period is eminently covered by a wide range of historic literature. See eg: H. Mao 2016; Waley 2005; Polacheck 1992; Lovell 2015; Platt 2012; S. Kirchner 2013

⁴³⁶ Paine 2005a; Hacker 1977; C. R. Hughes forthcoming; Suzuki 2007

adopting Western technology as a means of strengthening the empire's capabilities in face of the European powers.⁴³⁷ The foundational narrative, in sum, related to Europe as 'Threatening and Advanced'; an Other that was fundamentally threatening to Chinese ontological security, but that was sought contained through selective use of European technologies and military methods. The second case analyses the aftermath of the First Sino-Japanese War, the May 4th Movement, and the Early Republic Era, ca. 1900-1915, when a new Chinese state and national identity were articulated and sought realized by the political generation of Sun Yat-sen. This 'Ideal Europe', reflected a radically changed foundational narrative for the attempted new Chinese polity, where Europe became reconstituted into an ideal in a new narrative embedding Western notions of linearity and development, and Europe as an ideal Self for a Chinese polity to draw upon. In a sense, these two early cases roughly relate to a process of firstly understanding Europe and the forces of colonialism and modernity, and secondly seeking to implement these into a reformed Chinese Self.

5.2 The Self-Strengthening Movement (1861-1895): Making Sense of a Decentred China

The Self-Strengthening Movement (自强运动), also referred to as the Western Affairs Movement (洋务运动) emerged in the last half of the 19th Century as a means of addressing the old imperial system's political, economic, and ontological security crises through implementing institutional reforms, and adopting Western technology as a means of strengthening the empire's power and legitimacy.⁴³⁸ As the Chinese literati sought to measure up the new presence of European merchants and navy

⁴³⁷ Pong 2003, 3–8; Bailey 2013; Hao and Wang 1978, 166–68

⁴³⁸ Pong 2003, 3–8; Bailey 2013; Hao and Wang 1978, 166–68

vessels at the eve of the Opium War, it was, as detailed in the historical background chapter, from a point where the discourse of Europe as a Great Civilization reflecting the Chinese, had lost out to the discourse of Europe as Barbarians distinct from civilization. The discourse on the Europeans was not only indifferent with substantial streaks of xenophobia, however, it was first of all very limited.⁴³⁹

Amongst the wide realms of barbarian countries, then, another group of nations did not matter much in terms of the priorities of the celestial court. Ontological security was indeed an issue that plagued the Manchu Qing dynasty, but rather through their efforts at establishing their non-Han dynasty as a legitimate succession to the mandate of Heaven, for which purpose they were strongly asserting traditional imperial discourses and practices.⁴⁴⁰ On the level of practices, the persistence of the traditional Sinocentric worldview was clearly demonstrated also through the setup of the proto-diplomatic system dealing with the European traders and delegations, where there was no separate arm of the sophisticated imperial bureaucracy to deal with “foreigners” a notable exception of sorts being the office of periphery affairs, tasked with handling relations with Russia.⁴⁴¹ “Foreigners were not treated as citizens from countries considered to be equals. They were ‘barbarians’, to be restricted to peripheral areas only.”⁴⁴² Safely established within the traditional Chinese worldview,

⁴³⁹ Teng and Fairbank 1979b, 14–15; Hao and Wang 1978, 172

⁴⁴⁰ See Fairbank and Liu 1978; Mungello 2013; Hao and Wang 1978; Crossley 2000; Crossley 1992; Michael 1974; Crossley 1985

⁴⁴¹ Wills Jr and Cranmer-Byng 2010, 184–93; I. C. Y. Hsu 1978, 79–85; Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson 2012b; Hevia 1995

⁴⁴² C. Shih 1990, 127; An interesting critique of the prevalent historiographical tradition about the Qing dynasty embassy rituals, as typically in Teng and Fairbank 1979a; is raised by Hevia 1995 whose treatise, analysing the British Macartney mission argues that it tends to Orientalise the Qing court and its rituals for receiving foreigners. The book has seen some potent critique in its own right, most notably by Esherick 1998, but remains a useful corrective to overly Eurocentric readings of the late Qing.

a handful of barbarian merchants, pushy though they were, did nothing but affirm the normality of the ways of the world.

A number of further key political traits of this era are difficult to grasp unless analysed through a logic of identity, illustrating the degree to which ontological security is a salient approach. The need to uphold the traditional practices underpinning the ontological security of the Chinese empire took clear precedence over territorial and monetary issues, to an extent that is fairly inexplicable within a logical framework of interests predicated on the ontological paradigm of the nation-state. “It seemed worse to allow more Sino-barbarian contacts than to lose territorial integrity or sovereignty.”⁴⁴³ The imperial court’s main focus was on regulating ritual contacts with the barbarians, whilst territorial and judicial concessions, such as the ceding of Hong Kong, was regarded as lesser challenges, given how these did not challenge the existing ontological framework to the same degree. Thus, in the aftermath of the First Opium War (1839-1842), little heed was at first given in court circles to the matter of the European colonial powers. In spite of a few officials arguing for the need to learn from Western technologies, the overall sentiment was adherence to the traditional ontological narrative underpinning the Celestial Empire. The Opium War defeat was brushed off as an incident, and Chinese victories in smaller following skirmishes taken as confirmation of the continued superiority of the Chinese Empire.⁴⁴⁴ In face of the potentially devastating blow to the existing world image, the forces pushing for a strategy of cognitive dissonance were strong. Hence the Chinese representative negotiating the Treaty of Nanjing gave in to almost all of the British demands, whilst simultaneously communicating to the emperor his success in constraining these barbarians. Prejudice and outlandish theories about the European merchants,

⁴⁴³ C. Shih 1990, 96

⁴⁴⁴ C. Shih 1990, 95–97; C.-Y. Shih and Chang 2017, 11; Adelman and Shih 1993, 68–69

missionaries, and diplomats that had made China part of their circuit was still rife. It was a matter of debate amongst the *literati* and high officials whether the English had legs bestowed with a knee joint, or whether they would simply be unable to get back up should they be pushed over.⁴⁴⁵ Renewed warfare, and renewed defeat to the European colonial powers did, however, make it increasingly difficult to stabilise the established identity narrative, and Europe would soon come to the fore of the domestic debate over the identity of the Chinese polity.

5.2.1 *Discovering the Barbarian Civilization*

After 1860 and the defeat in the Second Opium War (1856-1860), a realization grew amongst the literati that the Western presence represented a qualitative break with the status quo of handling the barbarians of the Southern periphery. Scholars and officials would increasingly start referring to a “changed situation”, when discussing the challenges faced by the Qing empire post-Opium War.⁴⁴⁶ This change in the discourse implied the presence of a radical new challenge, for which radical new solutions became an option. This led to a scramble for information following the Opium Wars, at which point it became clear to a growing number of members of the scholarly elite that the developments in the Far West could no longer be ignored.⁴⁴⁷ Among the works written in the search for information about this new European threat that had suddenly manifested itself, the work of Wei Yuan, a prestigious scholar and advisor to high ranking officials of Southern China, stands out. *The Illustrated Treatise of the Sea Kingdoms* was a landmark investigation, finalized four months after the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing.⁴⁴⁸ The *Treatise* is a textual monument in the Chinese discourse on Europe,

⁴⁴⁵ Hao and Wang 1978, 153

⁴⁴⁶ Hao and Wang 1978, 156

⁴⁴⁷ Suzuki 2009a

⁴⁴⁸ Jessie G. Lutz 2012, 39–42; Leonard 1984, 96–98

due to its position as the first major, and widely read, Chinese investigation into the political and geographical specifics of the European continent.⁴⁴⁹ The *Illustrated Treatise* thus eventually became, in the aftermath of the Second Opium War onwards, widely disseminated and read. It went to three revisions, adding additional empirical material, and numerous reprints, and was even translated into Japanese where it had a considerable impact on the Japanese view of the new European presence in the Asia-Pacific.⁴⁵⁰

Given the limited information available to Wei and his contemporaries, amongst their key sources were precisely the Chinese dynastic histories and the Jesuit treatises detailed in the preceding chapter. In his opening essay on Europe, Wei thus notes how the continent was earlier known as *Da Qin*, similar to what the Chinese once termed themselves.⁴⁵¹ Nevertheless, Wei Yuan's main contribution was not to decentre China's position in the world, but rather the opposite. He anchored the European presence firmly within a Sinocentric framework that did not fundamentally challenge the ontological security of Imperial China, by focusing mainly on their role in challenging the maritime periphery of the Chinese suzerainty system. A discourse that was in continuation of the narratives of Europe established in the later dynastic histories that he referred to. The approach is made clear from the outset through the geographical structure of his work. The *Illustrated Treatise* is not organized according to the European concept of continents, that he was familiar with,⁴⁵² but subdivided into six parts based on six major 'ocean-regions', implicitly centred on the Chinese landmass. Following up this discursive orientation, his policy prescription was

⁴⁴⁹ Luk 1977; Leonard 1984; Hao and Wang 1978, 2–5; Waley 2005; Mungello 2013; Hunt 1993a, 65

⁴⁵⁰ Leonard 1984, 7

⁴⁵¹ Wei 1841, 1

⁴⁵² Leonard 1984, 109–10

aggressive diplomacy using the well-known strategy of seeking to “use barbarians against barbarians”, in order to drive the Westerners from the Southern seas, and revive the traditional tributary system.⁴⁵³

Wei’s description of Europe was also very much shaped through the lens of traditional Chinese historiography, with its emphasis on the rise and fall of a large unified empire, and the conflation of spiritual and political leadership. In particular, the Chinese worldview was prevalent in the understanding of the role of the Pope in Rome. As Leonard phrased it; “For Wei, the aggressive drive for profit was a direct consequence of the lack of virtue and sound political values in the West. And, of course, it was the primary cause of European expansion in Asia.”⁴⁵⁴ Although barbarian, Wei tells his readers, Europe once was a unified continent ruled by the political-spiritual figure of the Pope that ruled on behalf of heaven.⁴⁵⁵ However, in the current era, after the fall of the Roman empire, the vast empire had splintered, although the pope continued to play an important political-religious role equivalent to the Dalai Lama in Tibet.⁴⁵⁶ The idea of Europe as a related continent in the West had thus not disappeared completely, but whereas the Chinese had reunited again under the imperial system, Europe had, in this discourse, remained fragmented due to lacking political virtue. Thus, Wei Yuan’s treatise is linking the signifiers “barbarian”, “splintered”, “immoral”, “profit-driven” to the Chinese empire that in comparison epitomes “civilization”, “unity”, “morality”, and “righteousness-driven”.

The *Illustrated Treatise* did, however, take the step of realising that the Western presence although being barbarian, was a qualitatively different challenge than what

⁴⁵³ Leonard 1984, 184–87

⁴⁵⁴ Leonard 1984, 156

⁴⁵⁵ Wei 1841, 1

⁴⁵⁶ Wei 1841, 1

China had earlier encountered, pointing out that the European presence and their advanced weapons technology was something that China had not experienced in 3000 years.⁴⁵⁷ As such, he warns that the status quo will not be equivalent to stay the onslaught, but in line with the general discourse of the Self-Strengthening Movement, he argues that the barbarians need to be studied in order to drive them back; “Carefully study the four inner barbarians in order to control the four inner barbarians, if you do not carefully study the outer barbarians, the outer barbarians will be in control”.⁴⁵⁸ The studying would, importantly, not entail seeking to implement any of the European practices, that was termed as barbarian. For Wei Yuan, the foreigners were not a source of political and moral inspiration, rather they were akin of a ‘Sputnik Moment’ spur for the importance of restating traditional Chinese values and statecraft.⁴⁵⁹

Another textual monument, written some years later, Xu Jiyu’s *Short Account of the Maritime Circuit* was pivotal in developing the discourse from Wei Yuan’s regard of Europe as politically well organized and technologically competent barbarians. Rather, Xu acknowledged Europe as a civilizational centre, although of lesser moral value, in a non-Sinocentric world. Xu’s period of ostracism from the court following the publication of his account speaks volumes about the ontological security challenges even a not particularly flattering account of the world beyond the Chinese periphery posed for the foundational narrative of the Chinese empire.⁴⁶⁰ The 1865 Tongzhi restoration did, however, bring Xu back to the fore, as he was made a member of the Zongli Yamen, the new board for foreign affairs, and later the director

⁴⁵⁷ Wei 1841, 1–2

⁴⁵⁸ Wei 1841, 2

⁴⁵⁹ Jessie G. Lutz 2012; Jessie Gregory Lutz 2008, 212–14; Leonard 1984

⁴⁶⁰ Drake 1975, 4

of an institution founded to teach Western knowledge to the Chinese.⁴⁶¹ When the first Chinese resident diplomat travelled to Europe in the 1877, Xu's book was his primary source of information about the continent.⁴⁶²

Like Wei Yuan, Xu Jiyu drew upon both Western sources—ranging from the Jesuit's treatises to material from contemporary missionaries—and Chinese sources.⁴⁶³ Importantly, the text differs from the preceding ones by offering an adjusted discourse about Europe, a discourse that implicitly also challenged the Chinese discourse of their own place in the world. Even though Xu continued to use the term “barbarian” (夷) for the Europeans, Europe was treated and described as a civilization in its own right.⁴⁶⁴ It is notable that unlike Wei Yue's description of the world as subdivided into ocean regions around a Chinese centre, Xu Jiyu is basing his geography on the latest available European maps, subdividing the world into constituent continents. He emphasizes that Asia is the largest, though, and spends considerable time pointing out the glories of China, as if to make up for the fact that geography has relegated it from the centre of the earth.⁴⁶⁵ Xu notably took care to start out with a short description of the Qing Empire, explaining how it was not appropriate to cover it in detail in a treatise of the world outside of it, but spared time to establish that “The master of Asia is China”.⁴⁶⁶ He does also squarely admit to the reader the things he has learned from the European sources that took him by surprise, such as the fact that the sun revolves around the equator.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶¹ Jessie G. Lutz 2012, 48

⁴⁶² Drake 1975, 5

⁴⁶³ Drake 1975, 2; Jessie G. Lutz 2012; Drake 1972

⁴⁶⁴ For a more in-depth discussion on the Chinese uses, and the Western translations, of the term “yi”, see L. H. Liu 2006, 32–39

⁴⁶⁵ Xu J. 1848, 59 Drake 1975, 63

⁴⁶⁶ Xu J. 1848, 70

⁴⁶⁷ Xu J. 1848, 57

In his description of Europe (歐羅巴), it is emphasized from the beginning that Europe was the continent where rose the Roman Empire that “*Han histories called the country of Da Qin*. Before the end of the Five Dynasties, Rome did fall, and Europe was fragmented into warring states”.⁴⁶⁸ As the further text expands upon, at length in the cases of Italy and Greece, Europe is being recognized as having a long historical tradition as a civilization, that developed largely without Chinese influence. However, the fragmentation of European unity demarcates a fundamental difference as opposed to the Chinese empire.

There are numerous tribes, but when speaking only of large countries, there are around ten. The people are by nature careful and exact, and good at manufacturing devices, and they excel in using ships so within the four seas there is nowhere they have not been.⁴⁶⁹

Thus, the introduction on Europe also serves to illustrate two other points that Xu was keen to emphasize: first, a repeated assertion of the innate technological abilities of the European peoples, that plays into the *ti/yong* dichotomy of Chinese as morally superior, but Europe as technologically superior, that were to become the dominant trait of the new ontological security narrative of the era.⁴⁷⁰ Second, what a good idea it is to borrow technology in order to strengthen oneself. Xu emphasizes, on a note of reassurance, that the fearsome art of cannonry, whose consequences the Chinese had suffered recently during the Opium War, was originally invented in China, and the Europeans only belatedly caught up and learned how to utilise it.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ Xu J. 1848, 337 Italics are used corresponding to where Xu emphasised the original Chinese text by adding markers next to the characters.

⁴⁶⁹ Xu J. 1848, 60

⁴⁷⁰ Xu J. 1848, 347

⁴⁷¹ Xu J. 1848, 337

Europe possessed, furthermore, a higher level of culture than the Chinese barbaric periphery, and a level of technological progress and government organization that allowed for both economic wealth and military power. Thus, "for Hsu's [Xu's] readers, who in later years began to search for models outside of China, his introduction to European states provided appealing suggestions for further study. (...) European nations thus began to serve as models for Chinese in search of modern political forms and the secrets of state power."⁴⁷² Overall, Xu's textual monument relates a discourse defining Europe as a new 'Other' to China through a set of interrelated signifiers that emphasizes China as being united, Europe as being divided; China being large and glorious, Europe small and peripheral; China being morally dominant although technologically lacking, Europe being technologically adept but morally inferior.

This discourse, based on a new narrative where technological sophistication and civilizational/spiritual prowess was no longer linked, but separated, the new fundamental *ti/yong* narrative thus opened for the possibility of retaining ontological security based on traditional Chinese identity, even when having experienced defeat by modern technology. This *ti/yong* narrative was based on the paradigm of 中学为体 西学为用 (Chinese studies as essence, Western studies as function).⁴⁷³ As summarized in Levenson's pioneering work on the era's history of ideas, the Self-Strengtheners at the court saw the anti-Westernizers' isolationist ideas as self-defeating, and instead argued that:

The only alternative to outright destruction of Chinese civilization by foreign conquerors was selective innovation by dedicated Chinese traditionalists. To justify their proposal in the special sense, to satisfy their will to believe that Chinese superiority was still

⁴⁷² Drake 1975, 149

⁴⁷³ It is interesting to note that the slogan was first coined by Liang Qichao, using it dismissively in arguing against precisely this political and intellectual strategy. See the phrase's first appearance in Liang 2010, 80

unchallenged, they emphasized that these areas of innovation from the West were areas on only *practical* value, not of essential value. Western knowledge would be used only to defend the core of Chinese civilization, and it would not impinge on it. (...) This rationalization, whereby something of Western culture could have a place in China and yet be kept in its place, was an article of faith for a whole school of Confucian-official westernizers, the 'self-strengtheners'⁴⁷⁴

Amongst the most prominent and consequential voices in favour of such an ontological realignment at the Chinese court in the latter years of the 19th Century, was Li Hongzhang, a diplomat, general and politician.⁴⁷⁵ Through Li's changing fortunes at the Chinese court, he would press the cause of self-strengthening on a broad range of sectors, from founding arsenals to seeking school reforms, even sending Chinese students abroad for military training in Germany, and inquiring in vain for the possibility of having more educated at West Point in the USA.⁴⁷⁶ In his diplomacy he was a main promulgator of the, at the time, rather revolutionary view, that Europe ought to be recognized as a culture on par with China. He was the first official to treat foreign relations as relations amongst equals, and was also an admirer of the successful Japanese efforts at modernization.⁴⁷⁷ His views of the sameness of China and the Western powers is well illustrated in a statement, quoted by Bland:

The truth is, that at present the foreigners are powerful and the Chinese feeble. And whence arises the power of the former? It certainly is not innate in them, but depends on the fact that 'the requisites of Government are sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment, and the confidence of the people in their ruler' (Confucian Analects). And how is the weakness of China to be

⁴⁷⁴ Joseph Richmond Levenson 1958, 59–60

⁴⁷⁵ Paine 2005a, 48

⁴⁷⁶ R. J. Smith 1994, 133; K.-H. Kim 1994; C. Shih 1990, 66–70; H. Li 1913

⁴⁷⁷ K.-H. Kim 1994, 146–50; C. Shih 1990, 98

accounted for? This is also not innate, but is a result of the truth of the above axiom not being fully realised.⁴⁷⁸

This excerpt echoes the earlier discourses of Europe being fundamentally on par with China within a shared universe, in which it was possible, as indeed had happened, for countries of a foreign barbarian continent to grow powerful by adhering to familiar Chinese virtues better than the Chinese themselves.⁴⁷⁹

Even after the Zongli Yamen was founded by reformers as an early foreign affairs office, the institution was still very much peripheral in the bureaucratic system, with sparse resources and direct access to the key personnel in court.⁴⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the decay of Sinocentrism became gradually apparent in the decades from 1850 to 1890. Amongst the most evident symptoms, was that the practice amongst the gentry of comparing foreigners to animals abated, including the transcription of European countries' names in characters with animal radicals, most prominently the dog-radical.⁴⁸¹ A similar trend is well summarised by Hao and Wang, noticing that: "Changes in the use of key terms give eloquent testimony to this progress in understanding the West. Affairs in connection with the West were in the main called 'barbarian affairs' (*i-wu*) [夷务] before the sixties, 'Western [lit. Ocean] affairs' (*yang-wu*) [洋务] and 'Western learning' (*Hsi-hsueh*) [西学] in the seventies and eighties, and 'new learning' (*hsin-hsueh*) [新学] in the nineties."⁴⁸² This change constituted an important new discursive framework for the coming number of Chinese diplomats that would, for the first time in the history of China, embark on diplomatic missions

⁴⁷⁸ Bland 1917, 84–85

⁴⁷⁹ Bland 1917, 84

⁴⁸⁰ Yongjin Zhang 1991b, 17–29; Mêng 1962; C. Shih 1990, 127

⁴⁸¹ Hao and Wang 1978, 188

⁴⁸² Hao and Wang 1978, 200

to Europe, in order to secure their fledgling empire through embryonic engagement with the European diplomatic community.

5.2.2 *Meeting Europe Face to Face*

In the years following the Opium Wars, the Self-Strengthening Movement gathered pace during the related Tongzhi Restoration reform programme (1860-1874).⁴⁸³ This move towards realising the importance of knowledge of the West,⁴⁸⁴ as Wei Yuan had advocated, laid bare the extremely limited range of the Chinese literature on the topic. In seeking to address this shortcoming, a range of key texts of an entirely novel kind came into being, namely the first-hand accounts originating from newly instated diplomatic fact-finding missions to Europe and the USA. The most influential of these are the first-hand accounts relied to the Zongli Yamen. The missions would tend to travel abroad for over a year at the time, staying in the UK and France in particular, but also visiting a fairly wide range of other Western countries, from the USA to Sweden. The accounts were published in multiple editions, often including commendations from high-ranking political figures in form of forewords or title calligraphy, and they became central in disseminating knowledge about the West, as well as narratives about the West, and Europe's place in the world next to China.⁴⁸⁵

Key amongst these first political travelogues that would shape the Chinese discourses of the identity configuration between themselves, Europe, and their respective places in the world, were Zhang Deyi's dispatches from his mission in the years 1866-1872.

⁴⁸³ M. C. Wright 1962; Pong 2003; Hao and Wang 1978

⁴⁸⁴ The futility of ignoring the military and political threat of Europe was in this period also emphasised by further acts of war, including the destruction of the Yuanmingyuan palace complex in 1860, that were to become an iconic rallying point for later Chinese nationalism. See Callahan 2009; Ringmar 2013

⁴⁸⁵ Huangfu 2012, 12

They cover in fragmented, but extreme details his experiences and knowledge gathered from the trips to the European and American capitals, spanning from discussions of European children's games to fire brigades, fashion, swimming lectures, and contraceptives.⁴⁸⁶ Amongst the dispatches one can still trace the continuation of the self-strengthening discourse, although with a notable change in the evaluation of Europe, as exemplified when he describes a scathing conversation he had with a young overseas Chinese studying Catholicism in the US, reproaching him that

I pity your stupidity (...) This Jesus, born 1,860 years ago – during the reign of the Han Emperor Pingdi – spoke his fine words for the instruction of the West, instruction accepted since by the peoples of Europe, to whom they are a blessing; Confucius, born some 550 years before him- in the time of the Zhou Dynasty – left the tradition of his great words and deeds for the instruction of Asia (...) Why do you, an Asian, reject this for something else?⁴⁸⁷

The idea articulated is the notable step of accepting the Western European culture and political system not only as a technological civilization in itself, but also one that is a moral civilization in its own right. The civilization is still regarded as alien to the Eastern Chinese one, but not necessarily as immoral—only different. However, the Chinese civilization was recognized as the oldest and senior one, allowing Zhang his sceptical attitude to throwing away millennia of Chinese learning in favour of 'only' centuries of learning from the Europeans.⁴⁸⁸ This preoccupation with civilizational age as a mark distinguishing Chinese society has continued to play a central role in Chinese ontological security. Even the Communist Party's revolutionaries taking dubious archaeological evidence in favour of declaring China the "world's oldest

⁴⁸⁶ Deyi Zhang 1992

⁴⁸⁷ Deyi Zhang 1992, 82–83

⁴⁸⁸ Deyi Zhang 1992, 82

continuous civilization”, a term that to this day continues to be invoked repeatedly by Chinese delegations abroad, as detailed in later chapters.

Even more radical discursive change are also found in the dispatches relayed home to the Imperial court, such as those by Guo Songtao’s mission in the years 1877 to 1879; “I feel that of the many necessary things which would help us to govern our country well and establish a solid base for national wealth and strength, these two [railways and telegraphs] would enable us to establish a state which would remain strong for a thousand years”⁴⁸⁹ Guo did, however, also go considerably further in pioneering the suggestive thoughts that the political and economic models of Europe, were “well-ordered, enlightened, and methodical”⁴⁹⁰, and perhaps even worthy of being emulated by China.

In Europe people have been competing with each other with knowledge and power for the last 2,000 years (...) have evolved a code of international law which gives precedence to fidelity and righteousness and attaches the utmost importance to relations between states. Taking full cognizance of feeling and punctiliously observing all due ceremonies, they have evolved a high culture on a firm material basis.⁴⁹¹

This constituted a radical break with the current *ti/yong* discourse that had established a temporary sense of ontological security for the Qing dynasty based on the sharp division between European technological superiority, and Chinese political and moral superiority. As such the publication of these thoughts caused an outcry amongst the *literati* and at the court, leading to the journal getting banned and even the printing plates being destroyed.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁹ Guo 1974a, 103

⁴⁹⁰ Guo 1974b, 43

⁴⁹¹ Xihong Liu 1974, 72

⁴⁹² Frodsham 1974; Huangfu 2012, 17

There were however also dispatches reflecting ideas of a less radical bent, that reaffirmed the foundational narrative of the Chinese as superior in essence, albeit struggling to measure up to the technological level of Europe. As Liu Xihong, vice-minister to the UK, described it, “I informed these people of the fact that we Chinese base our culture on the pursuit of righteousness rather than the pursuit of profit”⁴⁹³ And following in the similar vein of separate political laws for the two civilizations, although Liu was very much in favour of studying European technology, he emphasized that this should be limited and within the purview of Chinese traditions.

They concentrate on such miscellaneous tricks, using boats and vehicles made to bring in profit, and firearms made for killing, trying to produce more and more of such things to become wealthy and strong. How can we call all this useful, real knowledge? Since the beginning of history, China has endured longer than any other civilization, and has produced a hundred and several dozen sages one after another (...) The depths of our philosophical discussions greatly exceeds those of the West.⁴⁹⁴

To this he also added sharp rebukes towards the Japanese reforms that demanded that Western laws and costumes should be utilized, pointing out how this broke with the idea of the spiritually superior Eastern civilizations.⁴⁹⁵

The dispatches of Xue Fucheng had a particular impact, and his journal from the mission from 1890 to 1893 became standard study material for the 1901 civil service examination, exemplifying the centrality if these texts for the Chinese literati in dealing with the knowledge of and from the West.⁴⁹⁶ Being an ardent supporter of

⁴⁹³ Xihong Liu 1974, 110

⁴⁹⁴ Xihong Liu 1974, 135–36

⁴⁹⁵ Xihong Liu 1974, 116

⁴⁹⁶ Huangfu 2012, 12

importing European technologies and traditions, he finds ontological security through creating a discourse that is reminiscent of the old idea of Europe as a parallel continent, although according to Xue, a continent that was in its days inhabited by Chinese themselves.⁴⁹⁷ As such, since the Westerners originally had borrowed everything from boats and clothing from the Chinese, why could not the Chinese borrow things back in return?⁴⁹⁸ As such, the fundamental narrative upon which the Self-Strengthening Movement sought to restore Chinese ontological security was reinstated, namely that there may be another civilization present on the globe, but the Chinese empire remains the senior one in moral, racial, and historical terms.

As demonstrated throughout this analysis, the key discursive changes that the Chinese idea of Europe went through in the period after the Opium War, were firstly that of recognising the presence of another great power centre outside of China itself. Secondly, Europe was increasingly acknowledged as another civilizational centre. As illustrated in the preceding sections, this did provide an entirely different ontological challenge for the Sinocentric system, and during the Self-Strengthening Movement this ontological crisis was sought addressed through the *ti/yong* narrative that gave the Chinese civilization a privileged moral and spiritual quality as opposed to Europe. As summarized by the viceroy Zhang Zhidong in a missive to the Emperor:

In order to render China powerful, and at the same time preserve our own institutions, it is absolutely necessary that we should utilize Western knowledge. But unless Chinese learning is made the basis of education, and a Chinese direction given to thought, the strong will become anarchists, and the weak, slaves. Thus the latter end will be worse than the former.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Huangfu 2012, 18

⁴⁹⁸ Huangfu 2012, 239–40

⁴⁹⁹ Z. Zhang 1901, 63

The narrative of “Chinese essence, European technology”, drew upon the ancient Buddhist concept of Essence-Function (*ti-yong* 体用) denoting the hierarchical relationship between fundamental truths, and the concrete utilization of these at a given point in time, as a way of trying to recreate a foundational narrative underpinning the ontological security of the Qing dynasty, even in the face of the abrupt end of two millennia of technological superiority. This attempt at recreating the foundational identity narrative of the imperial Chinese polity opened for a particular range of policies; those of the Self-Strengthening Movement. Eventually, as will be treated in the next chapter, these efforts proved not sufficient to secure the imperial courts position, neither in material nor ideational terms.⁵⁰⁰ Thus, few years later the idea would form that the old Chinese essence (体) in itself was flawed, and that yet another radical reformulation of the Chinese ontological position seemed necessary, based on European political and philosophical contributions. In this fundamental process, the role of Europe was pivotal, in the negotiations and discussions over the foundational Chinese narrative of themselves.

5.3 The Republic of China (1900-1915): Aspiring for the Family of Nations

The most important attempt at re-establishing the ontological security of a Chinese polity after the fall of the Qing dynasty, was politically manifested in the foundation of the fledgling Republic of China in 1912. This polity was founded on the basis of discourses and practices that were largely of European origin, and thus symptomatic of the further step in the role of Europe for Chinese ontological security; namely that

⁵⁰⁰ For a discussion on the interplay of discursive and material co-constitution in great power politics, see e.g. I. B. Neumann 2016, 184–90

of the change from being an alien and barbarian, to being an alien civilization, and then to being a civilizational standard. This monumental shift came about as part of an ongoing cultural and political reorientation over decades, that also saw Chinese intellectuals actively translating and disseminating numerous European texts, from Montesquieu to Bentham and Adam Smith.⁵⁰¹ This would intensify during the years of the early Republic, notably through the ideational legacies of key scholar-politicians such as Liang Qichao, Sun Yat-sen, and a number of other intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement. Such ideational reorientation tends not to come lightly, however. In addition to the preceding crises brought on by the European colonialists, yet another shattering blow was dealt to the Chinese ontological security through their humiliating defeat against their former subordinate Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95. A former part of the Confucian civilizational area, Japan had embarked on a route of rapid Westernization and industrialization, and the defeat thus brought also an immense endogenous challenge to the traditional Chinese sense of ontological security.⁵⁰² This gave further impetus to a renewed drive of introspection and ontological security seeking.

In this period of dramatic political, social and economic upheaval, a number of narrative entrepreneurs thus contended to formulate a new foundational narrative for a Chinese polity that could harness legitimacy both domestically and externally. As Callahan points out with regards to the various political ideas and practices of the era, “The goal was to construct a “China” worthy of being saved.”⁵⁰³ The main movement that sought to do this was the Republican one, which although politically struggling

⁵⁰¹ See Schwartz 1969; Mitter 2004; Strand 2011; Mishra 2013; Joseph R. Levenson 2011; Grieder 1983; Svarverud 2007b

⁵⁰² For a closer reading on the First Sino-Japanese War see the comprehensive work of Paine 2005b; Yoda 1996; Suzuki 2009a; Joseph Richmond Levenson 1970a, 19; Matten 2016, 46; A. Fung 1996; Qi 2014; C. R. Hughes forthcoming, 3-4

⁵⁰³ Callahan 2006b, 183

and at times unable to assert political authority over a territory populated by assorted warlords, was pioneering a rally around a new narrative for the Chinese, as an equal and sovereign state in the world. A key difference is how Chinese ontological security seeking now focused more on how the image of China could be accepted by the international society on premises not of traditional Chinese making. For this purpose, three deeply interwoven discursive developments took place; firstly the Chinese polity was sought re-formulated on the European derived basis of the nation-state, a discursive development with little precedent. This new ontological basis of the polity was then sought legitimized internally and externally. The latter most notably exemplified through the act of a fractured China to join in the First World War on the side of the allies, seeking to shore up both its internal and external ontological security in the process. In all of these three aspects of the ontological restructuring of China, the role of Europe was essential.

5.3.1 *From a (Chinese) World to a (European) Nation*

Laying the necessary ideational foundation for the emergence of the Republic of China, was a broad intellectual movement, whose reappraisal of Europe was integral to the foundational narrative on which these narrative entrepreneurs sought to establish a new, ontologically secure, Chinese political community. The concept of Europe, and European polities, amongst large swaths of the political and intellectual community, thus moved rapidly from being regarded as a threat to China's ontological security, to something more akin to a saviour. This fundamental change in the discourse of the West was spearheaded by journalists and intellectuals such as Yan Fu, and most notably, Liang Qichao.⁵⁰⁴ The key tenet of this intellectual new wave was one of seeking to find the right balance between traditional Chinese and Western

⁵⁰⁴ Jenco 2013, 36–38

impulses, for which purposes Liang argued for a whole range of educational, institutional and social reforms.⁵⁰⁵ Liang, as one of the leaders of this proverbial “Age of Openness”,⁵⁰⁶ spearheaded translations of an enormous amount of Western literature into Chinese,⁵⁰⁷ and disseminated these widely through journals such as his immensely successful *New Citizen Journal* (新民叢報), distributed at around 100 locations in China as well as in Japan and overseas.⁵⁰⁸ He thus was a key part of the movement to increasingly disregard the role of traditional Confucian culture towards a vision of universal progress; the world’s nations commonly developing from old to modern societies.

As Liang argued in his article *On the Scientific Spirit and Eastern and Western Culture*, there is no essential difference between Eastern and Western civilization within the universal scientific and social laws. It was mainly historical developments that left the countries on two different steps on the universal timeline of progress.⁵⁰⁹

After the Qin and Han dynasties the anti-scientific spirit pervaded in China for 2000 years; after the fall of the Roman Empire, the anti-scientific spirit also pervaded in Europe for more than a 1000 years. (...) Until the Renaissance, after which the health of the intellectual community gradually was reinstated.⁵¹⁰

The Scientific Spirit is, goes the key tenet of his thinking, not about a division between East and West, but between old and new, traditional and modern.⁵¹¹ An integrated aspect of Liang’s implementation of the range of Western philosophies, was also the

⁵⁰⁵ X. Tang 1996, 2–5

⁵⁰⁶ Dikötter 2008

⁵⁰⁷ H. Chang 1969, 33

⁵⁰⁸ Luo 2015, 94; X. Tang 1996, 46

⁵⁰⁹ Joseph Richmond Levenson 1970a, 2–3

⁵¹⁰ Liang 1922

⁵¹¹ Liang 1922

Social Darwinist thinking that was widely in vogue around the world in that era, in which the yellow race that was closest to the white one, now needed to stand up in order to avoid suppression. This notion entailed, of course, an intense discursive struggle about who exactly was constituted as the “yellow race”, as “Han”, or as “Chinese”.⁵¹² As summarized by Hughes, “reformers and revolutionaries saw their priority as salvation of the racially-defined national community in the international, Social Darwinian struggle for survival.”⁵¹³ In a sense, this served as a convenient shortcut for naturalising the idea of a universal, linear progressive timeline.

The key found by the new ranks of the Chinese intelligentsia,⁵¹⁴ was that the Chinese people for historical and geographical reasons had never conceived of their country as a nation-state, but rather as the unbounded polity of the Tianxia “all under Heaven.” This discourse of a world without borders under Chinese tutelage, came increasingly to be regarded as parochial.⁵¹⁵ The challenge was thus to change the Chinese foundational narrative, from one based on the emplotment of the traditional *tianxia*-view of the world as an extension of the Chinese empire. Instead, these narrative entrepreneurs sought a polity based on the Westphalia-derived idea of its ontological security being based on the emplotment of nation-states, *guojia* 国家, as the legitimate way of ordering large-scale communities. With regards to the composition of this nation-state, Liang Qichao argued for a more civic nationalism than the Han-based ethnic nationalism on which Sun Yat-sen’s early struggle against the Manchu Qing dynasty was predicated.⁵¹⁶ As one part of this effort at redefining

⁵¹² For more on the racial debates in Chinese identity configurations of this era, see Pusey 1983, 180–85; Dikötter 2015, 64–67; James Leibold 2006; H. Chang 1971, 55–56; G. Xu 2005b, 28–29; Brødsgaard and Strand 1998

⁵¹³ C. R. Hughes forthcoming, 7

⁵¹⁴ Luo 2015, 95–98

⁵¹⁵ Liang 1936a

⁵¹⁶ Zhimin Chen 2005a

the Chinese ontological security imaginary, Liang went so far as to suggest an entirely new historical narrative. In his manifesto-like outline of a new Chinese history; *New Historiography*, he further follows up on the fundamental narrative of a universal timeline for development, by deciding to subdivide Chinese history not into the usual dynasties cycles, but into linear periodization.⁵¹⁷ This subdivision was, significantly, based on those found in traditional European historiography; Antiquity, Middle Ages, and Modernity.⁵¹⁸ The force of historiography was thus central to his work, and to his argument that China had to follow the European experience through changing from a *tianxia* to a nation-state: "Historiography is of the principal and most essential knowledge, it is the mirror of a nation's people, and the wellspring of a patriotic heart. In present Europe [歐洲], nationalism has led to flourishing, guiding countries to civilization."⁵¹⁹ As summarized by Levenson; "It was the contraction of China from a world to a nation that changed the Chinese historical consciousness."⁵²⁰ Jin and Liu have attempted to quantify this change through looking at a wide database of Chinese writings, and tracking how there was a shift in the frequency of the terms *tianxia* and *guojia* around that point.⁵²¹ This process was part and parcel of ontological security, to which Liang Qichao contributed to propagate a new narrative that could bestow a Chinese polity with the an ontologically security identity both internally and externally. This, through a new emplacement of a foundational narrative of for ontological security, imported from abroad; that of the nation-state.⁵²²

Overall, this new movement drew upon a discursive construct of fundamental similarity between Europe and China. The signifiers of these monumental texts

⁵¹⁷ Schneider 2017, 96–98

⁵¹⁸ Liang 1936b

⁵¹⁹ Liang 1936c

⁵²⁰ Joseph Richmond Levenson 1970b, 288

⁵²¹ Matten 2016, 46

⁵²² For more on the role of nation-building at the eve of the Qing dynasty, see Joseph Richmond Levenson 1958; G. Lee 2018; Luo 2008; Zarrow 2012; Fitzgerald 1996

contrasts sharply to those from even only half a century earlier, and links Europe as a “modern”, “nation based”, “white”, “developed” with a China that is “backwards”, “civilizational”, “yellow” and “developing”, thus underlining the commonality between the two civilizations along a shared temporal arc, in spite of Europe being in front on the same road of modernity. Liang had to take the extra step of admitting that, although he was an optimist about the chances to restore China in a family of nations, right there now there was a large gap separating the Chinese from the modern European civilization.⁵²³ To be sure, the narratives drawn up in this discourse differ immensely from those of the Self-Strengthening Movement only a few decades earlier, representative of the degree of rapid change in the social and political landscape of the late Qing empire.

By the eve of the First World War, almost the entire Chinese intelligentsia was united behind the new suggested narrative of seeking China's rebirth as a fully-fledged nation-state.⁵²⁴ In particular as the country's intellectuals were being swept up in a new wave of cultural renewal, namely the New Culture Movement, sprung out of the May Fourth demonstrations following the Treaty of Versailles. Being described as akin to a Chinese Enlightenment,⁵²⁵ as Fung laid out in his treatise on early Republican philosophical debates, the realization of Europe as a necessary model had with immense speed become so commonplace that this was now a discursive framework that even the conservative voices was operating within, in sharp relief to the

⁵²³ Liang 1936d, 65–67

⁵²⁴ G. Xu 2005b, 28; Liang's personal views would, however, dramatically change after his visit to a war-ravaged Europe during the Versailles negotiations, but his later ideas of China and the West was indeed sperate and distinctive entities, some of which shared also by thinkers such as Du Yaquan and Li Dazhao, did not find much traction in the contemporary debate. For details on this alternative political discourse, see eg. Jenco 2013, 46–50; E. S. K. Fung 2010a, 32–35

⁵²⁵ Schwarcz 1986, 95–98; G. Xu 2005b, 42; Waldron 2003

conservative voices of the Imperial elites only decades earlier.⁵²⁶ As such, a radically new, European-inspired, national narrative was seeking to establish discursive dominance, and with it came the efforts at establishing a radically new, European-derived, reestablishment of the Chinese polity; that of the Republic of China.

5.3.2 *Building a Nation from Loose Sand*

The importance of Europe in shaping the foundational narrative for this new polity was, even if arguably less so than Japanese and American influences, considerable. Europe formed the ideational and political backdrop for the efforts at re-establishing a foundational narrative for the new Chinese republic.⁵²⁷ The key figure of the early Republic of China, and revered to this day as the father of the modern Chinese nation in Taiwan, and increasingly also in the People's Republic of China is the revolutionary Sun Yat-sen.⁵²⁸ Being himself a Western trained physician, and a baptized Christian, he began travelling around the globe seeking to drum up monetary support from a large diaspora of overseas Chinese that had come to establish themselves in the USA, Europe and in Southeast Asia.⁵²⁹ The writings of Sun Yat-sen underline the same fundamental ontological narrative as those of Liang Qichao, with whom he shared a contentious relationship.⁵³⁰ In sum, Sun's programme is the creation of a modern Chinese nation, able to take on the construction of a modern Chinese nation-state that

⁵²⁶ E. S. K. Fung 2010b, 62

⁵²⁷ Sun 1897; Wells 2001, 11–16

⁵²⁸ For more literature on the life and political project of Sun Yat-sen, and his foreign ties to the USA and Japan in particular, see Bergère and Lloyd 1998; Bergère and Lloyd 1998; Jia 2013; Hsüeh 1960; Guha 2014; Schiffrin 2010; Wells 2001; Fitzgerald 1995

⁵²⁹ Grieder 1983, 134

⁵³⁰ Jia 2013

could enter into the international, Western-based, society on an equal basis. As summarized by Sun:

For the first time I understood that though the European powers achieved national wealth and power, they were not able to give their peoples full happiness. For this reason, European men of determination were still striving for a social revolution. I now wanted to create a single-effort, eternal plan which would simultaneously solve the problems of socialism, nationalism and democracy.⁵³¹

In his work, *The International Development of China*, Sun lays out a range of ambitious visions for how the Chinese polity could flourish, and the role the outside world could play in helping this come to fruition.⁵³² Utilizing Hansen's analytical approach, the linkages between the key signifiers here are those of a unifying time, when the essentially similar civilization, will allow for China to join the European countries in casting aside tradition in order to belatedly embrace modernity, and the American ideal of the Melting Pot, which will allow them to rapidly catch up.⁵³³ This approach is demonstrated through large scale plans of modernising not only roads and communications, "The Chinese are a stagnant race (...) It is the movement of man that makes civilization progress. China, in order to catch up with modern civilization, must move."⁵³⁴

Again, the role of Japan was an important inspirator for the idea of a form of modernization that was a common path on which all people could tread in order to achieve equality in the international family of nations. As exemplified in Sun's famous

⁵³¹ Sun 1981, 329

⁵³² Sun 1922; Wells 2001, 44–45

⁵³³ Sun 1994a, 225

⁵³⁴ Sun 1922, 217–18

first lecture on Nationalism: “Previously, we thought that what the Europeans [歐洲人] are capable of doing, we are not capable of doing, but now the Japanese are capable of learning from Europe, so it is clear that we can study Japan, we are able to learn how to resemble Japan, and thus know how in the future we can learn to resemble Europe.”⁵³⁵ At the heart of this new foundational Chinese narrative, Sun Yat-sen was arguing for China to get back to the state of a great country that it was before, although not as an essentially different civilization, but as a particular part of global civilization.⁵³⁶

The key political manifesto of Sun Yat-sen, first enunciated in 1905 and thereafter developed into a guiding ideology, was the *Three Principles of the People* (三民主義), commonly translated as; Nationalism, Democracy, and People’s Welfare (民族, 民权, 民生), although the terms implied slightly different connotations than in the current day.⁵³⁷ Summarized in a series of lectures in 1924, he sets out a new vision for the Chinese polity; who they are, how they should organise, and what livelihood they deserve. For the purpose of this thesis it is the enunciation of the ontological basis of the Chinese polity that carries most significance, and the principle of nationalism does re-emphasize the centrality of the Chinese ontological move from a civilization to a nation-state, based on principles to a large extent drawn from European discourses. He points to how the West have successfully managed to be the first to develop, as the four main ethnic groups of the “white race”, successfully harnessed the power of nationalism:⁵³⁸ “China was a strong nation for several thousand years, but its obstinate

⁵³⁵ Sun 1924a

⁵³⁶ Sun 1924b

⁵³⁷ C. R. Hughes forthcoming, 9–11

⁵³⁸ Sun 1924c

adherence to tradition caused it to fall behind Europe and America in strength and prosperity. After the Manchus conquered it, China became still weaker"⁵³⁹

As Sun noted the Chinese traditional experience had elements with which to help enrich the global modernization efforts. "China was to learn from the West with regard to science and technology but to treasure her own unique 'learning' which created her identity and from which the West might also learn."⁵⁴⁰ For example, how the new Chinese polity through policies of a more socialist bent, may avoid some of the social ills and income disparity plaguing the Western.⁵⁴¹ "Today, no nation is richer or stronger than England and America, none more civilized than France. (...) They have achieved admirable forms of government, yet their poor and rich classes are still too far apart"⁵⁴² Being Christian himself, he points out that "compassion [仁爱] is also one of China's virtues. In antiquity the greatest articulator of compassion was Mozi, Mozi's doctrine of universal love, and Jesus' doctrine of universal brotherhood are the same."⁵⁴³ In this he also echoes some of the earlier philosophers treated in the previous chapter, that in engaging with the early missionary influx from Europe argued in favour of a syncretic morality between East and West.

Of course, one should not underestimate the degree to which the traditional Chinese ways of hierarchy, rituals, and dyadic social frameworks did structure the narrative emplotment of the new polity. The struggle for an acceptable national ontological framework did, for Sun as well as for others, very much entail efforts at combining

⁵³⁹ Sun 1994b, 101

⁵⁴⁰ Wells 2001, 120; C. R. Hughes 2011b, 129–32

⁵⁴¹ Sun 1994c, 39–40

⁵⁴² Sun 1994d, 63–64

⁵⁴³ Sun 1924b

European practices with Confucian traditions.⁵⁴⁴ However, it also drew upon the idea that China can contribute to the development of this common civilization, that is shaped by forces, drawing on the ideas of evolution, that shapes mankind in the same manner. As Sun formulated it: "In a nutshell, it is my idea to make capitalism create socialism in China so that these two economic forces of human evolution will work side by side in future civilization."⁵⁴⁵ Nevertheless, there was a considerable angst in Sun's lectures, presented after the First World War, when the struggle for colonial liberation had barely started. For instance, "Of the world's 1.5 billion people, the most rich and powerful ones are the 400 million people of the white race in Europe and America. The white race takes this as a basis to go and exterminate races of different colour. [...] and the yellow race of Asia is currently being oppressed and may before too long also face annihilation."⁵⁴⁶ Reflecting the increasingly close ties between Sun and the communists in Moscow, it is telling that the big hope he sees in this gloomy picture, arrives in the form of the Russian revolution.⁵⁴⁷ He thus warns against letting the cosmopolitanism contended by parts of the May Fourth movement, be prematurely applied to the Chinese society, which first needs to see national liberation, before it can go on to embrace universality notions.⁵⁴⁸ "So in order for us to save China, the first thing to think of is how to restore nationalism."⁵⁴⁹

When the Chinese revolution began on 10 October 1911, Sun Yat-sen was indeed abroad, fundraising in Denver, Colorado,⁵⁵⁰, but his central role as an ideologue meant that he was appointed the first president of the newly formed Republic that he

⁵⁴⁴ C. R. Hughes 2011b, 128–31

⁵⁴⁵ Sun 1922, 237

⁵⁴⁶ Sun 1924c

⁵⁴⁷ Sun 1924c

⁵⁴⁸ Sun 1924c

⁵⁴⁹ Sun 1924d

⁵⁵⁰ Sun 1994b, 100–101

long had been agitating for.⁵⁵¹ He was, however, forced to abandon his position in favour of the army leader Yuan Shikai only 45 days later, as the republic failed to find a solid footing in the chaotic and contingent circumstances of early 20th century China.⁵⁵² During the following Warlord Era, the *Kuomintang*, (KMT) Nationalist Party, co-founded by Sun, would regroup and slowly rebuild from their base in the Southern Chinese province of Guangdong, drawing on support from the Soviet Comintern, and joining, under Soviet tutelage, in a short-lived alliance of convenience with the growing Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The fundamental reformulation of the ontological narrative of the Chinese polity that was rapidly constituting itself at the start of the 20th century, was not only relevant for the domestic political and discursive configurations. Illustrating how the configuration of a polity's ontological security discourses is primary to the formulation of the interests of this polity, the new foundational narrative of the Chinese state fundamentally changed the material interests they were pursuing.⁵⁵³ The transition from the universalist empire, implicit in the traditional view of the *tianxia*, to a national-state imbued geographical delineation with a fundamentally different importance for the ontological security of the self. Borders suddenly mattered.⁵⁵⁴ Utilising Ejdus' terminology, one of the key traits of the modern nation-state is how this identity emplotment introjects the geographical materiality of boundaries into the foundational narrative in a distinct way.⁵⁵⁵ Thus, moving from a foundational narrative establishing ontological security on the logic of a nation-state, implied an

⁵⁵¹ Wells 2001, 39–43

⁵⁵² Bergère and Lloyd 1998, 198–202

⁵⁵³ Svarverud 2007b

⁵⁵⁴ Kerr 2011, 158–60

⁵⁵⁵ Ejdus 2017, 6–7; For an excellent treatise on how this dynamic played out on China's Western frontiers, see J. Leibold 2007; and Westad 2012, 125–44

entirely different range of geopolitical priorities; handing off pieces of Chinese sovereign soil to foreigners were no longer a trifle but now a matter of national security. "Treaty rights which were irrelevant or trivial to the Qing diplomats became national values now."⁵⁵⁶ This change was also reflected in the diplomatic practices, as being a diplomat was suddenly elevated from a humiliating profession at odds with the existing ontological image of the polity, to be a prestigious call to secure China's place as an equal nation-state. This change was also echoed in how the diplomatic service was organized.⁵⁵⁷

The degree to which the discursive realignment towards a European-derived nationalism manifested itself amongst the leaders of the Chinese polity, was on exhibit through a number of crucial moments throughout the era, and was a key determinant providing rationale for the young regime to go to war.⁵⁵⁸ In a key move symptomatic of the will of the new Chinese republic to breach into the club of mainly European nation-states as an equal member, was the decision of the warlord and then the Beijing-based Prime Minister Duan Qirui, in 1917 to enter into the First World War on the side of the Allies. As exemplified in e.g. Ringmar's account of the Swedish decision to enter the 30 Years' War,⁵⁵⁹ the act of war may be a prominent way to anchor one's identity, both externally and internally.⁵⁶⁰ This was in military and political terms an époque defining decision.⁵⁶¹ Sending short of 100 000 labourers to the Western front,

⁵⁵⁶ C. Shih 1990, 105

⁵⁵⁷ C. Shih 1990, 130–32

⁵⁵⁸ Kirby 1997, 438

⁵⁵⁹ Ringmar 2007

⁵⁶⁰ For more treatises on this aspect of ontological security see Mitzen 2006d; Rumelili 2018; Rumelili 2015b; S. Kay 2012; Ejdus 2017

⁵⁶¹ Mackerras 2014, 37; G. Xu 2005b, 12–15; Mancall 1984; Yongjin Zhang 1991a; Yongjin 1991

although none of them soldiers around 2000 died in the war effort, this was the first time China voluntarily entered into an international conflict.⁵⁶²

Even though there were certain direct material political gains to be potentially gathered for China, mainly to reclaim territory from the Germans, one of the main considerations for entering into the war can be viewed as that of Ontological Security; an act that would solidify the ontological security status of the new Chinese Republic both internally, and externally amongst the family of nations in the world.⁵⁶³ China's entry into the war was a major turning point in its foreign relations.⁵⁶⁴ "The Republic self-consciously entered "international society" for the first time in its diplomacy of 1918-20, agreeing to abide by the rules and norms that in theory governed international behaviour."⁵⁶⁵ However, when China's post-World War I demands were passed over at Versailles, in what was seen as a delegitimating snub from the Western-based international community, large demonstrations erupted on May 4th 1919. These were spearheaded by the student community, that would spur on the ideas of the necessity to radically modernise Chinese society, culture and politics.⁵⁶⁶ As Hunt pointed out, an increasing number of people drew from the unsuccessful earlier reform attempts the conclusion that "destruction of the old political and social system was the painful but unavoidable path to unity and order and ultimate renewal".⁵⁶⁷ Indeed, of the many movements tracing their lineage back to the 'May Fourth Movement', was one that would eventually be given that chance to formulate a new

⁵⁶² Mitter 2004, 5

⁵⁶³ G. Xu 2005b, 14

⁵⁶⁴ Yongjin Zhang 1991b; Kirby 1997

⁵⁶⁵ Kirby 1997, 442–43

⁵⁶⁶ Mitter 2004; Ebrey 2010, 268–72

⁵⁶⁷ Hunt 1993a, 69

ontological basis for the Chinese polity, namely the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).⁵⁶⁸

5.4 Conclusions

This section of the diachronic analysis has demonstrated how the Chinese concept of Europe was intimately entwined with Chinese ontological security seeking. This role of Europe was amplified all the more, give the direct linkages from the European continent to the fundamental Chinese ontological security rupture that took place in the late 19th Century. In the span of a mere 50-year period, a dynastic imperial system lasting for millennia was reshaped in the forges of a number of revolutions, rebellions, wars and world wars. The two cases analysed in this chapter constitute key moments of discursive change, seeking to re-establish an ontologically secure Chinese polity, although in two diametrically different ways. The discourses of these two key eras thus coalesce around two foundational narratives relevant for how a Chinese polity should relate to Europe. As detailed, the late Qing dynasty's self-strengthening efforts sought to readjust from traditional Sinocentrism to re-establishing ontological security through the idea of realising, and implementing, European technologies, but insisting on the superiority of Chinese traditions. This is famously summarized as the principle of *ti/yong*; taking the Chinese culture as the essence (体), whilst utilising (用) their technology. The second narrative, predominant in the case of the Early Republic, gradually leaves this idea of Chinese traditional political and cultural superiority behind. Instead it sought to establish a Chinese polity basing its ontological security on imitating not only the technology, but also the political and philosophical

⁵⁶⁸ Mitter 2004, 18; Hunt 1993a, 71–75; Schwarcz 1986; E. S. K. Fung 2010b; Y. C. Wang 1966

structures of Europe, and seeking confirmation for this new identity also outside the borders of the Chinese polity itself. These changes in the basis on which Chinese political entrepreneurs sought to re-establish an ontologically secure Chinese polity, is embodied in the changing foundational narratives of this era. For these narrative entrepreneurs, the Chinese identity crises necessitated a renegotiation of the basis a Chinese political identity should be based upon, and implied a rethink of the fundamentals of what it meant to be Chinese, and how this Chineseness should relate to the world that had recently come crashing in their door.

The development of the Chinese foundational narratives through this period decentred China, from the centre of 'All under Heaven' to a country seeking approval and a seat amongst the others in the European-defined family of nations. This process entailed a wholesale reformulation of the ontological essence of a Chinese polity, from that of a singular universal empire, to that of being one amongst the world's two great civilizations, to that of being one nation-state amongst others. Overall, through this period, one can trace the development from the late Qing dynasty reformers' concept of the use/essence, or *ti/yong* (体用), discourse within which narrative Chinese society should make use of Western technologies, without giving up on the radically different essence of Chinese civilization, to the new reformists' discourses on how human societies all are evolving based on the same 'universal laws' (公理). This discursive development was inherently entangled with a similar discursive change of foundational narratives in which Europe played a key role, that of the ontological foundation of the polity changing from that of an imperial Tianxia, to that of a nation-state after the European model.

Analysing these narratives through the theoretical lens presented in the preceding chapters, these foundational narratives are identified and classified based on two main structuring features; the extent and modality to which Europe and the European countries are regarded as an Other, as related to the particular Self of the relevant

Chinese political project. Secondly, how Europe as a political, technological and ethical concept is regarded as tied to China in terms of the narrative's temporal aspect. Intimately emmeshed with these radically new, repeated attempts at re-establishing an ontologically secure Chinese polity, was the fundamental reorientation of the Chinese discourse of Europe. In only a few decades the role Europe played for Chinese ontological security changed immensely; from being both alien and barbarian, to being an alien civilization, into becoming a civilizational standard for the former Middle Kingdom to strive for. Europe went from being a radically different Other challenging the core tenets of the traditional imperial foundational narrative, into becoming Ideal Europe; a reference point for a future Chinese Self. (See Fig. 2).

Europe in Foundational Narrative	Important Political Era	Modality of European Otherness	Temporal Position of Europe in Narrative
Barbarian Europe	Late Dynastic Period	A barbaric Other, but recognisable within extant cosmology	Outer barbarian in traditional Sinocentric system, dynastic cycles
Threatening and Advanced Europe	Self-Strengthening Movement / Late Qing Era	A radically different Other	To be emulated in technological matters, and kept separate in ethical matters (<i>ti/yong</i>)
Ideal Europe	Early Republican Era	An ideal future Self to strive for	To be a future reference point for both technological and ethical/political development

Figure 2: Overview of Chinese Narratives of Europe, Early Modern Era

This era of immense discursive change, was also an era of continuous experiments at establishing new ontologically securely based governments, most of which were explicitly European-derived, whether parliamentary republics, dictatorships, Yan Shikai's short attempt at constitutional monarchy, or the forthcoming communist takeover. The reformulation of the foundational narrative that was common to all of these efforts at re-establishing an ontologically secure Chinese polity, was closely entwined with Europe's new role as an ideal Self, as Chinese policymakers for the first time in Chinese history, found their ontological security to a considerable degree was shaped in relation to countries at the opposite ends of the Eurasian continent. The linking of China's ontological security with its efforts at status-seeking amongst the extant great powers had redefined the rules of ontological security seeking, as this was now also a matter of ensuring recognition, and seeking to join in, a club of international peers. This then opened a discursive space for a number of new policy options, such as joining in the First World War, that would have been inconceivable only decades earlier. Partly due to the unintended consequences of joining in the war in Europe, however, more radical political groups did also find a footing in this period. The cases of the next chapter thus analyse the Chinese Communist Party's attempts at addressing China's identity crises through a new modality of ontological security seeking, and the role of Europe in these efforts.

Chapter 6: A New China in a New World - Diachronic Analysis of the Post-War Era

6.1 Introduction: Making Marx Work for China

Emerging from a century of political struggle and experimentation with radical new modes of achieving ontological security, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) succeeded in realising a durable Chinese polity in 1949, after years of civil war. The renegotiations and tension regarding Chinese ontological security seeking did not end at this point, however. As such, the role of Europe in this new reformulation of a foundational narrative for China, was still in flux. Even though European countries after the Second World War played a lesser role in shaping Chinese identity narratives, it by no means ceased to be relevant. Thus, as representations of Europe changed, in line with the new ontological narratives, the Chinese view of Europe as an Other, and the role of Europe in the world, did also change at multiple points along the trajectory of CCP rule. The construction of the discourse of 'Capitalist Europe', entailed the move of the non-communist Western Europe from being considered more of a Self, to belonging to a particular category of Others within a new Chinese foundational narrative with global connotations. Over the later years of the 20th Century, the restructuring of the foundational narrative after the Mao era entailed a place for Europe as an 'Equal and Useful' Other, as the People's Republic of China (PRC) increasingly sought closer economic ties with the continent, whilst being sceptical of the challenge of Western-derived notions of political universality.

This chapter analyses the changes in the Chinese discourse of Europe, as the Chinese discourse about themselves was renegotiated throughout the 20th Century. The focus

is on two main cases. First, the articulation and construction of the PRC's 'New China', as the CCP sought to gain legitimacy for their foundational narrative of a Chinese state, in the years prior to and after the foundation of the People's Republic. The second section of the chapter looks at the processes of change brought to the PRC by Deng Xiaoping's reform efforts, and how these related to the then-Chinese leadership's concepts of Europe and their European policies. These new ontological security narratives are analysed through focusing on Deng's reconceptualization of the Chinese foundational narrative as part of his momentous reform effort from 1978 onwards, and how this narrative was challenged by the Tiananmen demonstrations in 1989, after which a readjustment of the Chinese foundational narrative can be found in the sources. The tensions inherent in the foundational narrative as seen during the years since the PRC's foundation, not only constitutes the basis of the current-era discourses analysed in the synchronic section, they also continue to be key fault lines shaping Chinese politics today.

6.2 The CCP's New China (1930-1955)

In an iconic moment of 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the beginning of the new People's Republic of China, declaring that the "Chinese people have stood up".⁵⁶⁹ This new polity was from the beginning constituted in a discourse of a fresh start for the Chinese people, after years of subjugation and wars.⁵⁷⁰ With Mao at the helm, the CCP formulated a different foundational narrative to address the ontological insecurity

⁵⁶⁹ Z. Mao 1977

⁵⁷⁰ The history of the CCP's rise to power, and Mao Zedong's ascent to the apex of the Party has been eloquently covered elsewhere, see e.g. Harrison 1972; Ip 1994; Westad 2017b, 234–41; Pantsov and Levine 2013; Dirlik 1989; Karl 2010; Westad 2003

that lingered on from the end of the republic, drawing on Russian and European influences to reshape the Chinese polity.⁵⁷¹ This new narrative entailed Europe being constituted in a different manner, and thus opened for a different range of foreign policies towards a Europe now split by the Iron Curtain. The Communist narrative did not emerge spontaneously, but grew forth from a number of earlier discourses drawn from the more radical fractions of the May Fourth Movement and the early KMT's efforts at re-establishing an ontological foundation for a New China in face of imperialists from abroad and the end of the traditional imperial system within.

This section thus focuses, firstly, on the period surrounding the establishment of the PRC, during which the CCP transitioned from a rurally based guerrilla movement to a governing body formulating and implementing a vision for one of the world's largest polities. What was the role of Europe in seeking to create and sustain domestic and international legitimacy for this novel experiment in creating a new foundational narrative for the Chinese polity? Secondly, this section will investigate how Mao Zedong's view of China's position in the world drew up a particular discursive space for the former European colonial states. The somewhat shorter length of this section of the chapter, reflects the fact that the role of Europe was of less importance in the Mao era than in the days of the Early Republic. This thesis will, however, argue against regarding the European influence on Mao's China as negligible. As this section outlines, it would be a mistake to underestimate the enduring persistence of European influence through the established ontological discourse narratives. As Moncada summarizes her analysis of the PRC elite's view of the European integration project; the worldviews of the 'Great Helmsman' were of key importance in establishing the

⁵⁷¹ The general overview of Chinese foreign policy of the Mao Era, on the background of the Cold War, is already described through a substantial extant body of literature, particularly useful volumes includes: Mitter 2004, 212; Dikötter 2013; Nakajima 1995, 264; Karl 2010, 150–55; Kissinger 2011; Whiting 1960

discursive framework for both the Mao -era policies, as well as for his successors.⁵⁷² It is thus vital for the understanding of China's developing discourses of Europe to understand how Mao's concept of Europe resonated with his view of the Chinese polity and the world at large.

6.2.1 *Mao's Sinified European Philosophy*

The shaping of the foundational narrative for the 'New China', cannot be meaningfully distinguished from Mao Zedong, an offshoot of the May Fourth generation, whose rise to instilling his own 'Maoist' ideology on the communist tradition and the Chinese state, was key.⁵⁷³ As Schram summarizes the role of Mao in creating a new foundational ontological narrative for the Chinese polity: "The problem of how to come to terms with the modern world, while retaining China's own identity, still represents perhaps the greatest challenge facing the Chinese. Mao did not solve it, but he boldly grappled with the political and intellectual challenge of the West as no Chinese ruler before him had done."⁵⁷⁴ Already from Mao Zedong's founding years as a student, the key strand of his developing philosophy was the engagement with the core question of how the Chinese policy should be reshaped, in the tension between the traditional tenets of Chinese civilization and the new technical and ideological impulses from Europe.⁵⁷⁵ Whilst being extremely critical of a range of traditional practices, not the least the Confucian influence on teaching and ideological life,⁵⁷⁶ he would at in his early days times also be quoting even Confucius favourably.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷² Moncada 2010, 19

⁵⁷³ Schram 1989; Karl 2010; Schram 1991; Pantsov and Levine 2013

⁵⁷⁴ Schram 2015, 8

⁵⁷⁵ Knight 1990

⁵⁷⁶ Mao Z. 1983, 16

⁵⁷⁷ Schram 1989, 141

Mao formulated this essential dilemma in a letter to his former teacher Li Jinxi in 1919, pointing out that in spite of his harsh criticism of traditional Chinese thought, “Western thought is not necessarily all correct either; very many parts of it should be transformed at the same time as Oriental thought.”⁵⁷⁸ The translation of the Marxist doctrine to Chinese would in itself highlight some of the issues and the tensions embodied in applying the intellectual doctrines of an urban German to the Chinese countryside.⁵⁷⁹ However, Mao and his cadres succeeded in turning this unorthodoxy into an advantage,⁵⁸⁰ as the newfound Mao Zedong Thought addendum to communism served to reinforce the uniqueness of China, is providing the founding narrative of the polity of the PRC. In this sense, Mao was drawing upon the narrative tenets of the *ti/yong* dichotomy as the ancient self-strengtheners, a narrative structure that also dovetailed well with his later works on the dialectical nature of reality and conflictual-driven political progress.⁵⁸¹ As he summarized the notion, in a strikingly similar phrase; “Use the old to serve the new, use the foreign to serve China(古为今用洋为中用).”⁵⁸²

It is furthermore worth noting that the development of Mao’s communist convictions happened in an intellectual context intimately related with European events and ideological trends, as the intellectual trends in China had increasingly become

⁵⁷⁸ Z. Mao 2015, 132

⁵⁷⁹ Schram 1991; Ebrey 2010, 288; Schram 1989; Yü 1993; Soo 1981; Knight 2007, 210–14

⁵⁸⁰ A typical example would be how the key term “proletariat” was translated into 无产阶级, literally the class without property, thus far more expansive than the industrial proletariat referred to in the original discourse. See: Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 320–23

⁵⁸¹ Nathan and Scobell 2015, 31; C. R. Hughes 2011b, 131–32; Schram 1991, 101–2

⁵⁸² Z. Mao 1993

intertwined with the comings and goings of Europe.⁵⁸³ As Mao wrote in 1919 at the dawn of the interwar period, in one of his earliest pieces of widespread importance:

In Russia they overthrew the noblemen, banished the rich, and the labourers and peasants together formed a Soviet government. [...] The entire world has been affected. Hungary has risen, in Budapest a new government of labourers have also appeared. The Germans, the Austrians, and the Czechs are doing the same [...] The wave of anger after sweeping the West then turns East. England, France, Italy, USA already have seen multiple great strikes, after which India and Korea have also seen a number of great revolutions. Yet other armies arise; in the Chinese area between the Great Wall and the Bohai Sea, the May Fourth Movement has broken out.⁵⁸⁴

Key to note, this latching on to the Marxist European doctrine of national and class liberation, did in Mao's mind offer a way out of Chinese subservience, and provide the Chinese nation with a chance to excel: "I dare to make one assertion; one day the Chinese people's reform will be more complete than any other nationality, the society of the Chinese people will be more radiant than any other nationality. The great union of the Chinese people will be successfully achieved before any other region or any other nationality."⁵⁸⁵ This had the added value of articulating a form of identity where the ontological security was tied to a representation of China as a revolutionary nation. No longer needing to seek approval from the international peer group of the Western-based 'Standard of Civilization' family of nations, this narrative construct defined them as part of the high-status peer-group of advanced revolutionary socialist states. Thus, the Chinese polity could re-establish a sense of greatness through the agency of the CCP, and the vehicle of Marxism. This basic narrative of a renewed China is still amongst the key ontological narratives for the leadership of the CCP, as will be illustrated in the synchronic section.

⁵⁸³ Mao Z. 1983, 14

⁵⁸⁴ Mao Z. 1983, 19

⁵⁸⁵ Mao Z. 1983, 21

In one of Mao's seminal theoretical works, *On Contradictions*(矛盾论), he emphasizes the similarity between the old era in China and in Europe, but acknowledges how the theory of Hegelian dialectical materialism and Marxist historical materialism was an idea developed in Europe, from which it spread, and "caused an enormous change to thought in China."⁵⁸⁶ The development visible when comparing Mao's view of the early days of the Second World War, with the Chinese efforts of the First World War are striking. Mao's different conceptualization of the world, resulted in the view that the Second World War was a situation where the Allied powers of France and Britain, as well as Germany, where all fighting an unjust imperial war, that amounted to a predatory conspiracy towards the peaceful interests of the Soviet Union, that had been contributing to anti-Imperialist causes in Spain as well as against Japan in China. This alternative foundational narrative compared to the one motivating Chinese entry into World War I, demonstrates how the changed worldview implied a differing set of political drivers. In essence, the CCP like the Republic of China still sought external recognition through demonstrating adherence to international standards, but they sought this through membership in a different club of nations, but importantly, one that still held out the promise of equal treatment and status recognition.⁵⁸⁷

In 1939 Mao Zedong co-wrote a comprehensive textbook on the Chinese revolution and the CCP, that went on to become a key text both within and outside the party. In it is given a comprehensive summary of the CCP's new foundational narrative for China, and Europe's place in it, that well illustrates the foundational narrative propagated. As he emphasizes, the Chinese society did historically develop after the same universal Marxist laws as the other nations on earth. However, the textbook also hails China as the world's longest lasting civilization and praises the number of

⁵⁸⁶ Z. Mao 1991a, 304

⁵⁸⁷ Z. Mao 1991b

accomplishments and inventions they invented before the Europeans. In spite of his, however, the foundational narrative of the Chinese nation is here depicted as one of a brave and freedom-loving peasantry that have throughout history rebelled again and again in pursuit of freedom.⁵⁸⁸ The role of the European, and later also Japanese, imperialists are thus fitted into the broader narrative of Marxist dialectics where they through their efforts at reducing China to a semi-colony inadvertently also contributed to the rise of capitalism and the degradation of the feudal system. As such, the Chinese people are currently faced with a double oppression, demonstrated by the double main societal contradiction of Chinese nationalism against imperialism, and the Chinese feudal overlords against the masses of the people.⁵⁸⁹ However, in the midst of all this oppression, the CCP's Maoist narrative still offers a privileged position to the Chinese proletariat, turning this weakness to a strength, as in "the colony and semi-colony of China, there is no economic basis for the socialist reformism like there is in Europe, so [...] this class is the most revolutionary."⁵⁹⁰

This new foundational narrative sought to anchor the ontological security of China to a new set of radically realigned signifiers, where China and Europe are still considered as equal civilizations ruled by universal laws. In this the texts of the political entrepreneurs of the CCP reflected those of the early reformers such as Liang Qichao, in adhering to their then pathbreaking new narrative of regarding Chinese politics as being a part of a universal, linear history. However, the universal narrative adhered to was of a different kind. As such, the signs of Self and Other were now based on ideological divisions, so that the Chinese proletariat "masses" are identified as similar to the Western proletariat, whilst being juxtaposed to the "imperialists" and "capitalists" that are the common enemies of the Chinese and the European

⁵⁸⁸ Z. Mao 1991c, 622–23

⁵⁸⁹ Z. Mao 1991c, 625

⁵⁹⁰ Z. Mao 1991c, 644

downtrodden. Thus leaving aside, of course, the detail that there were hardly any proletarians in China at that point. Instead of the main signifier being that between a “developed” Europe and an “underdeveloped” China, the signifiers contrasted a bourgeois Europe with a budding revolutionary China. Thus, in the Communist historical view, the Chinese had the chance to effectively claim they were more advanced than Europe, as the revolution had progressed further there.

Illustrating again how the European “masses” had gone from Other to Same, is Mao’s foreword, at the dawn of the PRC’s establishment, to a European book compiled in Czechoslovakia for European communists in the CCP’s victory in China.: “The struggles of the people of China and the peoples of Europe are two inseparable and mutually reinforcing parts of a common cause, despite the fact that owing to the differences in the levels of social development the stages of the development of their revolutions are different.”⁵⁹¹ These are the same notions that can also be found amongst the numerous official communications and telegrams he would send in his official capacity, to various European countries, in particular in the East Bloc, in his years at the helm of the PRC.⁵⁹² This same discourse also formed the backbone of the foundational narrative of the new People’s Republic of China, as illustrated in his famous speech at the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference on the 21 September 1949, at which point the rationale for the new polity of the PRC was declared, in a textual monument, the most famous section of which is perhaps the declaration that the Chinese People has stood up:

The Chinese have always been a great, brave, and diligent people, it is only in recent era we have fallen behind. This falling behind is entirely the result of foreign imperialism and domestic reactionary

⁵⁹¹ Z. Mao and Leung 1986, 24

⁵⁹² Z. Mao and Leung 1986

governments' oppression and exploitation. [...] From now on our nation will be included among the great family of the world's peace-and freedom-loving nations. [...] Our nation shall never again be a nation to be insulted.⁵⁹³

Moreover, the final accords of the speech illustrate nicely how the PRC was based on the idea of a common universal civilizational narrative, where China had fallen behind, but would now rapidly catch up. "The time when the Chinese were considered uncivilized is over, we will emerge in the world as a nation of high culture."⁵⁹⁴

If these notions sound familiar in their echoing of the thoughts of Sun Yat-sen's ideas for the rejuvenation of the Chinese state, this is no coincidence. Mao repeatedly tapped into the narrative created by the early nationalist movement, seeking to draw upon Sun's national standing by branding the CCP as the true heir to the independence struggle, and the only force capable of truly realising the Three Principles of the People.⁵⁹⁵ As illustrated in Mao's quote that "The Chinese Communist Party is the Chinese people's most faithful spokesperson."⁵⁹⁶ In relating to this basic ontological proposition, he also argued that the long sought after equality that the Chinese were yearning for, such as rescinding the "unequal treaties" from the colonialist era,⁵⁹⁷ could only be won through the tutelage of the CCP.⁵⁹⁸ As Mao summarized it in the piece chosen to end the 4th volume of his selected works, underlining how the Marxist-Leninist ideology worked so well because it was aligned with the realities faced by the

⁵⁹³ Z. Mao 1977, 5–6

⁵⁹⁴ Z. Mao 1977, 7

⁵⁹⁵ Z. Mao 1991d, 259; Z. Mao 1991e, 689–90; Z. Mao 1991f, 1469–71; Z. Mao 1991g

⁵⁹⁶ Z. Mao 1991h, 1087

⁵⁹⁷ In fact, the CCP had been challenging the KMT about who deserved the glory of abolishing extraterritoriality and the Unequal Treaties, ever since these were officially relinquished in 1943. See D. Wang 2005b, 92–98; Gong 1984, 181–83

⁵⁹⁸ Z. Mao 1991h, 1085–86

Chinese people: “Ever since the Chinese people learned Marxism-Leninism, the Chinese spirit turned momentarily from being passive to being active. From this moment onwards, the period of modern history where the Chinese people and the Chinese culture was looked down upon should be over.”⁵⁹⁹ In sum this discourse is drawing up a narrative where ontological security is sought reestablished, in a manner that demonstrates the continuation of certain discursive structures, but these are linked through a new set of Marxist-derived narrative innovations. Thus, these textual monuments of the early Maoist era continue to link the concept of China as essentially similar to Europe, in a foundational narrative of essential universality. However, the modality of this sameness is reformulated, in line with Marxist dialectics. Thus, China is reconstructed through the interlinked signifiers of being “suppressed”, “proletarian”, “revolutionary”, “reborn”, whereas Europe is no longer an entity of antithesis to this identity, but divided into two main bodies of which one, the European proletariat and communist movements, share these signifiers in common with China.

6.2.2 *Europe in the Foreign Policy of the People's Republic*

Of course, one of the key ways in which the heritage of the European intrusion on the Chinese territory was still alive in Maoism, was the extent to which the Chinese Communist Party's expressed objective of fighting back against was related to Chinese lived experience.⁶⁰⁰ However, Europe was by now a concept where the main old colonial powers from the earlier century of humiliation, France and Britain, were rebranded as part of the reactionary force in the world together with the US.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ Z. Mao 1991i, 1516

⁶⁰⁰ Z. Mao 1991j, 401

⁶⁰¹ Z. Mao 1991k

Meanwhile, the Eastern European countries were part of the communist movement of which China saw itself as a leading member.⁶⁰²

The People's Democracies of Europe (欧洲各人民民主国家) are currently consolidating themselves internally and uniting with each other to arise. With France and Italy in the lead, the anti-imperialist forces of the people in the capitalist countries are developing. [...] We, and the world's democratic forces, together, as long as everyone exert themselves, will surely be able to defeat imperialism's plan of enslavement.⁶⁰³

In Mao's writings the old discussions about "learning from the West" and which role and value to bestow upon the ideas and technological practices entering China from Europe is given a new twist, as he details how the young educated classes were in eagerly travelling to Europe to learn from the West. However; "The aggression of the imperialists shattered the Chinese people's pipe dream of learning from the West (学西方). [...] The Chinese [then] found Marxism-Leninism, the universally applicable truth, and the face of China began to change."⁶⁰⁴ This debt to the introduction of Marxism as a Western concept, not branded foreign *per se*, but another Western concept, that this time happened to be right, is an oft repeated fundament. It defined for the new Chinese polity a time of awakening, when the Chinese people joined their suppressed brothers around the world in the struggle.⁶⁰⁵

Nevertheless, it is important to note how even Western Europe was considered as less of a capitalist 'Other' than was the United States. Mao Zedong was at times being particularly optimistic about the degree of contradiction between Western Europe and

⁶⁰² China's relations with Eastern Europe in general has long been an undercover area, but has lately seen a number of interesting contributions, see eg. Zofka, Vámos, and Urbansky 2018; Albers and Chen 2017; Gnoinska 2017; Westad 2017a

⁶⁰³ Z. Mao 1991l, 1259–60

⁶⁰⁴ Z. Mao 1991f, 1470

⁶⁰⁵ Z. Mao 1991g, 1357; Z. Mao 1991f, 1469; Z. Mao 1991i, 1514

the US, and how this could be utilized. This particular discourse was theorized first in 1946, as Mao laid out a view of the world where Western Europe was not constructed as belonging in the American camp, as the Soviets and Americans regarded the situation, but rather as belonging to the “intermediate zone” (中间地带). This described the zone of superpower competition consisting of all the countries and continents in between the two superpowers; the US and the USSR.⁶⁰⁶ “The second ‘Third World’ is in Western Europe [西欧], consisting of highly developed capitalist, and also somewhat imperialist countries, these countries are on the one hand oppressing people, but on the other hand they are also being oppressed by the US, thus having contradictions with the US.”⁶⁰⁷ This worldview was further strengthened in the early 60s, when Mao redefined the concept to explicitly distinguish between two separate intermediary zones; one consisting of developing countries, and one consisting of the developed capitalist countries, Western Europe included.⁶⁰⁸ Following the idea that both these intermediate zones was chafing under the imperialist suppression of the US and the USSR, the strategic logic that was applied drew on the historical precedence of the “united front”, allying with competitors to defeat the primary enemy, such as the CCP’s alliance with their rival KMT against Japan.⁶⁰⁹

This narrative of Europe as an unlikely ally against American imperialism opened a discursive space for the rapprochement between Mao and Charles de Gaulle’s France. As these two countries, in a diplomatic coup for China, established relations with Beijing in 1964, the idea that they could act as anti-imperialist leaders each of their own section of the intermediary zone took root, and gave France a diplomatic

⁶⁰⁶ Kapur 1986, 7; Moncada 2010, 35–38; S. G. Zhang 2007

⁶⁰⁷ Z. Mao 1994a

⁶⁰⁸ Z. Mao 1994b; Z. Mao 1994c

⁶⁰⁹ E. Zhou 2017

importance in China beyond what its power basis should suggest.⁶¹⁰ In the early 70s, as the split between China and the USSR had become a main concern of the Chinese leadership,⁶¹¹ Mao's discourse about the global zones developed into the "Theory of the Three Worlds" (三个世界的理论), that was later picked up by Deng Xiaoping, and were to form a key international politics discourse in the years ahead.⁶¹² One of the tenets of this theory was how Europe was placed as a Second World country, as opposed to the Hegemons Soviet and the US in the First World, thus continuing the discourse of Western Europe as a potential ally against the superpowers. This discourse would, however, wax and wane reflecting the Chinese momentous rapprochement with one of these superpowers, the US.⁶¹³ Nevertheless, this reinforced the discourse, that would run throughout Chinese European policies in the years ahead, namely that the European countries, and the EEC/EU in particular, may be useful for counterbalancing the superpower dominance, and in achieving a more multipolar world.

⁶¹⁰ Albers 2016, 20–28; Kapur 1986, 6–7

⁶¹¹ As detailed in Chapter 3, Soviet Russia is not included in this research project, but the country remained one of the most important external actors shaping the PRC, first of all as a key conduit for that most European of ideologies; Marxism. For a comprehensive overview of the USSR's influence on the PRC, see e.g. the edited volume by H.-Y. Li 2010; or Westad 1998. The latter also provides a salient overview of that key moment of the Cold War that was the Sino-Soviet split. For further research representative of two historiographical schools of thought regarding whether the main reasons behind the split were ideological and identity issues, or a matter of political objectives and national strategy, see respectively Mingjiang Li 2013; and Hopf 2009, or Radchenko 2010; For a comprehensive treatise of Sino-Soviet relations in the aftermath of the split, see Zubok 2017

⁶¹² For more on the Three Worlds Theory, see H. S. Yee 1983; S. S. Kim 1989; K. C. Chen 2017; Van Ness 1993

⁶¹³ An 2013; H. S. Yee 1983; Z. Mao 2003, 1695

As such, Mao did on a number of occasions show support for the efforts at strengthening the European community, and countries' place in the world.⁶¹⁴ As Mao expressed in a talk with former British PM Heath: "You go on strengthen Europe, and we are happy!" (你们欧洲强大起来, 我们高兴啊!)⁶¹⁵ The discourse of this era thus showcased continuity from the earlier discourse of Europe as less of a radical other. The main new development in the political narrative, was that the discourse of the 'Three Worlds' radically transformed the subject position of the Soviet Union to being part of the imperialist camp. The role of Europe in this renegotiation did, on the other hand, stay fairly stable, and as demonstrated the discourse did increasingly draw upon signifiers in common between both Europe and China, even when talking about the European countries to the west of the Iron Curtain. One of the more ironic twists is perhaps how the new discourse found common ground with what was once predominantly referred to as foreign, radically different, imperialist powers; instead Europe was in this new narrative linked to China, and differentiated from the USA and Soviet as a group that was "dissatisfied with imperialism."

6.3 The Reform Period (1978-1990)

In a political feat singular amongst the world's communist leaders emerging from the early 20th Century, he managed to set his country on the path to economic success, whilst simultaneously keeping the power of the party-system. In the years after the death of Mao Zedong, in the aftermath of the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping did eventually emerge victorious from the fractional infighting that

⁶¹⁴ Z. Mao 1964

⁶¹⁵ Z. Mao 1994d

followed,⁶¹⁶ and launched China from relative isolation to actively embracing the outside world.⁶¹⁷ Deng himself, was one of the veterans of the CCP, although his relations with Mao became fraught, and he fell out of favour and was condemned with his family as a rightist on a number of occasions.⁶¹⁸ A challenging part of his political project was thus to construct a narrative that allowed for bridging the CCP legitimacy from the past, whilst simultaneously staking out a radically new course in defiance of the catastrophic policies enacted by Mao Zedong. In the famous resolution of CCP History, the party under Deng's directions opted for the same 70% right - 30% wrong ratio as the Soviet Union did with Stalin, but simultaneously exalting Mao's theoretical and political contributions.⁶¹⁹

In this interlinked domestic and external renegotiation of the foundational narrative for a new era of the PRC under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, Europe was also playing a part. Whereas most of the extant literature has tended to focus overwhelmingly on the role played by the USA and on Chinese domestic factors in one of the most momentous changes in Chinese history, I will argue that the European influence, although less pronounced, is still worthy of more attention than it has till now received. In particular, this section addresses the role of Europe in this new renegotiation of the Chinese identity and ontological security through two key renegotiations of the foundational narrative. Firstly, how Europe played a role in inspiring and shaping the reform efforts of Deng Xiaoping and his allies in the upper echelons of the CCP. Secondly, the role of Europe in Chinese ontological security seeking after the demonstrations leading up to the massacre of Tiananmen Square in 1989 forced the existing leadership to readjust the Chinese national narrative, seeking

⁶¹⁶ Vogel 2011; Garside 1981; Zagoria 1984

⁶¹⁷ MacFarquhar 1991, 350–98

⁶¹⁸ J. A. G. Roberts 2003, 450–63; Spence 2013, 579–82; C. Li 2001, 220

⁶¹⁹ 11th Central Committee of the CCP 1981; Vogel 2011, 368

to address the tension between a rapidly reforming economic system, and a political system that was still firmly authoritarian.

6.3.1 Opening Up China, and Embracing the European Example

The Chinese opening to the US as one of the pivotal points of the Cold War has rightfully received an overwhelming amount of coverage.⁶²⁰ In this new renegotiation of the ontological status of the Chinese polity, however, the European continent, particularly France, still played an important, although often overlooked, role. For Deng personally, the experiences during his half decade in France from 1920 to early 1926 as a young student were a formative period.⁶²¹ It was there he joined the very recently established Chinese Communist Party's local arm.⁶²² As Westad would summarize about this cohort, that later came to power in the CCP's upper echelons; "Common for all of them was a need to draw on the European experience to improve China, while resisting foreign attempts at dominating their country."⁶²³

As such, it was perhaps natural that the Chinese image of Europe also was strongly involved in Deng's reformulation of the Chinese ontological security narrative. As detailed earlier in this chapter, Mao's 1974 theory of the 'Three Worlds' had redefined Western Europe's place in the PRC's geopolitical discourse, from being part of the imperialist world, to being part of the 'second world'. As such, these were countries that could join with China to mount resistance towards the imperialist powers of the

⁶²⁰ See e.g. Mann and Edwards 1999; Kissinger 2011; Goh 2005

⁶²¹ Deng himself never learned French fluently, but would to the end of his day enjoy a number of French habits, amongst them an untypically Chinese taste for coffee, and indulging in cheese and wine. For more details, see Vogel 2011, 20–24

⁶²² X. Deng 2009a, 17–24

⁶²³ Westad 2017a, 111

first world; USA and the Soviet Union.⁶²⁴ The strategic importance of a strong Europe on the USSR's Western flank was strongly emphasized by Deng, who would also express his full support for Western European integration.⁶²⁵ As Deng said to the French President, "We attach, precisely, great importance to what happens on the European side. If the two Superpowers want hegemony they first have to control Europe. We agree with you that Europe represents an economic, political and military power. But the condition is that it is united."⁶²⁶ The choice of France and Europe for a number of symbolically important official visits was, moreover, not coincidental.⁶²⁷ Importantly, the earliest of these visits were undertaken at a point when relations with the US were still uncertain, but all the European countries visited had already formally recognized the PRC.⁶²⁸

In a 1987 talk with the visiting Dutch Prime Minister, Deng Xiaoping utilised the occasion to present a sweeping overview of the reformulated foundational narrative for a new, rising Chinese polity. The narrative, neatly summarizes the discourse that had been by then presented in numerous other of his texts from the reform period.⁶²⁹ In short, it reconfigures the historical arc of the Chinese narrative, through focusing on how the CCP as the transforming force of China, has diligently strived to better the conditions of the Chinese people. Although it made some grave errors on the road from the very beginning, it has continuously been seeking to learn from the errors and adjust its course.⁶³⁰ Thus, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution were

⁶²⁴ X. Deng 2009b, 2057

⁶²⁵ X. Deng 2009c, 43–45

⁶²⁶ X. Deng 1975

⁶²⁷ France had been making the most out of this strategic opportunity to better relations with China, recognising the PRC already in 1964, and sending President Pompidou to Beijing for a state visit as the first European head of state in 1973. X. Deng 2009b, 1981; Vogel 2011, 118–20; Albers 2013; Meissner 2002, 188–90

⁶²⁸ Vogel 2011, 220–24

⁶²⁹ For examples, see eg. X. Deng 1994a

⁶³⁰ X. Deng 1994b, 234–35

disastrous mistakes that the Party under Deng has now reviewed. Through learning and adjusting their course, the party is now instead delivering prosperity, “based on the facts.” The narrative weaves together the man-made disasters of the CCP under Mao not as a disqualifying horrendous policy failure, but as part of an ongoing process of creating progress through learning from successes and failure on the way. This then solved the dilemma of keeping on to the vestiges of Communist Party legitimacy whilst pursuing rather un-communist policies. However, at the end of the same speech, Deng raises the warning, also repeated multiple times, that the leadership of the CCP is not to be questioned, and that the CCP still is opposing bourgeoisie liberation in the sense of “wholesale Westernization (全盘西化)” of China, even though this opposition will now be fought in the schools through education, rather than Mao-style political campaigns.⁶³¹ This key division between economic and technological openness, and societal and political anti-Westernization, thus echoes the earlier *ti/yong* narrative of the Self-Strengthening Movement era. In many ways, it also set the stage for the democratization crackdown at Tiananmen Square two years later.

In this reformulated foundational narrative of China and its place in the world, Europe had taken on a different role. As Deng formulated it in a keynote speech:

When we analyse the world situation, we pay particular attention to Europe, Europe is the crucial region in determining peace or war. [...] We hope for a united, strong and developed Europe. [...] We feel that Europe is relatively open, especially with regards to technology, with which we are relatively satisfied, although naturally not completely satisfied. So, we have determined the policy of working together with Europe, including both Western and Eastern Europe, to develop friendly and cooperative relations.⁶³²

⁶³¹ X. Deng 1994b, 235

⁶³² X. Deng 1994b, 233–34

Thus, in Hansen's terms, the set of signifiers linking and differentiating the Chinese concept of China and the Chinese concept of Europe, is no longer closely tied to the revolutionary ideals, where a revolutionary China could teach the still bourgeois countries of Europe the way towards a new international order. Importantly, this also explicitly negated the difference between the 'two camps' of Eastern and Western Europe, that was a key representation of the Mao era. Although the signifiers that linked China and Europe together as a common group in standing against imperialism, the discursive change under Deng saw both China and Europe along lines more reminiscent of the pre-Maoist Era, where Europe again was a source for useful learning for China.

In other words, in the later Mao era, two distinct narratives were competing for becoming dominant, and informing the foreign policy of the PRC; one being the revolutionary image of China leading the Third World as the core of antihegemonic struggle against the US and the Soviets; the other image being that of regarding China as an equal member of the world of states.⁶³³ With the ascendancy of Deng, the latter narrative won out. This reformulation of the foundational narrative, opened up a range of new venues for the country's foreign policies; for example the punitive war against Vietnam, formerly a brotherly, Asian, Third World socialist country.⁶³⁴ The main focus was no longer on being at the helm of the world revolution, but on developing the economy and opening up for foreign expertise to help in this regards, tellingly China thus rapidly went from being a net aid- giver to a net aid receiver. The Maoist alignment with the downtrodden revolutionaries of the Third World also evaporated, in line with the material support for Marxist guerrilla movements in the developing world.⁶³⁵

⁶³³ C. Shih 1990, 118

⁶³⁴ C. Shih 1990, 119

⁶³⁵ M. Yahuda 1993, 555–56

The importance of Europe as a source of technology and as a valuable trade partner for China's development became increasingly prevalent as relations with the US evolved. Deng was also still supportive of a strong Europe whose "peaceful power" in the more relaxed international atmosphere was still a welcome contribution towards international multipolarity.⁶³⁶ In a 1985 meeting with the former British Prime Minister, these two economic issues were thus the main focus.⁶³⁷ Thus, Europe's place in the overall Chinese narrative was still shaped by the discursive structures enunciated by Mao, where Europe was considered as less of an Other than were the hegemons of the US and Russia. As such, early on in the modernization process this eased the transition to increasingly regard Europe as firstly, a partner in economic development and technology transfers; secondly, this also lent itself to a view of Europe as not so much part of a hostile capitalist NATO camp, but as a Second World player with an outsized role to play in the cause of peace, through balancing against the first world hegemons of US and the Soviets. In particular, and as the years went on, exclusively; against the Soviet Union.

It is interesting to note the degree to which Deng, and the Chinese political leadership, are referring to Europe (欧洲), even when talking to heads of states of separate European countries, and even during era of the Iron Curtain drawing a distinct line between the communist East- and the capitalist Western Europe. This may be symptomatic of a wish for greater European unity as a separate power pole in world politics. As Moncada points out, the Chinese leadership's new foreign policy outlook with regards to the 'two hegemons', the Soviet Union and the US (苏美两霸) lead to them lending support to the construction of a stronger European camp at the Western

⁶³⁶ Moncada 2010, 69–71

⁶³⁷ X. Deng 2004, 200; X. Deng 1994c

edge of the Soviet empire.⁶³⁸ In a talk with the European Community's Commission Chairman in 1983, Deng emphasized that he had always hoped that for the sake of world peace, the European continent would unite.⁶³⁹ In earlier talks with the PM of Luxembourg, he declared himself a “warm-hearted supporter of European unification (欧洲联合的热心支持者).”⁶⁴⁰ At a high level meeting with the French in 1985 emphasising on his behalf the Chinese “hope that Europe will rise up even stronger. We have common interests. On the South-North issues, our two sides have common approaches and viewpoints.”⁶⁴¹ In a stark historical rebuke of the late Qing he was explicitly cheering on the influx of outside knowledge and technology, admonishing foreign scientist to come, from both Western and from Eastern Europe.⁶⁴² Still, political and ideological tensions lingered on, as reminiscent of the *ti/yong* dilemma of the late Qing dynasty officials, the CCP was happy to accept European technology, but far more weary of their ideas and political institutions.

6.3.2 *Chinese Characteristics and European Values*

The Deng era in Chinese politics was book-ended by two considerable ontological security crises, running from the post-Mao debacles following the Cultural Revolution, to the events of the Tiananmen massacre. In both of these cases, Deng succeeded in pushing through his position and, in spite of considerable opposition, solidifying his narrative of the Chinese polity. In the latter of these two crises, the role of Europe was arguably even more notable, as the fall of the USSR and the end of Communism in Eastern Europe made the Third Wave of democratization acutely

⁶³⁸ Moncada 2010, 64–67

⁶³⁹ See eg. X. Deng 2011, 483; X. Deng 1994d; X. Deng 2009d, 1072

⁶⁴⁰ X. Deng 2009d, 820

⁶⁴¹ X. Deng 2009d, 1072

⁶⁴² X. Deng 1994d, 32

relevant for the CCP.⁶⁴³ In certain circles of the CCP and the Chinese intelligentsia, the European influence thus took on a particular strong hue as Deng's reform years coincided with the growing reform and democratization movements in Eastern Europe. These constituted a fundamental challenge for the CCP narrative, and thus being a crisis for both the ontological security of the regime.⁶⁴⁴

This was not lost on the CCP leadership, who feared that a Solidarity-style independent labour union could rise to challenge the existing political system, as had happened in Poland.⁶⁴⁵ Deng, as summarized by Goldman, "believed strongly in technocratic and economic reforms, but only within the prevailing political and ideological framework, very much in the tradition of the nineteenth-century self-strengtheners."⁶⁴⁶ Although the China of the reform era was tirelessly pursuing and utilising foreign technology and economic know-how, the 19th Century *yong*, the inclination to also imitate Western political and civil systems from which they grew, the equivalent of *ti*, was treated with far more scepticism, although Deng had in talks with European officials played with the thought of Chinese elections in half a century's time.⁶⁴⁷ Corroborating again the old *ti/yong* division, and pointing towards the handling of the demonstrations to come, Deng's key speech to leading members of the Central Committee in 1986 emphasizes the need to uphold the Four Cardinal Principles, protect the dictatorship of the CCP, and to resist bourgeoisie liberalization, and pointing out in straight forward terms that with regards to the necessary rising of peoples prosperity; "We cannot do it without dictatorship. (...) The struggle against bourgeois liberalization will last for at least twenty years. Democracy can develop

⁶⁴³ Segal 1992; Huntington 1993

⁶⁴⁴ Goldman, Link, and Wei 1993

⁶⁴⁵ Goldman 1994, 13–16

⁶⁴⁶ Goldman 1994, 18

⁶⁴⁷ X. Deng 1994e

only gradually, and we cannot copy Western systems. If we did, that would only make a mess of everything.”⁶⁴⁸

The Tiananmen massacre did bring a sudden chill to the rapidly developing China-Europe relationship.⁶⁴⁹ In spite of the violent crackdown of the demonstrators on Tiananmen, the anti-Communist demonstrations in Europe only grew more powerful in the great democratic upheavals in Europe in the years 1989 to 1991. This aroused considerable nervousness amongst the Chinese elites.⁶⁵⁰ The response in aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre was likewise very much influenced by the vista of social and political movements in Eastern Europe. As Yahuda points out, “Deng regarded the clamour about human rights abuses in his country as less a sign of the existence of international norms of behaviour than as evidence of a dark plot by Western forces to undermine socialism in China and elsewhere by a sinister subversive policy of ‘peaceful evolution.’⁶⁵¹ Such understanding of these political trends was made very clear in the famous comments by Deng that were circulated in the CCP as his guidelines for the coming years, as a warning against the forces of political liberalization.⁶⁵²

Deng Xiaoping and the remaining party leadership did, however, recognize that in light of the widespread demonstrations in Beijing, in the Chinese provinces, and against Communist regimes abroad, another readjustment of the fundamental narrative of the regime was apparently necessitated. As Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought had failed to capture the hearts and minds of the Chinese youth that

⁶⁴⁸ X. Deng 1987, 134

⁶⁴⁹ M. Yahuda 2007, 25–26; Möller 2002b

⁶⁵⁰ Vogel 2011, 654–57

⁶⁵¹ M. Yahuda 1993, 563

⁶⁵² M. Yahuda 1993, 564

was living under radically different conditions than those of decades past, the solution was to tone down the communist rhetoric in favour of doubling down on the revived ideology of patriotism, and the historical memory of the 100 years of colonial suppression, and the Japanese invasion during World War II.⁶⁵³ As Hughes draw the long lines of this era: “Since then, the process of “reform and opening” has continued to seek an optimal balance between preserving the CCP’s version of the Chinese essence through patriotic education and the propagation of “national humiliation” on the one hand, while opening up the economy to globalization and training personnel who can create the wealth and power necessary to save the nation on the other.”⁶⁵⁴ Old historical narratives focusing on grievances towards Western colonialists were brought back to the fore with gusto. The Western sanctions against China in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre was a convenient target for this new patriotic education, in which the CCP was now the embodiment of the national revival, instead of a force to overthrow Chinas traditional past.⁶⁵⁵ This forceful reassertion of the CCP’s narrative overcoming more liberal counter-narratives of this era is excellently summarized by Nathan and Schobell:

As China joined the world decisively under Deng Xiaoping, the disagreement between those who favored and those who opposed Westernization (often referred to respectively as “liberals” and “conservatives”) became once again the fundamental cleavage in Chinese politics. In 1988, an officially produced television documentary series, *Elegy for the Yellow River* (Heshang), used language almost identical to that of late-nineteenth-century reformers to declare that China’s inward-looking, land-bound civilization was moribund, and that China would have to “join the blue sea” of Western culture in order to escape disintegration. The authors of *Elegy* went into exile in the aftermath of the pro-

⁶⁵³ See Callahan 2006b, 185–86; C. R. Hughes 2006a; Callahan 2009; Z. Wang 2008b; Suzuki 2007; Gries 2003; Karl 2002

⁶⁵⁴ C. R. Hughes 2011b, 136

⁶⁵⁵ Vogel 2011, 661–62

democracy demonstrations of spring 1989. The issue of cultural identity was taken over by conservative leaders who were concerned about cultural subversion by the West. Attacking what they alleged were American schemes to promote “peaceful evolution” and “bourgeois liberalization,” they tried to promote a nationalistic mix of Confucian and Sino-Marxist values.⁶⁵⁶

The historical ramifications of the ontological rupture of the mid-1800s still resonated, as Deng’s narrative won out inside the CCP, and was further propagated domestically. As expressed by Deng, whilst pointing out how six of the G7 members establishing post-Tiananmen sanctions were the same as the Eight Nation Alliance invading during the Boxer Rebellion; “I am a Chinese, and I know of the history of foreign countries invasion of China. When I heard that the seven Western [西方] countries at their summit meeting decided to impose sanctions on China, I immediately associated it with the history of 1900 when the Eight-Nation Alliance invaded China.”⁶⁵⁷ One can here see illustrated the adjusted foundational narrative, where the European proletariat is no longer the “same”, as the discourse have moved back to regarding Europe as a more unified actor. China’s 100 years of colonialism was no longer mainly the work of the European bourgeoisie, but of Europe and the West *as such*. Following from the logic of this fundamental narrative is the consequential political view that if the Western essence, *ti*, is too different from the Chinese one; then there is in fact no choice between Chinese democracy or Chinese autocracy, but between Chinese autocracy and chaos. Talking about his fear for chaos, as the precise antecedent of what China needs to develop, namely a peaceful environment at home and abroad, and pointing out in terms reminiscent of the

⁶⁵⁶ Nathan and Scobell 2015, 32; For more detail on the “He shang” counter-narrative, see Xiaomei Chen 2002, 23–42

⁶⁵⁷ X. Deng 1994f, 357

essentialist Mandarins of the past, how Islamic countries and others were so different from Europe that European ideas of civil rights did not apply to these societies. "It will not work to require all the countries in the world to copy the patterns of the United States, England, or France."⁶⁵⁸

The polity of the PRC was based on the narrative that the CCP was the actor that had managed to restore the Chinese place as an equal member of the family of nations. Thus, the leadership had long struggled to achieve legitimacy and recognition internationally: through the communist society in the early days, then as a Third World leader, and now increasingly as full-fledged member of the international society of states. Part and parcel of this was, as pointed to earlier in this chapter, the denunciation of unequal treaties, and the symbolical return of Chinese territory to Chinese sovereignty. After the momentous events surrounding the massacre of Tiananmen square had clearly demonstrated the extent to which the party leadership had failed to retain their legitimacy over large substrata of the populace, the task of rebuilding a polity that could defend its claim as the embodiment of an ontologically secure state fell eventually on China's Third leadership generation, spearheaded by Jiang Zemin. Internal Party disagreements were quashed in favour of the official line of the events as counter-revolutionary riots brought on by Western interference,⁶⁵⁹ thus drawing upon the established tropes of the threatening and fundamentally different West, including Europe.⁶⁶⁰

The wounds from the imperial era were there ready to be ripped up by the political elite. As Deng angrily reacted to the news of the G7's post-Tiananmen sanctions

⁶⁵⁸ X. Deng 1994g, 359–60

⁶⁵⁹ Liang Zhang et al. 2002

⁶⁶⁰ Xitong Chen 1989; Jiang 1989

against the country: “How many people’s human rights have they harmed around the world! Since the beginning of the Opium War, when they started invading China, how many Chinese people’s human rights have they violated!”⁶⁶¹ In terms of the continued salience of the colonial era, the return of Hong Kong to Chinese hands became extra important, given the increased importance of a national narrative where suffering at the hands of foreigners were given more weight than the former Communist narrative that laid equal blame on the traditional Chinese political and social structure.

The return of Hong Kong from British rule, was one of the crowning achievements of Deng Xiaoping, and took on all the more significance as this was one of the main focal points for the issue of ontological security with regards to Europe. From the outset, as Deng met in 1982 with Margaret Thatcher as the end of the British lease to the New Territories in 1997 was drawing closer on the horizon, the British PM’s stance on the future of Hong Kong was categorically rejected.⁶⁶² Symbolically enough, when Deng declared that on the issue of sovereignty, China was not open to discussion, he quoted the historical precedence of Li Hongzhang, who had gained notoriety as the man signing the unequal treaty in the first place.⁶⁶³ On any other issue than sovereignty, though, Deng was thoroughly pragmatic, as summarized in the title of his suggested ‘one country, two systems’ policy approach, exemplifying thus how the issue was in large parts one of seeking to avoid the ontological security issue of weakening the narrative of legitimacy for the CCP.

As the handover was successfully negotiated, Deng explicitly drew on the colonialization discourse, in comparing Thatcher to the French President De Gaulle, as the latter had brought decolonization to Africa.⁶⁶⁴ When the eventual handover

⁶⁶¹ X. Deng 1994h, 348

⁶⁶² Vogel 2011, 493–98; Mark 2017

⁶⁶³ Cottrell 1993, 87–88

⁶⁶⁴ Cottrell 1993

came to pass, four months after the death of Deng Xiaoping, the ceremony was unequivocally framed in terms of the same revival of the “Chinese People have arisen”, as was the declaration of the PRC itself nearly half a century earlier. As Foreign Minister Qian Qichen described it: “It was raining the whole day of the handover ceremonies, but I am sure that all Chinese in the world felt it was a refreshing shower, washing away China’s humiliation.”⁶⁶⁵ At the eve of the new millennium, a new Chinese polity, guided by the Chinese Communist Party, had by then symbolically asserted its grasp of the country further, in an event that underlines the continued importance of the role of Europe in China’s ontological security seeking.

6.4 Conclusions

The foundational narratives underpinning Chinese ontological security through the two key periods analysed in this chapter, offer valuable background for understanding the changes in China’s policies towards Europe in this period. As the Chinese Communist narrative was renegotiated and reconstituted, so did Europe’s constitutive role change. The dominant discourse of Europe’s role as China’s Other saw three main changes through this period: first, the change from a suppressive colonial Other, to a battlefield in the midst of an ideological struggle in which China solidarized with sections of the continent. Secondly, after Deng Xiaoping’s reforms Europe was regarded as less ideologically relevant, but the idea of Europe as partly separated from the US remained, which amongst other things opened up for a clear support for the European integration project. This idea of a united Europe as a useful counterweight not only to Soviet Russia, but also to the USA, thus remained from the Mao years. Thirdly, the idea of Europe was still, however, that of an Other, and in

⁶⁶⁵ Qichen 2006, 279

particular after the Tiananmen massacre, Europe's role as an ideological subject position for China to define itself against became more dominant.

Thus, there are two traits of the discursive dynamics of this period that carries particular salience for the PRC's relations with Europe. Firstly, the reformulation of Europe from being part of the imperialist world, to being in the "second world", thus less different from China and a potential ally against the hegemons. This entailed an early change in the Chinese strategy towards the continent, and also made Europe a less contentious place to learn from in the early years, before the opening towards the US progressed further. Deng's support for Western-European integration was repeatedly asserted, commonly using the phrase of, "We have always wished for a united, unified, and strong Europe."⁶⁶⁶ The role of Europe as a less radical Other in the Chinese foundational narrative, also opened a useful policy space that gave Europe a particular place in providing two further important factors for the rising Chinese power; firstly, economic and technological cooperation; and secondly, contributions to ontological security, through certain European countries' early diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic as the polity representing the Chinese people.

Europe in Foundational Narrative	Important Political Era	Modality of European Otherness	Temporal Position of Europe in Narrative
Capitalist Europe	Early CCP Era	An Other within a new cosmology, but less radical Other than the USA	To be surpassed technologically and politically

⁶⁶⁶ See examples in X. Deng 2009c, 693; X. Deng 2009c, 7; X. Deng 2009c, 13–14; X. Deng 2009c, 327; X. Deng 2009c, 389

Useful & Equal Europe	Reform Era	A coexistent Civilization. Similar in technological terms, equal in value, but fundamentally different	To be emulated technologically, but kept separate politically
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Figure 3: Overview of Chinese Narratives of Europe, Post-War Era

Secondly, and even more relevant for the contemporary era, over the long century preceding this moment, the Chinese discourse on Europe had never fully solved the tension inherent in the old *ti/yong* divide, between universalism and Sinocentrism. As Taiwan, constructed as the last wayward province yet to be reclaimed, opted for liberalism and an open society in their ongoing reconstitutions of identity, mainland China chose in the same decade to go another route, through emphasizing Sinocentric narratives in a new hybrid form of “national-communism” as the basis for the polity’s ontological security. The role of Europe in the Chinese foundational narratives had during the CCP years been going in the direction of increasingly underlining Europe as an Other, compared to, for example, the narratives during the May Fourth movement. See fig. 3, for a summary cross-section of Europe’s place in China’s foundational narrative through the years covered by this section’s diachronic analysis. However, the conceptualization of Europe as a part of the West that was distinct from, and less Othered than, the USA was sustained. As such, Europe’s role in this foundational narrative was akin to that of being regarded as ‘Useful and Equal’, reflecting the old *ti/yong* dichotomy. Of course with the crucial difference that in the late days of the Qing Empire, the court did not recognize the ordering principle of the international system, whereas in this era, the Chinese political establishment instead sought to be recognized by the leading players of this system as an entity of equal status, but separate political values and traditions.

Overall this section has demonstrated Europe's role in China's ontological security seeking within yet a new system with a new set of rules. The discursive patterns and foundational narratives derived from this century of ontological and political upheaval, are still in play and remain amongst the factors guiding the policies of the current-day political leadership. Furthermore, the Chinese conceptualization of Europe is still related to the Chinese foundational narrative in ways that makes the continent a particularly relevant actor for Chinese ontological security seeking. An in-depth understanding of the discursive developments analysed in this chapter, thus allows for a more salient understanding of Beijing's policies towards Europe over the last two decades. In the next constituent part of this thesis, the coming chapters will pick up the thread from this longitudinal investigation of the fundamental dynamics of China's narratives of Europe, and undertake a synchronic analysis of how this identity factor plays a role in contemporary Chinese policies towards Europe. Going more in-depth on a narrower timescale, the synchronic analysis thus engages with the role of Chinese ontological security-seeking in current day politics, in the realization that the contemporary identity vagaries informing politics today, are deeply rooted in the discursive structures of the preceding century.

Part III: Synchronic Analysis

Chapter 7: Synchronic Section Introduction, and Status

Upgrade Denied - Beijing, Brussels, and the EU (2003-2006)

7.1 Synchronic Section Introduction

This thesis contends that the Chinese discourses of Europe, and how they reflect the Chinese political projects' demand for ontological security, is a key aspect for China-Europe relations that serves to explain a number of contemporary political actions that cannot be otherwise explained. The analysis in the preceding diachronic chapters demonstrated how the Chinese concept of Europe has been a substantive part of the Chinese identity crisis junctures, as well as integral in the reformulations of the Chinese ontological sense of self. Working forward from the diachronic section's analysis of the Chinese concepts of Europe, this synchronic section proceeds to undertake an exploratory analysis of the role of ontological security in current-day relations between Europe and China. For this purpose, this section proceeds to narrow the scope in temporal terms, whilst broadening the analytical reach. Hence the synchronic investigation will focus mainly on an analysis of the Chinese discourses surrounding a number of key policy cases with regards to Europe, exploring the extent to which Chinese ontological security concerns played a part in their policy formulation and political practice.

The post-89 Chinese foundational narrative of China and Europe as 'equal and separate civilizations', as referred to in the previous chapter, opened a space for a particular identity dynamic to play out in the relationship between these two actors.

The concurrent Chinese discourses of Europe based on this narrative framed the political and diplomatic field in ways that carried broad political repercussions. In addition to its empirical investigation, this synchronic section thus also has a threefold theoretical goal, which corresponds to a three-layered analytical approach. First, it seeks to trace the *foundational narrative* forming the base of Chinese ontological security, analysing the continued development of this narrative onwards from where the diachronic section left off, and establishing how it framed the debates of the contemporary era. Second, these chapters strive to detail the more specific *main discourses* of Europe derived from the foundational narrative. Third, it seeks to explore the *political repercussions* of these discourses and how the identity factor served as an element in key contemporary political and diplomatic issues of Sino-European relations.

In the following sections, then, the Chinese main discourses of the China-Europe relationship will be presented, as it relates to the main political and diplomatic issues of these key years of the EU-China relationship. At the outset of the 21th Century, the European influence was less keenly relevant as a foundational building block for Chinese identity and ontological security. Overall, for China, Europe was in most cases a secondary relationship, that was of inferior importance compared to the dominant role that the USA was given in Chinese official and popular discourse.⁶⁶⁷ However, Europe was still of enough relevance to Beijing's political identity to shape Chinese policies towards the European continent in a number of important ways. The different foundational narratives of the Chinese polity and how these were constituted with regards to Europe, opened up for different discourses based on these foundational narratives, and these discourses then constituted a particular political

⁶⁶⁷ For sources on China's views of America, see B. Wu 2010; Ford 2015; Shambaugh 2013; Shen, Dingli 2008; Pomfret 2016; Men and Shen 2014; For literature on Japan's role in contemporary Chinese identity-building, see Gustafsson 2014b; Suzuki 2007; Hagström and Gustafsson 2015

space for the Chinese actions in their relationship with Europe. Through tracing these changing Chinese foundational narratives, and Europe's role in the identity configuration of these, it has become clear the extent to which the variations in these narratives shaped the political incentives for China's Europe policies in quite radically different ways over the last century.

In line with this analytical framework, the following chapters 7 to 9 of this synchronic section are subdivided into four main parts. The first part provides general context on the broader foreign policy rhetoric emanating from Beijing, and key Chinese political developments of the relevant period. The second part will identify and trace the Chinese foundational narrative, and how Europe is constituted within this. Third, the chapters will go in-depth on the main discourses on Europe derived from the foundational narrative, identifying and analysing them as expressed in the texts and official speeches of these two decades. The fourth part will then investigate the concrete political situation through, firstly, providing a specific background of the political flashpoint, and then go on to analyse the extent to which the main discourses identified earlier did indeed frame the Chinese policymaking. Thus, the impact of China's ontological security seeking on current-day Europe relations will be analysed through its foundational identity narrative constitutes the main discourses on Europe, and how these discourses then shapes the policies undertaken.

The analysis will be focused on three key cases, each constituting a separate chapter of this synchronic section. These cases are selected based on two main criteria, aimed at contending the case for respectively the existence, and the political relevance, of the ontological security factor in China-Europe relations. Firstly, the selection is informed by secondary literature and knowledge of the political context as 'crucial cases' for probing the existence of an ontological security driven identity factor in China's Europe policies. Secondly, in order to support this research's claim to political relevance, the cases selected are key political events in China-Europe relations over

the last 20 years. As such, they are also 'hard cases' in the sense that if the identity factor is present in the discourses and practices of these key political cases, it should indeed hold as an argument for its overall relevance as a factor in China-Europe relations. The first case, following in Chapter 7, will trace the end of the 'honeymoon phase' in China-EU relations, starting with the relationship agreement in 2003, and investigate the failed negotiations to bring the EU embargo of arms sales to China to an end, as well as the political consequences in the aftermath. The second case, Chapter 8, addresses the fallout between China and its European partners following a number of incidents in 2007 and 2008, notably the Dalai Lama's visits to France and Germany, that ended with a diplomatic crisis and the cancellation of the 2008 China-EU Summit. Third, Chapter 9 investigates the Chinese political boycotts towards the UK and Norway in the years 2010 to 2016, as well as tracing the discursive changes resulting from the change in the Chinese leadership and Xi Jinping's rise to power. This synchronic section overall contends that in all of these key political negotiations, identity questions were a considerable factor shaping the Chinese side, and that Beijing was ready to undertake actions to preserve their ontological security, that would be impossible to understand if employing only economic or rational-political logic to the analysis of the relations between two of the world's largest economic blocks.

7.2 Introduction: The Case of the EU-China Crucible, 2003-2006

As mentioned, the first case study analyses Chinese official material focusing on the diplomatic crisis that have been defined as the 'tipping point' of the China-EU relationship, as the trajectory abruptly changed from its 2003-2005 honeymoon phase to a range of political and diplomatic crisis. The renegotiations of the Chinese EU relationship in the first decade of the 2000s are centred on three main events; the 2003

declaration of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the aborted attempts at dropping the EU arms embargo towards China in the years 2003-2005, and the controversies related to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, which will be treated in the next chapter.⁶⁶⁸ In Casarini's words, the relationship first went through a rapid, and unprecedented, development of a "techno-political linkage", only to see this die off a few years later.⁶⁶⁹ The years from 2003 to 2006 thus demarcated a crucial era in China-Europe relations, that was most notably marked the failure to end the arms embargo in the face of US pressure, in an event that cast long shadows over the Chinese view of Europe's global position for years to come.⁶⁷⁰

The following sections will proceed in two parts. First, the main Chinese discourses on Europe and the EU in this period is presented. The analysis is based on what I define as the Chinese foundational narrative, upon which the polity's sense of ontological security is predicated, and Europe's role within it. It then moves on to detailing how this foundational narrative is expressed through the four main Chinese discourses on their relations with Europe: China and the EU as co-rising power poles; as joint ancient and splendid civilizations; as the largest actor in the developed and the developing world with complementing interests; and as partners with equal status. In the second part, this analytical framework is applied to an investigation of

⁶⁶⁸ For a range of excellent treatises detailing the political and economic processes of China-EU relations throughout this era, see Michalski and Pan 2017a; Shambaugh, Sandschneider, and Zhou 2007b; Holstag 2011; Gill and Murphy 2008; Scott 2007; Edmonds 2002; Sandschneider 2002; Fei and Kerr 2008; Brown and Crossick 2009; Men and Pardo 2014; Fox and Godement 2009; Barysch, Grant, and Leonard 2005; X. Song 2012; For good analyses of the Sino-EU relationship as viewed from the Chinese side, see Huo 2005; Hong 2012; CASS European Research Institute 2008

⁶⁶⁹ Casarini 2009, 14–16

⁶⁷⁰ B. Wu 2010, 170–71; V. K. L. Chang and Pieke 2018; It is also noteworthy that two of the most politically connected Chinese EU scholars shares a similar view of the EU's troubles negatively affecting the institution's role in Chinese foreign policy. As they expressed in Cui 2018; Wang Mingjin 2013

the political and diplomatic processes relating to the negotiations over lifting the EU's arms embargo on China.

This section will present the political background of the case, and analyse how it was constituted in the contemporary Chinese political discourse. Finally, it will draw upon corroborating sources to point to political effects rooted in the policy drivers found in these discursive constructs. Overall, it is demonstrated how the Chinese main discourses on Europe were part and parcel of the political process that constituted the embargo issue as a key matter of European recognition of China's status and ontological security. Thus, alongside the, already thoroughly analysed, geopolitical and military balance-of-power explanations for the debacle over the EU's aborted drive to lift their arms embargo to China, this chapter argues that an added and underexplored key driver of this diplomatic process was Chinese ontological security concerns.

7.3 Foundational Narrative: A Story of Two Civilizations

As explored in preceding chapters, the response of the political elite in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre, had been to further emphasize a foundational narrative that to an extent had more in common with the 19th Century self-strengtheners than the 20th Century communists. In this readjusted narrative about the rejuvenation of China, Europe was no longer an ideal to copy from and reach after, as in the days of the early Republic. It was not either a weak link in a capitalist camp that would eventually copy China and their revolutionary ways, as in the Mao era. The foundational narrative has instead developed through this new set of crises to more explicitly embrace the idea of China and Europe as two equal civilizations, although with separate values and political systems.

This was also related to a reassessment of traditional China, whose place in the foundational narrative was radically changed from the Mao era's slogans to smash the old feudal society, to regarding the traditional Sinocentric system as possessing timeless Chinese civilizational values. The linkages between the key signifiers here are those of China and Europe as separate civilizations, both old and admirable, but essentially different to the extent that 'Westernization' was no longer a goal, but something to be actively defended against. Whilst the CCP's China should thus open up to technological and economic impulses from abroad, the new foundational narrative, as proselytized through official discourse, schoolbooks, and museum exhibitions, was that while European technology was welcome, European liberal political ideas were not. This is reflecting the old *ti/yong* distinction of seeking to embrace the foreigners' technology, whilst keeping the Chinese proclaimed spiritual heritage as the basis, separated from notions of universality by insisting of the sovereignty of the Chinese civilization.

The Chinese discourses, as related to Europe, was thus intimately linked with the general patterns of China's view of their place in the world in general. As Hu Jintao took over from Jiang Zemin in 2002, it happened at a point when China's rapid and sustained economic growth was already on its way to breaking global historical records. Hu Jintao's 4th generation of CCP leadership sought to phrase their new position in the world, where, in line with the existing orthodoxy, Hu's rhetoric centred first on the slogans of peaceful rise/peaceful development and later on the idea of a harmonious society/harmonious world.⁶⁷¹ However, the slogan of the "harmonious world" as basis for Chinese foreign policy, no matter how innocuous it was designed to sound, it marked a departure from the Deng-era public diplomacy where China did

⁶⁷¹ Y. Zheng and Tok 2007, 2; B. Zheng 2005; Moncada 2011

not seek to propagate any international vision on the global stage.⁶⁷² Within the foundational narrative of a China rising, separate but successful and equal to the rest of the world, the CCP sought to secure their ontological security in a situation where the link between recognition as a legitimate and non-threatening actor abroad and the possibility of continued economic development domestically was becoming clear.

In terms of exemplifying the Chinese view of themselves and Europe in world politics, the early days of Hu Jintao's presidency are a good example of how these discourses, and the foundational narrative they were based upon, were overall stable. In a keynote speech to the Institut français des relations internationales, during Hu's important 5-nation tour to Europe as a vice-President in 2001, he outlined his visions of China's place in global politics at the beginning of the 21st Century. Emphasizing the underlying forces of multipolarization, economic globalization, and technological development, he went on to expound on three key discursive representations; Firstly, he emphasized the international context as one that was too hegemonic and unbalanced, the solution for which was the "democratization of international relations" (国际关系民主化)⁶⁷³, utilizing the UN as the main international arena, and with interactions based on the Chinese Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, with their emphasis on state sovereignty.⁶⁷⁴

Secondly, Europe's place in this Chinese view of the dominant international trends was established: "China and Europe are two rising powers, politically and economically, in international relations, and will inevitably be playing a more and more important role in the process of multipolarization."⁶⁷⁵ This discourse of the EU and China as two rising powers, is a key structure motivating the contemporary

⁶⁷² Callahan 2011a

⁶⁷³ J. Hu 2016a

⁶⁷⁴ J. Hu 2016a

⁶⁷⁵ J. Hu 2016a

Chinese drive for closer relations and Europe-China axis. It is furthermore interesting to note that in the prolonging of this idea of a rising role of Europe in world affairs, Hu Jintao does only speak directly to French-Chinese relations in brief terms at the very end of his talk, having spent most of the talk referring to “Europe” or to the “European countries”, even whilst talking at a French arena during an official visit to France. Thirdly, although the discourse propagated here depicts China and Europe as allies and growing powers that together can contribute to making a fairer and more democratic political system, the foundational narrative of Europe and China as equal but fundamentally different civilizations still constitutes the key representation:

Our world is abundant with different colours, it is impossible to have only one model. One should agree to recognize the world's diversity, respect each country's history, culture, system of society, and development path. The power behind progress for the civilization of mankind, comes from every civilization communicating and drawing lessons from each other. Every civilization and system of society should not only be able to coexist in the long-term, but also by competing, comparing and using other's strength to make up for one's weak points, and thus develop by seeking common ground and casting differences aside⁶⁷⁶

This keynote speech thus summarizes quite poignantly the discursive context of the Europe policies of the CCP. Having acceded to the post as President of the PRC, Hu Jintao held another speech at a conference of Chinese diplomats in 2003. Repeating here the same words about the world's multi-coloured civilizations, he underlined how for China and its diplomats a fundamental interest was “multipolarization, democratization of international relations, and diversification of development models”.⁶⁷⁷ This “multicivilizational” discourse was also reasserted from the UN

⁶⁷⁶ J. Hu 2016a

⁶⁷⁷ J. Hu 2016b

pulpit, during the summit in honour of the organization's 60 years jubilee.⁶⁷⁸ This discourse is commonly phrased in a manner that explicitly ties it into the Hu-era's broader domestic and international political discourse on, Confucian-derived, 'harmony.'⁶⁷⁹ Notably, the phrase often used to signify the coexistence of different civilizations, is that of "harmony in diversity (和而不同),"⁶⁸⁰ a concept drawn from Confucius' Analects, anchoring the government discourse even closer to the old philosophical canon the CCP increasingly sought to draw legitimacy from.

7.4 Main Discourses: China's Views of Europe

Having thus detailed the foundational narrative in which the Chinese leadership inscribed their relations with Europe at the beginning of the 21th Century, the following sections will analytically move to the next level of the layered discourse. In particular, they will go more in detail on what this thesis defines as four of the main discourses in the broader Chinese rhetoric on China-EU relations, all of them anchored in the common understanding of the basic subject positions of the Chinese Self and the European Other that the foundational narrative provides; as fundamentally separate civilizations that should each bestow the status as an equal upon the other. On the basis of this Chinese foundational narrative, the analysis further identifies four main discourses through which the Chinese framed their relationship with Europe at the beginning of the 21th Century. For a graphic overview of these, see fig. 4.

⁶⁷⁸ J. Hu 2016c The symbolic importance of the speech's timing, is accentuated by the fact that in the Chinese traditional calendar 60 years represents a full natural cycle of an era. For details, see:; Barmé 2009

⁶⁷⁹ Callahan 2011b, 258–59; Kerr 2011, 171–72

⁶⁸⁰ Confucius 2007 The full quote “君子和而不同， 小人同而不和” denotes how a true gentleman is conciliatory, but without giving up on his principles

The first main discourse is that of “Equal Status Recognition”, denoting the reiteration of the importance of equal status between these two civilizational nodes, and the recognition of Chinese sovereignty. The second is the discourse of the two parties as “Two ancient and splendid civilizations”, third is the construction of the two as joint, anti-hegemonic “Rising power poles”, fourth is the discourse making a virtue out of the differences in their development level, by branding both the EU and China as in the same major league by emphasizing that they are respectively the “largest developing, and largest developed” economic entity. For an overview of these discourses, and how they relate within the three-layered analytical framework, see fig. 4. These discourses then constituted a political space upon which was derived certain key policy directions. These directions can be defined as a Chinese motivation for seeking status confirmation; seeking recognition for a ‘different’ political regime, and for territorial sovereignty; seeking Europe’s cooperation as common partners in global multipolarization; and arguing that on this basis there were no fundamental problems between the two parties, full overlap in interests, and only differences to be handled in respect of the status and equality recognition described above.

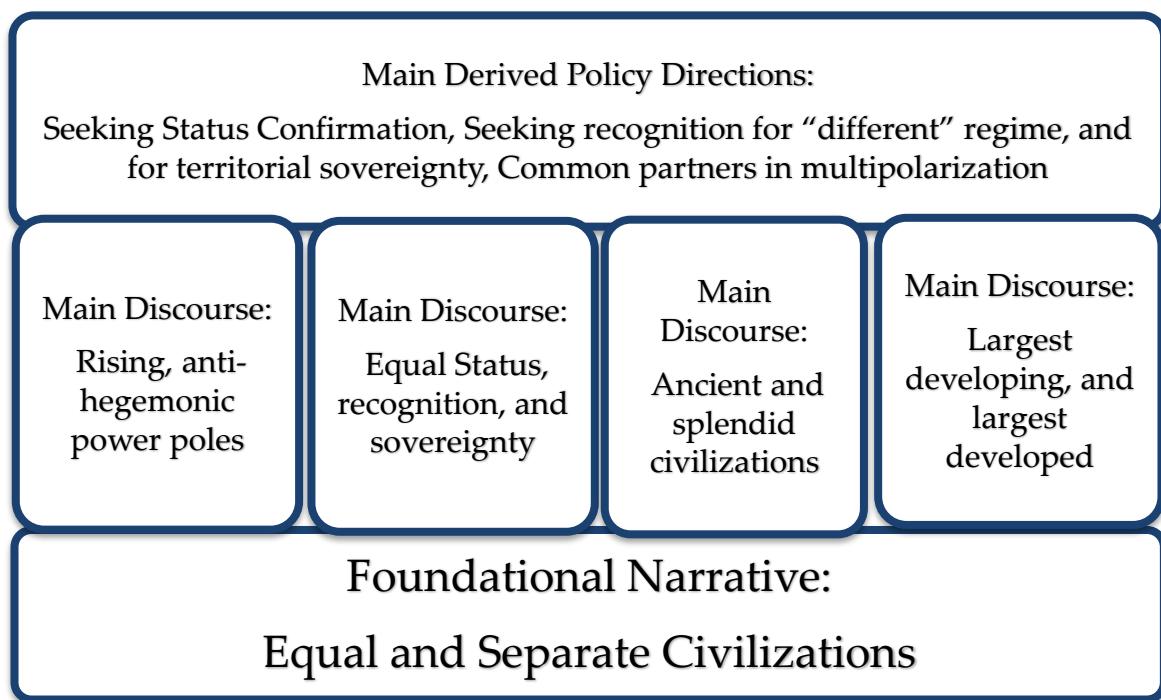


Figure 4: Overview of the three-layered China's discursive construct of Europe, 2003-2006

7.4.1 *China and the EU as Co-Rising Power Poles*

The discourse representing the EU and China as two jointly rising new powers that both favoured a more multipolar world, harks back to the earlier Mao- and Deng-era discourses of Europe as a potentially anti-hegemonic ‘second world’, and was thus established well before Hu Jintao’s ascension to power.⁶⁸¹ In the 4th China-EU Summit, of 2001, Hu pointed out how, in the years since their first summit, “China and the EU have both equally made great progress”. This in addition to the standard phrases about the One China policy and Chinese sovereignty, which is a fixture of these declarations.⁶⁸² In a later speech, a section on great power actors counts three of them; namely the US, Russia, and the countries of the European Union. France and Germany were also specifically mentioned, together with Russia, as forces in favour of multipolarization, and that may be counted on to oppose unipolarity, along with China.⁶⁸³ Furthermore, whereas the call for cooperation with the US is followed by a stark cautionary warning to be on guard for attempts at ‘Westernization’ and ‘Splittism’ from those quarters, with regards to the EU countries no such warning was directly mentioned. Instead there was a call for China and the EU to vigorously expand their relationship.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸¹ Casarini 2015, 123–24

⁶⁸² PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2001

⁶⁸³ J. Hu 2016b

⁶⁸⁴ J. Hu 2016b

Already in the first sentence of the landmark 2003 Whitepaper on China's EU policy, the concept of multipolarization (多极化) is thus invoked, together with economic globalization, as the key global trends that China seeks to harness.⁶⁸⁵ This in order to ensure economic growth in China, as well as a more "democratic and diverse world order"⁶⁸⁶ This discursive reasoning is linked with the idea of a more democratic international system, meant in the sense that China's political system should be regarded as equally valid as the Western liberal democracies, within a "diverse" world order. This right of the PRC to differ from the liberal system that was on the ascent globally following the fall of the Berlin Wall, thus ensuring the CCP's power position, is a key tenet of the new ontological security narrative of the post-1989 Chinese polity. Whereas the idea of multipolarization is a core tenet of the key textual monuments defining overall Chinese foreign policy, and its relations to the EU, the term is to a less extent prevalent in general Chinese communications with Europe, as seen in fig.5. However, the figure illustrating the frequency of terms in over 30 000 Chinese diplomatic documents relevant to the EU and European states in the period 2000 to 2018, does showcase how even in bilateral communications with the EU member states, the term EU was referred to in an extraordinarily degree in the early 2000s. This corroborates the analysis of China's foreign policy focus on the EU as a rising power and potential partner, and illustrates the later cooling of this discourse following the embargo crisis.

⁶⁸⁵ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003a

⁶⁸⁶ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003a

Document Frequency (%) of 多极化 (Multipolarisation) & 欧盟 (EU)

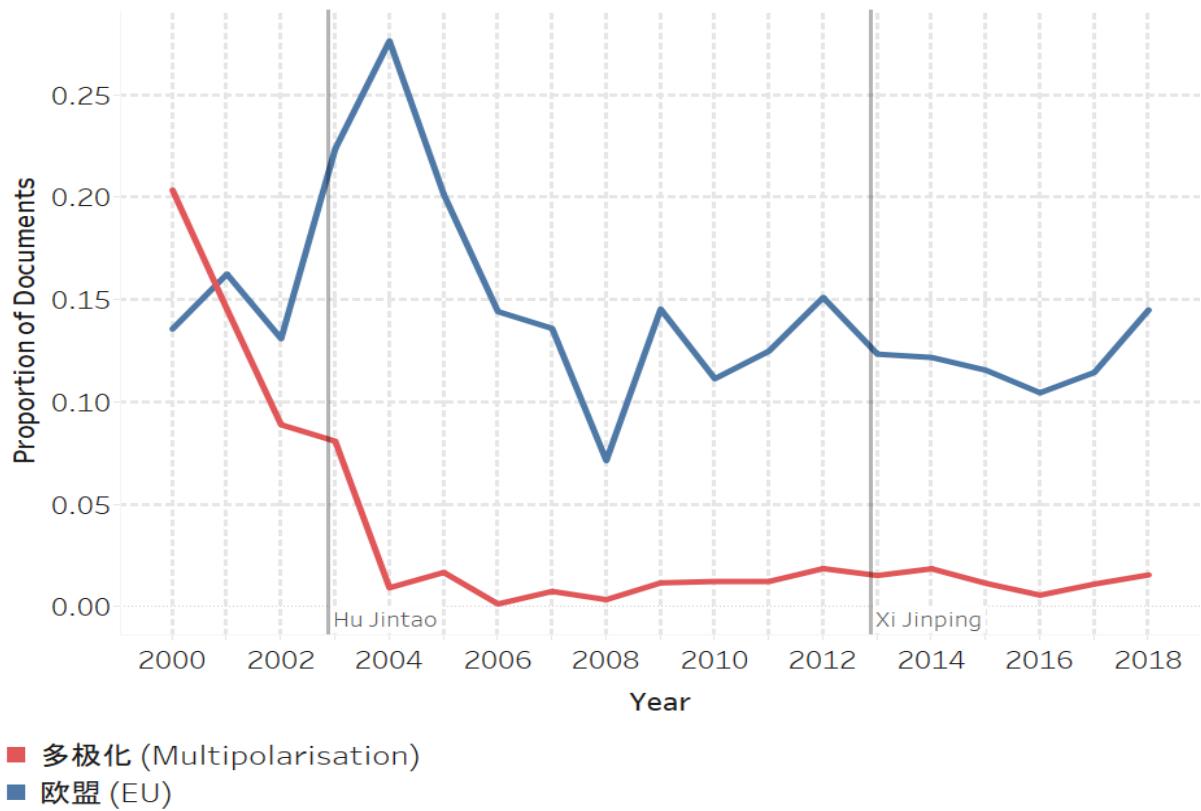


Figure 5: Use of the Terms "Multipolarization" and "EU" in FMPRC Documents on Europe

This relates to the discourse of China and the EU as two rising powers both dynamically booming at the same time. Jointly contributing to the wished-for multipolarization of the international system, this is a discursive motif that keeps being repeated in this period. For instance, during State Councillor Tang's meeting with EU's High Representative Solana, he emphasizes how both China and the EU are standing in front of important historical developments, with the EU expansion, and the Chinese push to build a moderately well-off society.⁶⁸⁷ From this discourse also follows a commitment from the part of China to strengthen the EU's position as s

⁶⁸⁷ J. Tang 2003

political actor, both regionally and globally.⁶⁸⁸ Thus, in line with the discourse from the days of Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese leadership would be continuously repeating their support for the EU integration process.⁶⁸⁹ Of course, their assessment of the degree of actual policy integration between the parties would often differ from the proposed ideal. As the former Swedish ambassador to China recalls, when then-Premier Wen Jiabao during a meeting was asked what he expected from the coming EU-China summit, he replied. “To be honest I must say that I do not expect much. The 27 member countries are usually split. But now I was perhaps too honest.”⁶⁹⁰ Nevertheless, throughout this period, one of the main discourses found in the empirical analysis, was that of supporting a strong Europe as a Chinese multipolar partner.

7.4.2 *Splendid and Ancient Civilizations*

The idea of Europe and China as two fraternal old, and splendid civilizations was also a main discourse that was continuous throughout the Jiang Zemin era, as in e.g. the typical commonly used phrase: “Both China and Europe have long histories and a splendid culture (悠久的历史和灿烂的文化), and thus should get along very well.”⁶⁹¹ As the preceding diachronic section illustrated, this discourse also has roots in deeper strands of the historical development of the Chinese discourse, and ties into earlier conceptions of Europe as a continent from where another civilization had sprung, comparable with the Chinese in material splendour even if deficient in spiritual terms.

⁶⁸⁸ J. Hu 2005a

⁶⁸⁹ J. Hu 2003; See also, eg. PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005

⁶⁹⁰ Quoted in Lundgren 2017, 462

⁶⁹¹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2002

As such, the 2003 Chinese Whitepaper on their European policy emphasizes from the very beginning that both China and Europe have long histories and splendid civilizations.⁶⁹² Interestingly in the English version this is officially translated to “both China and the EU member states”. This sentence sets the stage for the whitepaper, that goes on to repeat that the EU integration process is irreversible, and that the EU will play an increasingly strong role in international affairs. Similarly, Hu Jintao was invited to give a keynote speech to the French Parliament in 2004, during which he was emphasizing again the subject positions of the two partners as representatives of two ancient cultures with a long history, that had reached out to each other from different ends of the Eurasian continent.⁶⁹³

7.4.3 *Developed and Developing*

Another of the recurring main discourses through which Europe was constructed in the Chinese political rhetoric, emphasizes how the EU is the world’s largest grouping of developed countries, whilst China is the world’s largest developing country. This discourse—which is another one of the figures of speech present in the speeches of the Chinese leadership of this era—thus points to a special position for the EU and China as heading the two main groups of countries in the world.⁶⁹⁴ Thus, in essence providing China with a privileged position, at the same time as underscoring the role as a developing country would help abate concerns about China’s rapidly growing power stature. An example of this is Wen Jiabao’s speech to the China-EU Business Forum in 2004, where he offered to give the public an introduction to the most important knowledge about China and, in so doing, drew upon a simple historical narrative that emphasized precisely China’s development experience and the success

⁶⁹² PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003a

⁶⁹³ J. Hu 2004

⁶⁹⁴ J. Hu 2004

of raising 200 million people from poverty. Another typical fixture of the equality and recognition sought in this discourse, is one where China appreciates the EU's development, and the EU on their side proclaims it "understands and supports China's economic and social reforms to date for achieving development."⁶⁹⁵

Adding on to this trope, the discourse also includes the repeated assertion that the two parties are compatible. "As the largest developing country and the largest bloc of developed countries, China and the EU develop trade cooperation on the basis of mutual benefit."⁶⁹⁶ As the formulaic statement goes, the EU and China thus have many overlapping common interests, but no fundamental differences in world politics.⁶⁹⁷ In his 2004 speech, Wen continued to emphasize the economic complementarity between the parties, thus in effect adding to the crucial puzzle of how it was possible for such a relationship to collapse so soon afterwards.

7.4.4 Equal Status Recognition

The fourth main discourse identified in the empirical material is arguably the most important in explaining how the negotiations over the arms embargo took on such an outsized importance for the Chinese leadership. This main discourse reflects the foundational narrative of equal civilizations, in that it emphasizes at almost every occasion the importance for the EU to recognize China's status as an equal. The importance of the EU showing respect for the Chinese polity and the national narrative of the CCP is a running theme throughout Chinese diplomatic and political communications.⁶⁹⁸ It is furthermore operationalized in a number of specific

⁶⁹⁵ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2001

⁶⁹⁶ Wen 2004b

⁶⁹⁷ Wen 2004b

⁶⁹⁸ Z. Li 2003

requirements that the PRC aims at holding the EU to, such as avoiding state visits to Taiwan and the Dalai Lama's exile government, thus showing adherence to the foundational narrative of the PRC. In the same vein, discussions on human rights should only be undertaken as part of a dialogue "based on equality and mutual respect (愿在平等和相互尊重)." ⁶⁹⁹ These sentiments are also reflected, as will be analysed in more detail in later chapters, in the increasing weight Beijing would give to pronunciations of the importance of European countries and the EU to respect China's so-called 'core interests' (核心利益). As detailed in fig. 6, the Chinese diplomatic documents regarding Europe did after the 'honeymoon phase' of China-EU relations in the early 2000s reflect the discursive shift from focusing on economic cooperation, to a steadily increasing trend of Beijing instead employing the new *tifa* of core interests as a key framing of the China-Europe relationship.

⁶⁹⁹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003a

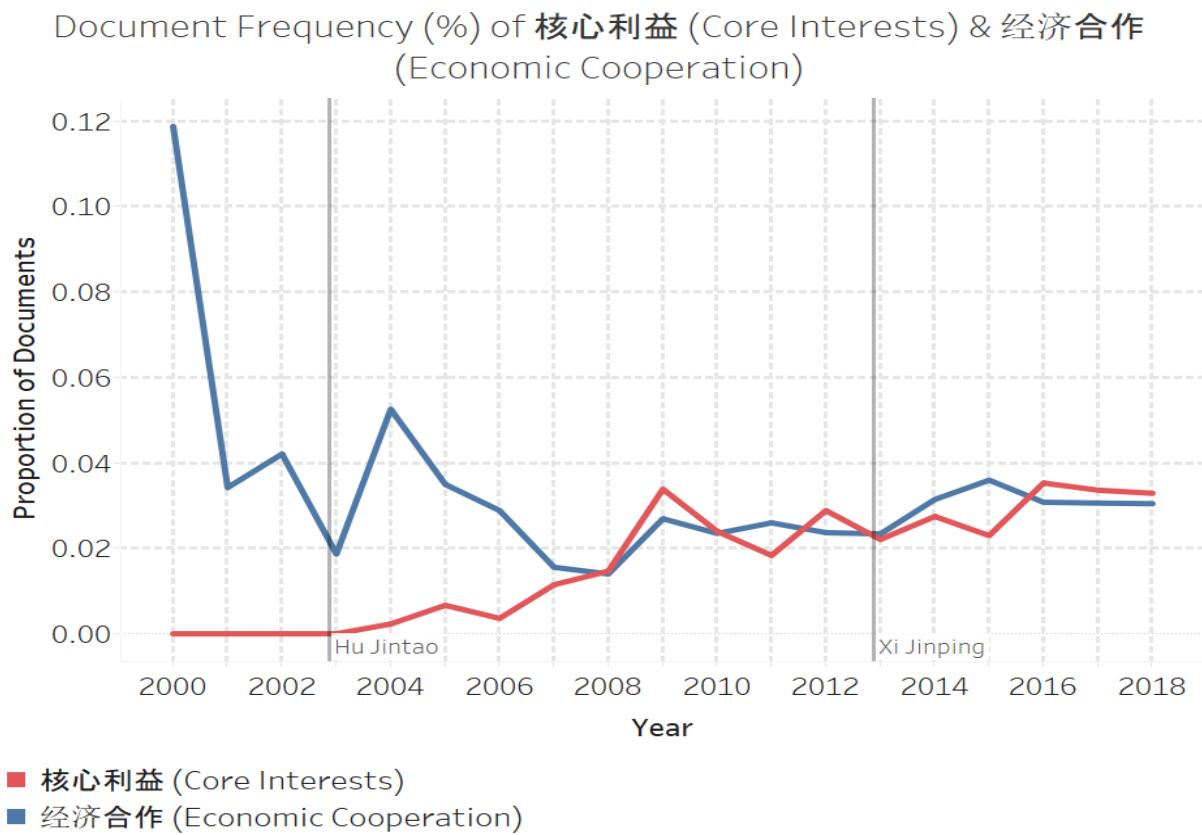


Figure 6: Use of the Terms "Core Interests" and "Economic Cooperation" in FMPRC Documents on Europe

The link to the foundational narrative of China as a distinct civilization, along *ti/yong* lines, is clearly prevalent, as the document underlines China's and the EU's common interests in democratization internationally, and that no one is a threat to the other. However, it underlines the difference in history, culture, and political systems, that needs to be handled properly and with respect, as was for example the message in the joint statement after the Summit with the new EU member Poland⁷⁰⁰ The 2003 Chinese Whitepaper goes on to declare in its key policy statement that China's main goals for their policies towards this new potential European great power is to promote political and economic ties based on mutual respect and mutual trust (互尊互信).⁷⁰¹ Overall, these discourses tie the construction of Chinese ontological security to being

⁷⁰⁰ FMPRC 2004b

⁷⁰¹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003a

recognized, and have its core interests respected. In short, China aims to be given face, as an equal partner, with a separate, and equally valid, social model. As such, political issues touching upon these identity discourses have a particular potential for triggering Chinese ontological security concerns, and thus lead Beijing to undertake policies informed by a different logic than the economic one that was considered the guiding principle for EU-China relations.

7.5 Political Repercussions: The Embargo Issue

These main Chinese discourses of Europe were a constituent part of what was at the beginning of the 21st Century a considerable optimism with regards to the growing relationship between China and the EU. As a sign of the growing momentum in China-EU relations, in 2003 the European Commission launched their updated China strategy, in which China was included amongst the EU's six strategic partners. China followed up with their first ever policy paper on a bilateral partnership in that same year.⁷⁰² In 2004, Wen Jiabao repeated the idea, first initiated during talks between Jiang Zemin and French President Jacques Chirac, that China and Europe should aim towards a comprehensive strategic partnership. The rationale for two growing actors that shared the same economic, and increasingly political interests, was an assumption that did not only exist amongst the Chinese political circles, but also among European politicians, and a number of both Chinese and Western analysts. This is perhaps most poignantly reflected in the literature on the "emerging China-EU axis".⁷⁰³ In the era

⁷⁰² Hol slag 2011, 310; E. J. Kirchner, Christiansen, and Dorussen 2016, 21–22

⁷⁰³ Shambaugh 2004; Scott 2007; Shambaugh 2005; Huo 2005; See also CASS European Research Institute 2008; Crossick and Reuter 2007; For critical contemporary voices towards this proposition, see Men 2012; Hol slag 2011; Callahan 2008b

of the Transatlantic split, following US President G. W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq, the idea of a growing Sino-European axis was not only a feature in the minds of the Chinese Communist Party, but also a fixture of a growing body of both punditry and academic literature. As argued by Shambaugh in an oft-cited 2004 article: "Given the absence of systemic or strategic conflict of interests—which always lurks in the background of Sino-American relations—there is every reason to believe that the China-Europe relationship will continue to grow and develop at a steady pace. Over time it will become a new axis in world affairs, and will serve as a source of stability in a volatile world."⁷⁰⁴

So, where did all of this goodwill and drive go? Arguably, the very discourses detailed in the preceding sections came to constitute a hindrance to an extent that economic or strategic issues fail to fully explain. At this key point in the relationship, a defining issue would be the question of the post-89 arms embargo, and the political and diplomatic process around the discussions to end this embargo policy. This was an issue in which the identity factor and China's demand to be given the appropriate 'face' and recognition of their own status narrative, were an important factor. This identity dynamic will be further explored through the lens of ontological security in the following sections. Giving first a short background of the arms embargo issue, and why it was a central point of contention in China-EU relations, the following sections will then go on to detail how the issue was constructed in Chinese sources, and how this construction is related to the foundational narrative and the main discourses detailed earlier.

⁷⁰⁴ Shambaugh 2004, 248

7.5.1 Political Background

In the period from ca October 2003 to March 2005, the discussions over the potential lifting of the EU arms embargo towards China developed into a diplomatic impasse with wide regional and international repercussions, as the People's Republic of China sought to have the Europeans drop an embargo with little practical effects and few potential material gains. The sanctions themselves resulted from the European Council deciding in their meeting in Madrid on June 27, 1989, to react to the preceding political crackdown in China by imposing a number of political and economic sanctions. Although most of these were quite rapidly dropped, one key sanction that stayed in force, and does to this day, was the declaration of an "interruption by the member states of the Community of military cooperation and an embargo on trade in arms with China."⁷⁰⁵ In the 2003 Chinese Whitepaper on Europe, the issue is brought forth towards the end of the document, as something that should be cancelled as soon as possible in order to remove barriers to defence technology and industry cooperation.⁷⁰⁶ As the years moved on this was reframed, as it would be mentioned explicitly as an issue that proved an obstacle to cooperation, overall. This European arms embargo has ever since been a key thorn in the side of the PRC and its continued existence has long been at the very forefront of Chinese relations with the EU and European countries.⁷⁰⁷

In tracing the Chinese discourses of Europe, it is worth to delve in some more detail into one of the most obvious political developments that shaped the relations between China and the European continent, namely the European integration project that had China relate to a complex and evolving regional body, in addition to the established bilateral ties with the separate European countries. The European Community had

⁷⁰⁵ European Council 1989

⁷⁰⁶ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003a

⁷⁰⁷ Casarini 2007; Gupta 2013; Vennesson 2007; Hellström 2010

established diplomatic relations with China in May 1975, and as the parties signed their first trade agreement in 1978, extended to a Trade and Cooperation Agreement in 1985, the economically focused relationship continued to develop in line with China's overall reform and opening up policy under Deng Xiaoping. The main political foci for the Chinese European policies, however, were still the European nation-states, with the handovers of Hong Kong and Macau from the UK and Portugal, respectively, handled bilaterally. As such, whereas the EU/EC level dominated in trade questions, the development of the EU into a more unitary foreign relations actor, and the Chinese realization of such, came only gradually.⁷⁰⁸

Nevertheless, as the empirical material in this chapter demonstrates, in the 2000s the Chinese discourses of the singular European countries were closely intertwined with their view on the EU itself. Simultaneously, bilateral trade multiplied almost forty-fold, making the EU by 2005 China's main trading partner, and China the EU's second biggest trade partner. The FDI flow into China from Europe and the number of policy platforms and meetings also mushroomed.⁷⁰⁹ A such, in almost all high-level speeches, interviews and official communiques with the Chinese political leadership, and on official visits to European countries, there is a section that would explicitly address the EU, confirming China's support for the EU's integration and increased weight in international relations, and expressing the hope that the European country in question will use its position in the EU for the best.⁷¹⁰

The EU level would, however, become the key institution on a few crucial issues, as the development in China-EU relations were abruptly shaken by the Tiananmen

⁷⁰⁸ Michalski and Pan 2017a, 47–49; M. Yahuda 2007, 27–30; Casarini 2006, 9

⁷⁰⁹ Casarini 2006, 9–15; Shambaugh, Sandschneider, and Zhou 2007b, 303–6; Ruan 2007, 288–92; PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003b

⁷¹⁰ For typical examples, see e.g. Wen 2006a; Wen 2007

massacre in 1989. The following arms embargo, and the criticisms over China's human rights situation, was enacted with the EC Commission as the key actor.⁷¹¹ With the French and the German governments taking the lead, the EU and China entered in the beginning of the 2000s into negotiations about the cancellation of the embargo, which, after two years of hectic diplomatic activity, would crash due to opposition from the US, as well as consensus issues within the EU member states, exacerbated by China's anti-secession law directed towards Taiwan that same year.⁷¹² Being such a defining element of China-EU relations, and a constant irritant for Beijing, hot on the heels of the declaration of their comprehensive and strategic partnership, the years from 2003 to 2005 thus saw the rise and fall of a concerted effort at having the EU drop their arms embargo.⁷¹³ As the 2003 Whitepaper marked a symbolic start for the springtime in China-EU relations, the Chinese leadership dubbed 2004 their "Year of Europe", and in the midst of a plethora of diplomatic initiatives, the negotiations regarding the lifting of the embargo came to occupy centre stage, as China was, arguably, applying for a 'status upgrade' from the EU to be recognized as a polity of a kind that was more in line with its own identity narrative.

7.5.2 *The Embargo and the Identity Factor*

The Chinese view of the embargo issue was, as this section will argue, intimately linked with the Chinese identity narrative. This was expressed through a political drive for the Chinese government to primarily see the embargo issue, neither as a matter of money nor a matter of weapons, but as a question of status, face, and recognition of the foundational narrative of China as an equal and separate civilization. In investigating how the embargo issue was constructed by the Chinese

⁷¹¹ Casarini 2006, 9–10; Michalski and Pan 2017a, 50

⁷¹² Gupta 2013; Casarini 2007, 376; Vennesson 2007; S. C. Tang 2005; Hellström 2010; Y. Deng 2008, 157–58

⁷¹³ S. C. Tang 2005, 319

throughout this period, two documents from the early days of the 2004 'Year of Europe' are of particular importance. Firstly, the joint communique that came as result of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's first ever visit to the EU headquarters in May 2004. After Wen and Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing met with their EU counterparts Romano Prodi and Javier Solana, the joint communique emphasized the need to strengthen the cooperation between two parties, amongst other things by updating the 1985 China-EU Agreement, as both the EU and China were "at an important stage of their development."⁷¹⁴ The latter exemplifies the discourse of China and the EU as co-rising power poles. A centrally placed ambition in the communique, was the article 5, about the proposed lifting of the arms embargo. "The Chinese leaders [...] hopes for the European side to reach a decision to lift the prohibition as soon as possible, in order to further strengthen mutual trust and cooperation in the political relations between China and the EU."⁷¹⁵ Therefore, in this key document the embargo is thus not inscribed in a discourse that regards it as a technical matter of limited practical consequence, but rather in a discourse that emphasizes it as a crucial matter of "mutual political trust (政治互信)" between the two parties.

Further emphasizing the centrality of equality of status and mutual respect as the underlying discourse for the Chinese approach to the relationship with the EU, was the next point on the agenda. Written in the context of the transatlantic political rift during the George W. Bush presidency, although not explicitly mentioned, there was a call that "China and the EU both should cooperate to jointly protect international peace, based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, and equality. (互信、互利、平等)"⁷¹⁶ This in addition to recognising China's call for being recognized as

⁷¹⁴ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004a

⁷¹⁵ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004a

⁷¹⁶ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004a

Market Economy Status, and to agree to continue the Human Rights Dialogue, on this same basis.⁷¹⁷ This, again, typifies the Chinese demands for equal status in terms of political and organizational values. In March 2004, French President Jacques Chirac, who had been central in pushing EU's relations with China in general, and the lifting of the arms embargo in particular, made a phone call to Hu Jintao and updated him on the latest efforts to make progress in the case.⁷¹⁸ However, progress increasingly stalled, due to opposition from a number of EU members, as well as the US, which considered lifting the embargo to a one-party dictatorship a wrong signal to send out, in particular in a situation with increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait. The Chinese leadership was therefore increasingly displeased.

In the second key document of 2004; the joint declaration of the 7th China-EU Summit in December, the Chinese side's statements is very pronouncedly run out of patience; "The Chinese side once more emphasized that political discrimination (政治歧视) on this issue is unacceptable, and should be immediately eliminated."⁷¹⁹ It is a key point to note that in this joint declaration it is, yet again, emphasized the degree to which this issue was regarded by the Chinese not so much a matter of military security, but as a matter of ontological security; a matter of being not allotted the appropriate respect for one's political foundational narrative.⁷²⁰ In a similar keynote speech at the China-EU Business Summit at the end of 2004, Wen Jiabao repeated the same notions, whilst also elaborating more on how these discourses are tied to the overall foundational narrative on which this leadership generation sought to build ontological security for their vision of the Chinese polity. He laid out in clear terms the four principles that should be followed as the fundamental rules of the EU-China

⁷¹⁷ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004a

⁷¹⁸ FMPRC 2004a

⁷¹⁹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004b

⁷²⁰ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004b

relationship, the very first one of which is “mutual respect and mutual trust. Respecting one’s respective choice of development path (互尊互信。尊重各自选择的发展道路)”⁷²¹

In essence, all of these four principles illustrate the fundamental view of non-interference and the right for China to be different, as one out of two “splendid civilizations”, in the EU-China relationship. This all ties in to the earlier analysed foundational narrative of China as ‘equal and separate’, where China and the EU seek a multipolarization of the international scene. However, the EU emphasized multilateralism and the universality of human rights and at the outset regarded the Chinese movement towards greater implementation of these as part of a teleological process based on universal values. The Chinese discourses, on the other hand, regarded this differently, as reflected in the typical formulations exemplified here as “respecting the others development path”, and in the formulation that as the birthplaces of the worlds civilizations, China and the EU both seek to safeguard the variety of world civilization and show each other mutual respect.⁷²² As the negotiations ground to a halt, then, the diplomatic crisis did not result so much from any material factors, but rather the fact that the issue was framed by China quite unequivocally in discourses tying it to their ontological security, as demonstrated above.

⁷²¹ Wen 2004b

⁷²² Wen 2004b; See also Z. Li 2005

7.6 Conclusions

In addressing the question of how the negotiations around a set of policies with little practical value, in either economic or military terms, could become one of the defining moments in contemporary China-EU relations, this thesis contends that the question of Chinese ontological security is a key factor. Given the centrality of the arms embargo in the Chinese foreign policies towards Europe, it is notable that the scholarly consensus is that the lifting of the embargo would not be likely to significantly impact the defence trade between EU countries and China.⁷²³ In fact, the EU embargo, being neither centralized at the EU level, nor legally binding, gives a lot of leeway to the various member states.⁷²⁴ In fact, European defence-related sales to China almost rose fourfold, from 55 million to 400 million euros in the period from the embargo's instatement to 2007, compared to Russian arms sales to China doubling from 1.2 to 2.5 billion. These sales from Europe included helicopters, howitzers, jet engines and submarine motors.⁷²⁵ "In sum, the arms embargo is neither the only, nor the principal, mechanism governing technological and military related exports to China by EU member states."⁷²⁶

Nevertheless, there were considerable concerns, most notably amongst US political and military circles, but also amongst their Asian allies, regarding which new potential European weapon export's regime would come in place of the embargo measures, and in particular if this would allow the Chinese easier access to dual-use advanced technology and material.⁷²⁷ The US and Japan saw with increasing

⁷²³ Gupta 2013, 521

⁷²⁴ Casarini 2009, 128

⁷²⁵ Archick, Grimmett, and Kan 2005, 14

⁷²⁶ Hellström 2010, 25–29; Vennesson 2007, 420

⁷²⁷ Casarini 2009, 135–39; Brookes 2005, 6–7

scepticism on the EU's efforts to lift the embargo, as this happened in the broader regional context where both countries shared the concern over a rapidly evolving Chinese military power posture, and the changing power balance of the Taiwan Strait.⁷²⁸ As a result the US House of Representatives went as far as passing a near unanimous resolution that strong terms condemned and warned against the EU lifting the arms embargo towards the PRC.⁷²⁹

As those Europeans in favour of lifting the embargo pointed out, however, the EU Code of Conduct on arms sales and national arms export's policies would in any case still apply, further limiting the tangible effects of lifting the embargo, particularly as it in the event of a lifting of the embargo would be further revised and strengthened.⁷³⁰ It is also significant to note that the European advocates of lifting the arms embargo, including most prominently the French President Jacques Chirac, but also the German, Italian and Spanish heads of government at the time, similarly emphasized that this was mainly a symbolic gesture, and that "the end of the embargo would principally serve to show that the EU does not discriminate against Beijing but treats it on par with nations such as Russia"⁷³¹ As pointed out by the EUI's Pascal Vennesson, "If the arms embargo is not legally binding and of only limited effectiveness, why do some actors greatly desire to have it lifted[?]"⁷³² It is towards this question that it is argued the identity factor contributed in a notable role.

The focal point for this thesis is, however, not on the dynamics of the transatlantic alliance, but on the motivations and drivers of the Chinese side in these efforts. As

⁷²⁸ Casarini 2007, 382–83; Brookes 2005

⁷²⁹ US Congress 2005

⁷³⁰ Casarini 2007, 375

⁷³¹ Casarini 2006, 31

⁷³² Vennesson 2007, 420

such, this chapter will argue that alongside the other factors already well covered in the literature, for the Chinese the issue causing a diplomatic crisis was not only about being denied access to weapons, as they in any case would be barred from substantial purchases. Rather this was about being denied face, as the EU in effect refused to give China a symbolic status upgrade. To quote Gupta's summary of the issue: "Political rather than military concerns play a larger role in the Chinese demand for lifting the embargo. The embargo flies in the face of China's projection of itself as a major global player."⁷³³ Chinese officials have, in interviews by Casarini, thus emphasized that the only other countries with which the EU has maintained an arms embargo are Zimbabwe, Sudan and Myanmar.⁷³⁴

Lifting the arms embargo would demonstrate that China is, in principle, able to buy weapons and have normal military-to-military links with EU countries. The fact that the authority that would lift the ban is the EU, a part of the West, provides additional credence to the signal that China is worthy of equal treatment and not of discrimination. Finally, lifting the embargo would help establish the country's "face" in the hierarchy of international power.⁷³⁵

Then-Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing would also on a number of occasions declare the embargo to be a form of political discrimination against Beijing.⁷³⁶ As Chris Patten argues, drawing on his first-hand experience in negotiating the embargo issue with the Chinese on behalf of the EU: "China did not want the embargo relaxed in order to make in order to make huge new arm purchases; it wanted this so as to end a humiliating situation in which it was placed in the same category as Burma and Sudan. This was an affront to China's dignity."⁷³⁷ This demonstrates how this was

⁷³³ Gupta 2013, 584

⁷³⁴ Casarini 2007, 275

⁷³⁵ Vennesson 2007, 427

⁷³⁶ Casarini 2009, 125

⁷³⁷ Patten 2013, 260

indeed not so much an issue about weapons, or the lack of them, but an issue of status, recognition, and the building and maintenance of Chinese ontological security.

This construction on behalf of the Chinese leadership, of the embargo issue as a matter of identity, may not in itself have been a hinder for the embargo to be lifted. However, also for the EU it became increasingly entwined with the European Union's self-perception as a humanitarian, civilizing, international entity.⁷³⁸ "There exists a clear gap between China's belief that co-operation should depart from normative diversity and joint interest, and Europe's assumption that differences in interests can be resolved by a consensus over universal political rules."⁷³⁹ Thus, if the issue was only one of splitting the difference about technical readjustment of an arms sales regime of little practical consequence, this matter could have been solved quite silently and speedily. However, the embargo issue came in addition to the military factors also to be at the fault line of two parties' ontological security seeking, as they both sought recognition for foundational narratives that were not compatible with regards to this issue. Thus, the matter of the EU's arms sales regime became embroiled into a further layer of complexities, something akin to a zero-sum standoff informed by identity concerns, making it all the harder to reach a workable compromise, as the actors saw their respective polities' foundational narratives challenged. In addition, the matter of regional strategic balancing and the Chinese ability to potentially further their diplomatic standing would also have implications for their regional image.⁷⁴⁰ Overall, the ontological security clash between the two parties' competing identities made this issue exceedingly difficult to solve. In the new 2014 Chinese policy whitepaper on the

⁷³⁸ Vennesson 2007; Mitzen 2006d

⁷³⁹ Hol slag 2011, 309

⁷⁴⁰ Casarini 2007, 285–86

EU, the arms embargo is still mentioned, as a result of the failure of the political process, emphasizing that the EU should lift this embargo “as soon as possible”.⁷⁴¹

Importantly, the embargo issue did not share the economic impact of the second one of the “two jokers” in the China-EU relationship; the other being the question of EU’s recognition of China’s Market Economy Status (MES), a decision which would have quite direct impact within the WTO regulatory framework.⁷⁴² The more pronounced and more directly tangible material interests the case of the MES held for the Chinese authorities, is also the reason why this chapter chooses to focus on the issue of the arms embargo as the prime case for investigating the role of Chinese ontological security seeking in its relations with the EU. However, this does not mean that the identity factor is irrelevant in the case of the MES, to the contrary, as Crookes summarizes it: “The issue of MES is typically interpreted by China as one of prejudice, inequality and a lack of respect by the EU towards China as an equal that engenders memories of long-expired but still emotionally charged unequal treaties of past centuries.”⁷⁴³ These episodes would thus have a significant impact on the Chinese view of the EU contributing to altering the main discourse of the EU as a key partner in multipolarisation. In particular with respect to the European Union’s independence from the US, as the negotiations developed in a direction that was not in line with the Chinese expectations fostered by their own discourse of a common multipolar cause with Europe.⁷⁴⁴ As summarized by Mickhailski and Pan; “it proved to China that the EU was less independent vis-à-vis the US than it had anticipated and was unlikely to constitute the third pole in the multipolar system that China envisaged.”⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴¹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014

⁷⁴² Green 2004; Farnell and Crookes 2016, 88–89; Rémond 2007

⁷⁴³ Crookes 2013, 652

⁷⁴⁴ Farnell and Crookes 2016, 206; J. Yu 2014, 82–85

⁷⁴⁵ Michalski and Pan 2017b, 621

Over the preceding sections, this chapter has analysed first, the main Chinese discourses of Europe, and how these are predicated on a particular foundational narrative upon which the ontological security of the current Chinese polity is based. Secondly, the analysis has demonstrated the extent to which these discourses were indeed constituting the Chinese understanding of, and communication regarding, the political and diplomatic debacle around the key political question of the arms embargo. To summarize the argument, this section corroborates the conclusions of the discourse analysis of the publicly available Chinese texts, through drawing upon primary and secondary sources from negotiations between the representatives of China and the EU. On this basis, this chapter concludes that the identity factor was a key component of how the Chinese constructed the issue, contributing to both the failure of the negotiations, and to the repercussions such a failure would carry for the overall relationship. Chinese ontological security seeking entailed a specific set of political motivations and policy drivers, chief amongst which were the drive to secure 'face', through seeking status confirmation, and recognition for their foundational narrative as a successful, separate, and equal partner to the EU.

In terms of the broader impact of the China-EU relationship, this identity clash between them, which is exemplified in the embargo crisis, brings home a broader point, namely that in the EU-China relationship one does underestimate the identity factor at one's own peril. This is demonstrated here through the analysis of what has been commonly regarded as the crucible of the current-day EU-China relationship, namely the rise of the China-EU axis' prominence, from the declaration of the 2003 comprehensive strategic partnership, until the end of this political honeymoon started in 2006, after a number of diplomatic issues had brought on an impasse to the relationship. This impasse was, as will be treated in Chapter 8, further exprobated, before the budding strategic relationship between the parties was suddenly brought to near-collapse, to the extent that China chose to cancel the EU-China summit in 2008.

As detailed earlier in the chapter, there was a substantial optimism on behalf of the EU-China relationship in a wide range of the academic literature, predicated mainly on the degree to which China and the EU shared massive economic interests, and, unlike the US, have almost no direct security conflicts. By discounting the identity factor, however, these analyses were rapidly challenged by the sudden falling-out of this “new power axis”. This demonstrates how the post-1989 foundational narrative of China as an equal and separate civilization, entailed a very distinctive set of identity drivers for the current day negotiations with the EU. The identity factor was thus a strongly contributing factor to a substantial lapse in a bilateral relationship that was at some point predicted to be a major new axis on international politics. Thus, by factoring in the identity issue, through an ontological security lens, this chapter shows how China sought recognition for their chosen foundational narrative for the Chinese polity, in order to ensure their legitimacy, both domestically and internationally. An issue of rather limited consequence, materially speaking, thus became the cause of very tangible diplomatic strains. This thesis argues that throughout this period, with security issues largely non-existent, and with economic ties growing rapidly and successfully, one important factor driving the China-EU relationship to go from its peak to its nadir in only a few years, was the issue of ontological security.

Chapter 8: Strategic Relationships and Forced Recognition - Beijing, Berlin, and Paris (2007-2010)

8.1 Introduction: The China-Europe Breakdown, 2007-2010

In the years following 2007, the political relationship between China and Europe rapidly declined, to the extent that in an unprecedented move, the 2008 China-EU summit was cancelled by the Chinese, right at the onset of the global financial crisis. All the while, the economic relationship between the parties continued to burgeon. The rapid reversal in the relationship centred instead around a number of key disputes coming to the fore in the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, most notably the decisions of various European countries to continue their traditions of receiving the Dalai Lama.⁷⁴⁶ Although these were actions that were unproblematic in the European context, it was of immense concern to the Chinese, as it was regarded as an affront to some of their core interests. These were interests of little material importance, but all the more relevant for the ontological security seeking of the PRC.

In contributing to the analysis of this key period of China's relations with Europe, this chapter will first explore and detail the changes in the Chinese discourses about Europe in these years, and the foundational narrative on which they were based, as manifested in key political documents and speeches. Advancing from this basis the chapter will then provide a short background of the political context, before analysing how these discourses framed the political negotiations in a manner that tied relatively

⁷⁴⁶ B. Wu 2010; V. K. L. Chang and Pieke 2018; Cui 2018; Wang Mingjin 2013

materially insignificant issues to identity questions that were a considerable factor shaping Chinese policies towards Europe.

8.2 Foundational Narrative: China's More Assertive Take on Europe

Over the years following the diplomatic crisis of the arms embargo, and leading up to the arguably even more acute crisis around the time of the 2008 Olympics, the foundational narrative of the CCP remained fairly stable, as illustrated in fig. 7, below. A few developments in this period are however worthy of some further detailing, as they reflect a certain development in the degree to which China's status with regards to the rest of the world was conceived. In essence, the extent to which the West was conceived of as an Other in the Chinese government's rhetoric did not change fundamentally. However, some changes are detectable with regards to the specific role the Chinese saw themselves as occupying vis-à-vis the Western countries. In particular, in the years after the start of the Financial crisis, China would increasingly perceive of themselves as a great power seeking equal recognition from the other great powers. The narrative of the Deng era, where the focus was on China developing economically, whilst seeking to secure the respect of the international system without asserting themselves as a great power, changed in favour of growing Chinese assertiveness. A process that provided an extant discourse to build upon for the later president Xi Jinping, as will be detailed in the next chapter.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁷ Christensen 2011; Xuetong Yan 2014; K. He and Feng 2012; Doshi 2019; X. Yan 2014; Cui 2018

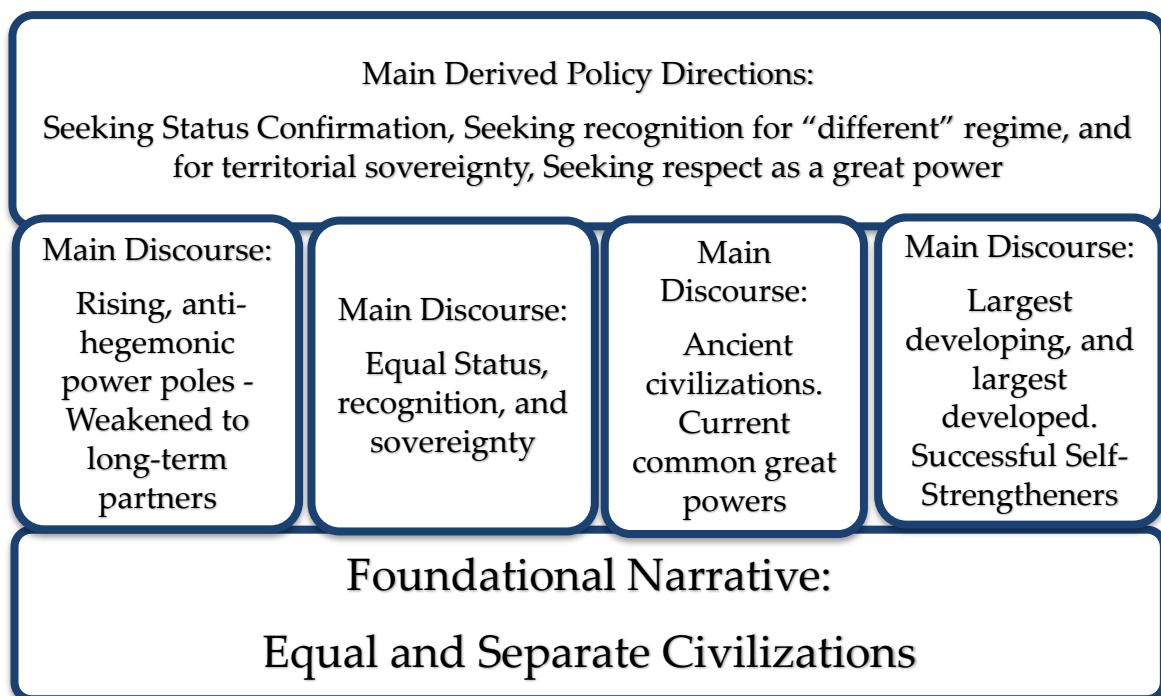


Figure 7: Overview of the three-layered China's discursive construct of Europe, 2007-2010

The discursive changes with regards to the role of Europe for the ontological security of the Chinese state, were of course also linked to a range of wider discursive changes on the role of China, the West, and the world in general. The broad historical narrative, was still centred on the main theme of the Great Rejuvenation of China, as is well exemplified by Hu Jintao's opening speech on the symbolically important occasion of the 30 years jubilee of the 3rd plenum meeting that under Deng's leadership ushered in China's reform and opening up policies. In summarising the CCP national narrative for the polity of the People's Republic, a clear line is drawn from a glorious past to a testing and humiliating start of modernity. Thanks to the Communist Party, that has been turned into a rejuvenation of the past glories:

Comrades! The Chinese nation has a long history of more than 5000 years (...) [and] created a splendid Chinese civilization. After the Opium War, due to the invasion of the Western Great Powers (西方列强) and the decay of feudal rule, China was step by step reduced to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society (...) In order to achieve the Great Rejuvenation (伟大复兴) of the Chinese nation, countless

people of high ideals have vigorously risen up to seek the road to save the country, save the people, and to revive China. In the past century, our country has seen three great revolutions. (...) The third revolution was our Party-lead Reform and Opening Up, setting off a new great revolution. It led the Chinese people to embark on the wide road of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and ushered in the bright future of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.⁷⁴⁸

The two preceding great revolutions were quoted as being Sun Yat-sen's 1911 revolution, which overthrew the monarchy, and thus opened up for the second great revolution of the CCP's establishment of the New China after overthrowing imperialism, feudalism, and the bureaucratic capitalist ruling regime. This again, then, paving the way for Deng's third revolution.⁷⁴⁹ Hence, this foundational narrative, constructs, out of over a hundred years of political and economic near-chaos, a simple and teleological historical narrative tying future greatness to past greatness, with the CCP as the natural, and only possible, conduit between the two.

Furthermore, the last 30 years have been successful through the CCP leading the nation through a range of crises and challenges, both domestic and foreign, the latter, importantly, relayed as "the rapid changes in Eastern Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and serious domestic political disturbances, or facing Westernization (西化), splittism, and so-called 'sanctions'"⁷⁵⁰ This foundational historical narrative on which the PRC's ontological security was based, was not only for domestic consumption, but also repeated internationally, for example in Hu Jintao's speech at Yale University in 2006, where he similarly presented an overview of the CCP's foundational narrative for China, at the heart of which is the struggle of an old

⁷⁴⁸ J. Hu 2016d

⁷⁴⁹ J. Hu 2016d

⁷⁵⁰ J. Hu 2016d

civilization, led to success by the Communist Party, communicating the exact same key points as in the speech quoted above: “57 years ago, after a long period of bloody struggle, the Chinese people achieved national independence and people's liberation, and established the people as masters of their home in a New China.”⁷⁵¹

This foundational narrative, as discussed earlier, is founded upon the idea of China and the Chinese polity as being separate. This in the sense that success was only achieved when the Chinese under the CCP found their own development road to revive their ancient civilization, and that this hard-won right of being separate and sovereign has since been threatened by the West. This general narrative of China's relations with the international relations overall, is well exemplified by Hu Jintao on the occasion of the UNs 60th Anniversary, declaring that civilizational diversity is at the heart of mankind's society, and that every country should be free to choose their social system itself.⁷⁵² This main discourse, that will be treated in more detail later, was formulated in policy terms in 2009 as China's Three Core Interests, that have since become a defining political prism though which to ascertain Chinese political priorities,⁷⁵³ namely; “for China, our concern is we must uphold our basic systems, our national security; and secondly, the sovereignty and territorial integrity; and thirdly, economic and social sustained development.”⁷⁵⁴ As the academic debate on China's perceived “new assertiveness” following the 2008 financial crisis demonstrates,⁷⁵⁵ the global economic crisis, and China's relative solidity in the face of it, seems to have further strengthened the main discourse of CCP's China as having found a separate

⁷⁵¹ J. Hu 2006a

⁷⁵² J. Hu 2005b

⁷⁵³ See Zeng, Xiao, and Breslin 2015; Swaine 2011; Crookes 2013, 651–52

⁷⁵⁴ Men 2011, 542

⁷⁵⁵ For key texts on China's increasingly assertive international behaviour after 2008, see Friedberg 2014; Christensen 2011; Swaine 2011; K. He and Feng 2012; For critical voices to this argument, see Jerdén 2014; Johnston 2013; Scobell and Harold 2013

road that was successfully propelling them to great power status. As Rozman argues, “Whereas earlier identity gaps opened in the shadow of U.S. ascendancy, the new environment called that into question as China envisioned itself as an all-around challenger able to pose an unprecedented alternative to Western civilization.”⁷⁵⁶

This gave further impetus to a foundational narrative that underlined Chinese distinctiveness, by increasingly linking the People’s Republic with visions of the Chinese past, rather than with social models from the West, as the CCP accelerated their dramatically fast turnaround to venerating the Confucian past they had actively sought to eradicate only a few decades earlier.⁷⁵⁷ There were little to no explicit mentions of this in the Europe-related speeches; however, these notions are relevant for the broader background of the domestic and international context of the relationship. Another general discursive trend to keep in mind, as it is directly relevant for China’s relations with Europe, is how the strengthened assertion of the PRC as not only different, sovereign, and equal with regards to the West, but now also very successfully so, is the continuation of, and the added emphasis on, the need for the polity to avoid the danger of “Westernization”. As Hu Jintao formulated it in a 2004 speech to an expanded meeting of the Central Military commission: “Western hostile forces have not given up the ambition to subjugate us, intensifying their efforts to implement in our country a Westernization (西化) and division (分化) strategy, attempting to use their political model and value system to transform us.”⁷⁵⁸ This discourse continued from the earlier eras and was repeated throughout these years, as seen in his speech on the ‘harmonious society,’ his trademark policy initiative, where he explicitly warned against the same hostile westernization and splittism plots,

⁷⁵⁶ Rozman 2013c, 13

⁷⁵⁷ Rozman 2013a, 243–44

⁷⁵⁸ J. Hu 2016e, 257

“especially in guarding against, at home and abroad, hostile forces pushing the banners of so-called “democracy”, “freedom”, “rights protection”, to take advantage of the people’s internal contradictions, creating disturbances and sabotaging the trend of progress, one can never let down one’s guard.”⁷⁵⁹

It is however of interest to note that in this particular subset of the narrative, the subject position towards which radically different values the Chinese need to be wary of, are in all of Hu’s published speeches described as The West (西方). Europe or European countries are never explicitly identified with these notion of the threatening ‘West’. This is a distinction that carries interesting echoes from the delineation made between Europe and the US, based on Mao’s ‘Three Worlds Theory’, where the US is regarded as the most ideologically threatening and politically different Other. This in both contrast to, and meaningful continuations from, the leading political theorists of the Early Republican era that rather looked to the US as a political same to be emulated, as opposed to the old imperial powers of Europe. In contemporary Chinese discourse, as the examples illustrate, ‘The West’ has in essence become shorthand for liberal, and threatening, political ideas.⁷⁶⁰ This concept informs the discourse of both the EU and the USA, but it also opens up for differentiation between the two actors, in the sense that a multipolar world where the transatlantic ties are weaker, this can serve to weaken the assertiveness of liberal values in the international order. “China views multipolarity as a way to constrain US hegemony, and recognizing that the EU constitutes a pole reflects China’s hedging strategy.”⁷⁶¹ Strengthening the EU may then, for China, be

⁷⁵⁹ J. Hu 2016f, 426

⁷⁶⁰ See eg. the important leaked CCP-communiqué stressing the importance fight the encroachment of liberal “Western” ideas in all sectors of Chinese society: Central Committee of the CCP’s General Office 2013

⁷⁶¹ C.-H. Wu forthcoming, 5

a way in which to weaken the impact of 'The West', in the sense of liberal values and political interventionism. This thus creating an interesting split in the Chinese rhetoric where on the one hand 'The West' is a threatening and radically different Other, whereas on the other hand, Europe can be a partner in the process of helping China establish their independence and status internationally through helping to push forward the multipolarization and democratization of world politics.⁷⁶²

This discourse of distinctiveness is perhaps most famously formulated in the general, often repeated phrase of 'Chinese characteristics'. As summarised by Yahuda: "Thus the Deng Xiaoping concept of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" suggests that China's identity once again is seen as turning on values and principles that differ fundamentally from those of the modern (that is Western) world with whose capitalist international economy he sought to

link the Chinese economy."⁷⁶³ This phrase is, of course, most notable in its presence in the key concept of 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,' as exemplified in e.g. Hu Jintao's 2009 conference speech.⁷⁶⁴ In comparing this to earlier manifestations of treating the countries of the Western hemisphere as Others after the establishment of CCP's New China, the most notable alteration in the narrative, reflecting the Chinese domestic political developments on this field, is the absence of the 'capitalist' term, when describing these actors. The main narrative was thus one of defining Others no longer on the basis of political and economic structures, but on the basis of geographical signs delineating the divide as cultural and civilizational.

As always, however, there are competing discourses available; one discourse in opposition to the foundational narrative of China as fundamentally separate from

⁷⁶² J. Hu 2016g, 505; J. Hu 2016h, 472

⁷⁶³ M. Yahuda 1999, 252

⁷⁶⁴ J. Hu 2016i, 74

Western societal structures, was the discourse of China as rather being only temporally different, whilst still aspiring to a Western model as the ultimate goal, one more in line with what the earlier chapters have identified as more prevalent in earlier eras. This is a discourse one can also trace from the days of Deng Xiaoping. The most pronounced proponent of this view would be the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, who formulated this on a number of occasions,⁷⁶⁵ such as his speech to the Royal Society in 2011: “The future China will be a country that fully realizes democracy, the rule of law, and fairness and justice.”⁷⁶⁶ However, given that his more liberal pronouncements and visions articulated abroad were famously censored by the Chinese press, this alternative narrative was increasingly weakened, and lost out even more after the ascension of Xi Jinping.

8.3 Main Discourses: Levelling the Playing Field

This adjustment of the foundational narrative is also reflected in the main Chinese discourses about Europe. In the texts from this period, the discourse defined in the last chapter as “Rising anti-hegemonic power poles” is still recognisable, but there is an alteration where there is no longer talk of the EU and China as the rising power poles as a short-term goal, but of taking the long term and developing the strategic relationship. The discourse of the EU as China’s co-rising power pole weakened. The main discourse on the importance of being granted equal status stayed permanent, and if anything was given extra weight. This can be seen in the diplomatic conflicts regarding the Dalai Lama, as a natural reflection of this more assertive twist to the foundational narrative.

⁷⁶⁵ Wen 2004a

⁷⁶⁶ Wen 2011

The ancient and splendid civilizations discourse remained, and took on added value as the CCP's reading of traditional Chinese, Confucian civilization was increasingly drawn upon as a legitimising strategy domestically in China, and as part of China's soft power offensive abroad, as seen for instance in the rapidly growing global network of Chinese-sponsored Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms.⁷⁶⁷ Adding to this extant discourse, though, was the more often repeated notion of China as a great power alongside the UK and France. Finally, the reassessments of China as a developing country, and the EU as the world's largest group of developed countries was still there, but increasingly changing to emphasize the success of China's development, as opposed to what was expressed as the economic problems of the EU. The foreign policy playing field seemed in the eyes of the Chinese leadership to be getting ever more equal, and they demanded a respect that matched it. Thus, these changes were opening a discursive field for a broader set of foreign policy incentives and resulting policy directions, that opened up for a more assertive posture in seeking adequate recognition from the European countries.

8.3.1 Dampening the Rising Power Poles Discourse

One of the most politically charged amongst China's main discourses of Europe, was also one that saw a certain change over the later years of the first decade of the 2000s. As demonstrated in the last chapter, the idea of China and the EU as co-rising power-poles was a key feature of the PRC leadership's rhetoric on Europe, and co-constitutive of a policy that regarded Sino-EU ties as a potential central axis of international politics. Following the crises detailed earlier in the thesis, though, there is a notable adjustment of this main discourse, towards a discourse, towards one that

⁷⁶⁷ For more details on the PRC's use of Confucius Institutes as a soft power tool, see eg. Paradise 2009; Hartig 2012; For an updated overview of the number of these institutions, see Hanban 2019

increasingly emphasizes China's role as a more independent rising power-broker internationally, reflected in a rhetoric that describes the EU in more long-term strategic terms, and less like an immediate partner in pushing for a rebalanced world order.

The underlying discourse of multipolarization and globalization as the key trends of the world, were still stable elements of the discourse, as illustrated by Hu Jintao in the UN's 60th Anniversary Summit speech.⁷⁶⁸ The discourse rather developed with regards to China and the EU's respective positions within this world of power transfers. Illustrating in a longitudinal manner the changes in this discourse as it was presented for a European public, it should be noted how the EU-China summit declarations changed their wording of the relationship's global potential during the years covered in this chapter. In both the 8th and the 9th Summit Declaration, of 2005 and 2006 respectively, a repeated phrase emphasized that the strengthening of China-EU relations was of key importance for Europe-Asia cooperation, and for world peace and development.⁷⁶⁹ In 2007, this phrase was removed in favour of one that pointed out explicitly how the two actors have had an effect on a number of international hotspots, including Myanmar and Iran, and how they will continue to work together to promote democratization of international relations.⁷⁷⁰ At the 11th summit declaration, these formulations about the common struggle for democratization in international politics were gone. Instead, in the 2009 11th Summit declaration a new phrase denoted how the EU-China relationship increasingly had an effect 'past the bilateral and actually being important for the world stage', which was also repeated in the 12th summit declaration later the same year.⁷⁷¹ The lofty goals of common effort

⁷⁶⁸ J. Hu 2005b

⁷⁶⁹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006

⁷⁷⁰ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007

⁷⁷¹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009c

at democratising international relations were thus gone from the summit declarations of the following years.⁷⁷² Relatedly, in Hu's 2006 Work report to the Central Foreign Affairs work group, he listed the prioritized bilateral relationships according to importance, as first the one between China and the US, second the relationship with Russia, and third, to expand the contact with the great powers (大国) and other countries of the European Union.⁷⁷³

The effect of the 2008 financial crisis, and the following debt crisis in the eurozone, did of course also have an effect on the Chinese understandings of the international situation, their own role in it, and the role of Europe with regards to themselves. As the decade following was summarized by Christiansen, Kirchner, and Wissenbach, EU-China relations "reached a critical juncture at the end of the 2010s (...)China has expanded its institutional role in global governance and its economic and political relations with the rest of the world based on its national interests, while Europe's role in all these areas has remained fairly stagnant or in some cases has diminished"⁷⁷⁴ The global financial crisis is, as expected, a recurring topic of Chinese official speeches in the years after 2008.⁷⁷⁵ With regards to how this event informed the developing Chinese discourse on international relations, an informative demonstration can be found in Hu Jintao's speech to the 11th meeting of the Chinese diplomatic envoys in Beijing in 2009. Referring to the financial crisis at the very beginning of the speech, he goes on to say that "Our country's overall strategic environment has improved, but with the Western countries the strategic contradictions have become even more complex."⁷⁷⁶ Also following the crisis, a clamour for Chinese investment capital from

⁷⁷² PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010b; PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012a

⁷⁷³ J. Hu 2016g, 509

⁷⁷⁴ Christiansen, Kirchner, and Wissenbach 2019, 181

⁷⁷⁵ J. Hu 2016j

⁷⁷⁶ J. Hu 2016k

the crisis-struck states at the EU's periphery, further created the impression of radical change in the relative power position.⁷⁷⁷

If a reminder was necessary in the following up of the first attempt at ending the EU arms embargo, leaked cables to the US State Department revealed a Spanish suggestion for a renewed effort at ending the EU embargo in 2010, that was again rapidly shot down due to US pressure. The Chinese ambassador was quoted commenting on this in terms that can serve to illustrate the Chinese disappointment with what was regarded as the EU's subservience to the US: "The EU and China are now strategic partners and it doesn't make any sense to maintain the embargo (...) I also think it is pitiful and pathetic that Europe can't make decisions on its own, without being influenced by other powers."⁷⁷⁸ As detailed in the next chapter, this set the stage for the increasing emphasis on China as a great power, under the leadership of Xi Jinping.

8.3.2 Equal Status Recognition

The main discourse of underlining in unequivocal terms the importance for China of receiving the respect of the European countries as equal partners, continued to be one of the most dominating discourses throughout these years of political and diplomatic tensions. Hu Jintao's visit to Sweden in 2007 as the first Chinese head of state in history, provides an archetypical example of the broader, and constantly repeated discourse. In his public remarks following the bilateral talks, he followed the typical Chinese pattern by firstly, putting emphasis on when, in the Swedish case quite early, the Swedes recognized China. Then he proceeded on to underline just how important it is that the relationship with China is undertaken on the basis of recognition of equality

⁷⁷⁷ Lanteigne 2015, 185–90

⁷⁷⁸ Quoted in Willis 2010

in status, and diversity in political values, "Since establishing relations 57 years ago, both countries have based on the principles of mutual respect, equal benefits, and mutual non-interference in internal affairs (相互尊重、平等互利、互不干涉内政等原则), actively developed the bilateral ties and achieved gratifying results"⁷⁷⁹ This discourse is in this thesis' model identified as a main discourse on the background of its ubiquitous presence as structuring China's political narrative on all levels, including with the other European countries, and with the European Union as a whole.⁷⁸⁰

As mentioned, this is the fulcrum of a number of the Sino-European disagreements, that increasingly often would lead to diplomatic crises. China and the EU both claimed to seek a multipolarization of the international scene. However, the EU emphasized multilateralism and the universality of human rights, and at the outset regarded the Chinese movement towards greater implementation of these as part of a teleological process based on universal values.⁷⁸¹ The Chinese discourse, on the other hand, was instead founded on the premise of civilizational divergence rather than convergence. As the quantitative analysis illustrated in fig. 8 corroborates, this shift in rhetorical orientation was reflected in a notable and quite substantial shift reflected across all Chinese open diplomatic communications with the EU and European countries, namely the increasing prevalence of mentioning "Chinese characteristics", a *tifa* denoting the separateness of China's political and economic system.

⁷⁷⁹ J. Hu 2007a

⁷⁸⁰ Wen 2004b

⁷⁸¹ Christiansen, Kirchner, and Wissenbach 2019, 168; C.-H. Wu forthcoming; Scott 2008a; J. Hu 2016g, 503–4

Document Frequency (%) of 中国特色 (Chinese Characteristics) & 人权 (Human Rights)

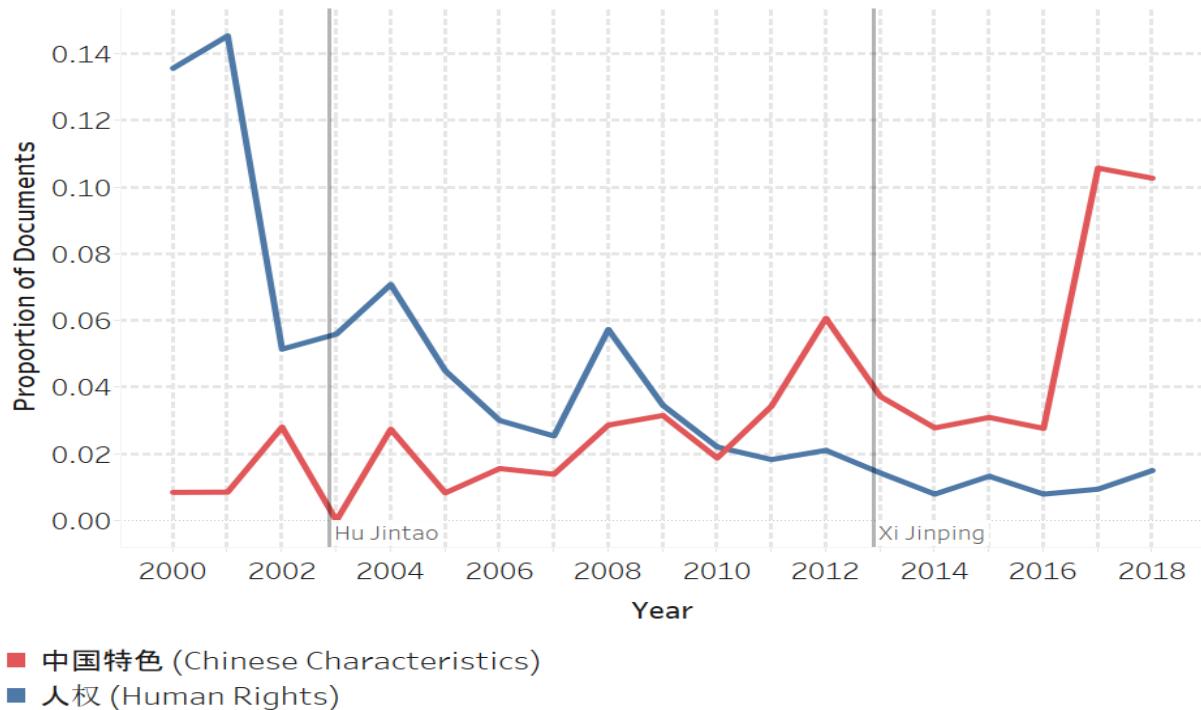


Figure 8: Use of the Terms "Chinese Characteristics" and "Human Rights" in FMPRC Documents on Europe

After 2008, so even before the added emphasis on China as a great power, there is a very notable rise in the use of this phrase. This increased use does also, importantly correspond to a decreased frequency of referring to human rights in Chinese documents and speeches relevant to the EU and European countries. As the content analysis of Chinese foreign policy documents of this period corroborates (see fig. 8), declarations underlining China's distinctiveness would only become more important to the Chinese foreign policy rhetoric through the years, whereas the key issue of human rights would increasingly disappear in the political documents, as the CCP gradually succeeded in pushing it further away from the diplomatic agenda. The crossing trendlines of these two terms in the aftermath of the global financial crisis corroborate an increasing Chinese assertiveness about the distinctiveness of their political and economic model. This was, as demonstrated here, at the heart of the

CCP's ontological security based on the fundamental national narrative of equal and separate civilizations.

8.3.3 Ancient, Splendid (and Increasingly Confucian) Civilizations

The main discourse of insistence on equality as a distinct civilization, was closely intertwined with the proclaimed Chinese idea of Europe and China as two separate, ancient and glorious civilizations. Exemplified by Premier Wen Jiabao's words from a 2009 meeting with EU officials, as quoted by Yang Jiechi, he pointed to the shared interests between China and the EU as respectively the largest developing country and the largest group of developed countries, and the common fact that both of them are two grand old civilizations.⁷⁸² This main discourse saw little change; if anything, the emphasis on the past as 5000 years of unbroken and distinctly Chinese history strengthened further, and eclipsed any remains of the old Marxist narrative of "smashing old culture."⁷⁸³ In Hu Jintao's keynote speech on China's peaceful rise,⁷⁸⁴ the way in which the Chinese polity of which he stood at the helm was presented mainly as the embodiment of 5000 years of civilization. This exemplifies the extent to which the emphasis of the governing class had shifted since the days of Mao, from condemning the old and seek legitimacy in the new, to an amalgamation that sees the CCP as the embodiment of the ancient Chinese civilization in its most current form.

This, as mentioned earlier, marks in particular a paradigm shift in the Chinese Communist Party's view of Confucius, who during the last three decades went from being regarded in party propaganda as another old suppressive philosopher in support of slavery, to becoming increasingly utilized in the official discourses as a

⁷⁸² Jiechi Yang 2009

⁷⁸³ X. Lu 2004, 61–62; Clark 2008

⁷⁸⁴ J. Hu 2006a

centre piece of a new discourse tying CCP's legitimacy to an essentialized Chinese cultural heritage.⁷⁸⁵ As Meissner points out in this regard, "In most post-Leninist countries, we can observe a renaissance of traditionalist thought that is frequently linked to nationalistic and ethnic or even racist tendencies."⁷⁸⁶ This development can also be traced quantitatively. As fig. 9 demonstrates, based on the analysis of over 30 000 Chinese documents and speeches relating to Europe, there is a very substantial and correlated change in the Chinese rhetoric's use of the word "civilization", and "Confucius" in their Europe-related discourses. During the Hu era this term was introduced into the diplomatic discourse as a novelty that quickly became prevalent, a growth that was particularly pronounced, again, from 2008 onwards.

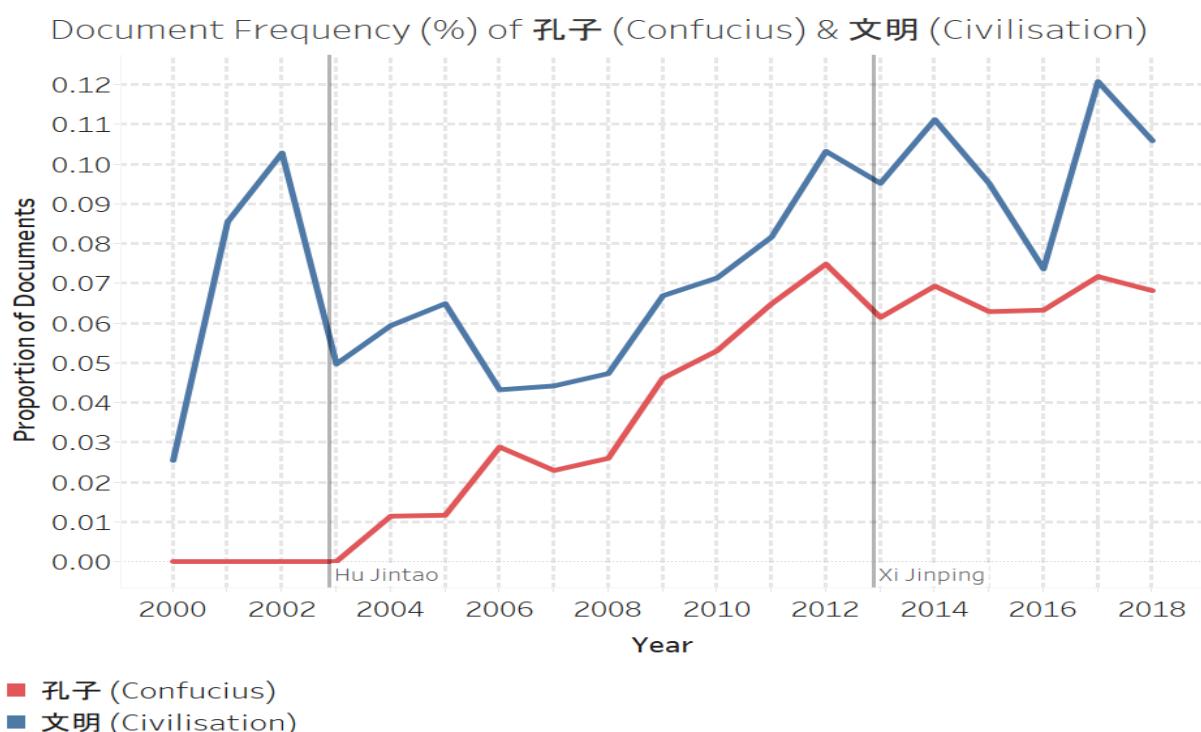


Figure 9: Use of the Terms "Confucius" and "Civilization" in FMPRC Documents on Europe

Thus, the emphasis is even more pronounced on a rather Huntingtonian view of the world as subdivided into distinct civilizations, although with a focus less on the clash

⁷⁸⁵ Billioud 2011, 235–36; Brady 2012; Solé-Farràs 2013; Hartig 2012; Callahan 2012a

⁷⁸⁶ Meissner 2006, 8

of these than on plural co-existence between these essentialized political units. In Hu's words, "Civilizational diversity is the objective reality of mankind's society (...) We should actively maintain the world's diversity, promote dialogue and mixing among different civilizations, learn from each other's experiences rather than mutually excluding each other, thus making humanity more harmonious and happy, and making the world more richly colourful."⁷⁸⁷

8.3.4 Largest Developed and Developing / Successful Self-Strengtheners

Finally, amongst the identified main discourses structuring the Chinese view of their relations with Europe, is the notable change in the discourse of China as the world's largest developing country seeking cooperation with the world's largest bloc of developed countries. Reflecting the changes along the other main discourses, in this area also an increased Chinese self-confidence is related to a more pronounced emphasis on the Chinese economic success as opposed to the discourse of China as a still underdeveloped country. The assertion that although China still is developing and has a long way to go, as Wen expressed it in a 2010 press conference after meeting with EU Commissioner Barroso, explicitly points out how China's comprehensive power, and its status in the world had grown, after the reform and opening up period: "China's Reform and Opening Up have obtained immense achievements. The country's comprehensive power and international position has obtained a remarkable upgrade."⁷⁸⁸ Given the importance of economic success for the performance legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party, this factor plays a considerable role in the narrative in which the regime's, and by correlation also the Chinese polity's ontological security is based.

⁷⁸⁷ J. Hu 2006a

⁷⁸⁸ Wen 2010a

Of course, in the years following the international financial crisis and the eurozone debt crisis, economic matters would increasingly be important in declarations and speeches relating to Europe and European countries, and increasingly building upon a discourse of a more level playing field for the two partners EU and China.⁷⁸⁹ The changing discourse was reflected in, for example, the 14th Summit declaration, that included a point on how China and the EU would each “actively look at and support each other’s development.”⁷⁹⁰ In point two of the Summit Declaration, then, the discursive field explicitly shifted from being that of the largest developing countries together with the largest bloc of developed countries unto being more a matter of two co-developing parties, as Europe at that point in many areas was craving Chinese investments.⁷⁹¹ The same change is present in the 15th Summit statement in late 2012, emphasizing how China and the EU should actively look to and help each other’s development. This thus demonstrates a shift in the discourse, that is all the more important as a key *raison d’être* of Chinese political projects since the beginning of the 20th Century has been the ambition to economically catch up with the developed world, at this point however, the help has started to go both ways.

Thus, as the leadership of the CCP will increasingly accentuate over the next decade, as analysed in the next chapter, the political elite of China would increasingly draw upon a discourse of themselves as being the ones that after more than a century of attempts and false starts, had finally managed to bring China to the brink of its rejuvenation. The change in this main discourse to implying the ongoing success of these efforts thus has outsized consequences for the ontological security of the Chinese governing class. As will be detailed later, this particular link between economic performance and ontological security would serve as an explanation for the key role

⁷⁸⁹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010a

⁷⁹⁰ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012a

⁷⁹¹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012b

the explicit, public recognition of Chinese development success were to play in solving diplomatic conflicts between China and European countries. The CCP wanted, in effect, to be recognized as the successful Self-Strengtheners that earlier Chinese political regimes failed to be.

8.4 Political Repercussions: The 2008 Boycott and Cancellation Issues

8.4.1 *Political Background*

As a symbolically important marker of the trend of the relationship, the EU and China decided at their 9th Summit in 2007, following the earlier failures in their talks on the arms embargo, to turn a new leaf on the relationship by launching negotiations on a Partnership and Co-Operation Agreement.⁷⁹² The expectations of a successful negotiation, was at the outset quite high, but already in 2009, the hope for such a treaty had dissipated, and as of today it is still not finalized.⁷⁹³ In the intervening years, the series of issues and incidents in the build-up to the Beijing Olympics, including meetings between the Dalai Lama and the Prime Ministers of Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Denmark, had led to a breakdown in the relations, to such an extent that China cancelled the 11th China-EU Summit planned for December 2008.⁷⁹⁴ This period of a 'long half-decade' thus saw the convergence of a number of key economic, political, and strategic issues in the EU-China partnership, and an abrupt turnaround in the Chinese view of the role of the European continent. Thus, as Wu Baiyi has pointed out, the years 2005-2008 represented an inflection point with regards to the Chinese views of the EU, as three major events mutually reinforced the perception of

⁷⁹² PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006

⁷⁹³ Michalski and Pan 2017b, 622

⁷⁹⁴ Shambaugh 2013, 93

the EU not as a multipolar player representing a successful modern paradigm, but as a struggling, and slightly chaotic entity whose very existence was challenged by its own failings: the failure of the 2005 EU Constitution process, the failure to end the arms embargo in the face of US pressure, and most importantly the 2008 financial crisis and following eurozone double-dip.⁷⁹⁵ While this inflection point in the relationship came as the result of a number of political decisions, negotiations, and failures, this thesis will demonstrate that another key factor in this sudden and dramatic turnaround in the relationship was the role played by Chinese ontological security concerns.

Setting the stage at the eve of years of diplomatic challenges, Jacques Chirac's high-profile state visit to China in October 2006, seeking to shore up and strengthen the relationship with China after the failed attempts at cancelling the arms embargo, was a diplomatic parade of celebrating the achievements made by the two countries. Hu Jintao expressed how Sino-French relations at that point were a model for the world of how two countries of different cultural backgrounds and development levels should interact. Whilst hailing France's support for the EU to end the arms embargo and supporting the recognition of the PRC as a market economy, Hu also proclaimed that "no matter the changes in the international situation, we persist in the Sino-French comprehensive friendship."⁷⁹⁶ The same year, Wen Jiabao would declare his full confidence in the future of Sino-German relations, when meeting with the German president.⁷⁹⁷

However, barely more than a year later, this relationship was turned into a complete standstill, as Chinese officials and politicians implemented a boycott of the bilateral

⁷⁹⁵ B. Wu 2010, 170–71

⁷⁹⁶ J. Hu 2006c

⁷⁹⁷ Wen 2006b

relationship, that even extended to the full-scale cancellation of the 11th EU-China Summit of 2008, thus reverberating to the level of the entire European continent. What was the chain of events leading to this breakdown in Europe-China relations? On the European side, a change in the leadership of key European countries and concerns regarding the increasing trade deficit with China had led to an increased emphasis on human rights issues and a more strained economic relationship.⁷⁹⁸ This thus hardened the main cause of diversion between China and Europe, whilst weakening the main interest bonding them together. In September 2007 this tension came to a head as Angela Merkel, fresh home from a state visit to China, became the first Chancellor to receive the Dalai Lama in an official capacity.⁷⁹⁹ This act led to strong reactions from the Chinese, suspending a number of exchanges until diplomatic negotiations managed to smooth out the issue.⁸⁰⁰ Soon after, however, large-scale protests in Tibet, and the heavy-handed Chinese crackdown of these in the spring of 2008, lead to widespread European condemnations.⁸⁰¹ The Tibetan issue was further accentuated by being linked to the symbolically loaded 2008 Beijing Olympics, as both the French President Sarkozy and the German Chancellor Merkel decided to boycott the Olympics Opening Ceremony, and as the Chinese Olympic torch relay was met with public protests in many European capitals, in Paris in particular.

Both official and grassroot nationalism in China converged to cause a popular boycott of the French chain Carrefour, as a counter to the perception that Europe, and France in particular did not respect Chinese sovereignty.⁸⁰² When French President Sarkozy in late 2008 declared his intention to receive the Dalai Lama officially, the Chinese

⁷⁹⁸ Mingjiang Li 2009, 236–37; Lanteigne 2015, 189190

⁷⁹⁹ Fuchs and Klann 2013, 166

⁸⁰⁰ Shambaugh 2013, 92–94

⁸⁰¹ R. Barnett 2009; Men 2011, 541–43

⁸⁰² Z. Pan 2012b, 26

responded by cancelling the 11th EU-China Summit scheduled in Lyon. Furthermore, when Wen Jiabao went on a trip of European capitals in early 2009 to seek to shore up some of the fallout from the crisis, he intentionally avoided France, whilst admonishing the French to correct their behaviour and stop insulting the Chinese people.⁸⁰³ When Denmark's Prime Minister later received the Dalai Lama, they saw a similar boycott enacted. This further prolonged a period of deep diplomatic crisis, only slowly solved through diplomatic means through the 2009 and 2010 as the leaders scrambled through an extended number of meetings and summits in order to seek to address the fallout.⁸⁰⁴ Thus, two leading European powers came to be the focal point for a more systematic European challenge to the Chinese self-narrative, highlighting a set of issues that would keep reappearing as a structural feature of the Europe-China relationship. This feature, deeply emmeshed in diverging ideas of values, universality, sovereignty and the political foundations of the regime, were all deeply related to the ontological aspect of Chinese security seeking.

8.4.2 The Identity Factor in China's Europe Boycott

In analysing the Chinese governments rhetoric through these years of escalating diplomatic conflict, the main discourses identified earlier are present throughout. These basic structures of meaning entailed a set of policy impetuses for the CCP, aimed at ensuring the ontological security of their regime's political project through, essentially, policing the European countries' recognition of their foundational narrative. This is reflected in their insistence on the role of recognising sovereign equality, avoiding any critique of their domestic and territorial politics, and seeking to harness the European parties acceptance for providing status and face to the Chinese leadership. Thus bestowing upon them officially the status of stewards of a

⁸⁰³ Mingjiang Li 2009, 237

⁸⁰⁴ Shambaugh 2013, 93–94

separate and high status civilization. The Chinese discourses framing these political issues in the China-Europe relationship would even, unwittingly, draw upon the personal psychological basis on which the IR theory of ontological security was drawn upon, through branding an action like receiving the Dalai Lama as something that “hurts the feelings of the Chinese people”. In other words, a key political driving force in Chinese foreign policies identified by the CCP itself as Chinese feelings, in the context of the Europeans not providing them their vaunted status position.

When meeting with the EU Commission President Barroso and the Portuguese Prime Minister in November 2007, Hu Jintao was perfectly clear in his framing of the gathering clouds on the diplomatic horizon: “both parties must, based on the spirit of mutual respect and equal consultations, appropriately handle the new problems arising from the new situation of the development of the bilateral relationship.”⁸⁰⁵ The formulations utilized here also demonstrates that the Chinese discourse used to describe the relations with the EU in normal times, was also the key prism in times of diplomatic crises. In February 2008 in a phone call with Merkel, Wen Jiabao underlined again how important it is that Germany and China work on their relationship based on a fundament of equal status and respect.⁸⁰⁶ Throughout March and April of 2008, then, the Chinese logs of the leadership’s phone conferences with the German leadership, show how the Chinese government underlined on three different occasions their stance on the Dalai Lama’s splittist activities. This trope ties directly into the fear of Western-led splittism directed towards China, which as detailed earlier was a recurring feature of China’s general foreign policy discourse.⁸⁰⁷ In terms of the role played by face and status, it is also important to note that for China,

⁸⁰⁵ J. Hu 2007b

⁸⁰⁶ Wen 2008a

⁸⁰⁷ Jiechi Yang 2008a; Jiechi Yang 2008b

a country of such a stature, on a rapid ascent in world affairs, the top priority was declared by Foreign Minister Yang to be cooperating to ensure a successful hosting of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, and he specifically appreciated the EU's decision not to boycott the opening ceremony.⁸⁰⁸

When Barroso met Hu Jintao again in April 2008, however, the tone was notably changed, and a far more careful and conflict-focused discourse has emerged, as Hu was underlining the importance of the EU and China upholding their contact, and "properly handle and solve significant bilateral concerns and divergences, to ensure the long-term health, stability, and development of the comprehensive strategic partnership relations between China and the EU."⁸⁰⁹ Over the following year, these significant bilateral divergences would only intensify in nature. This was not so much due to economic or security factors, as to the underlying gap between the parties in their search for ontological security and status recognition on the international scene. After the tussle with Germany over the Dalai Lama visit, it was again France that would become the main focal point of China-Europe tensions, due to a number of actions of high symbolic value to the Chinese. As tensions rose between China and France in early 2008, a substantial diplomatic operation to defuse the crisis saw a number of high-level meetings take place in Beijing. Wen Jiabao emphasized to the French delegation the Chinese view of the situation in Tibet.⁸¹⁰ As Hu Jintao met with the French Senate President Ponchelet, he emphasized in a straightforward manner how the Chinese leadership regarded the demonstrations and actions against the torch relay through Paris as a matter of genuine concern for the Chinese party state. He utilised a turn of speech that would become a signature phrase for the CCP in cases where they felt they had lost face abroad, by claiming that it hurt the feelings of the

⁸⁰⁸ Jiechi Yang 2008c

⁸⁰⁹ J. Hu 2008b

⁸¹⁰ Wen 2008b

Chinese people: “Recently in France, a series of events have taken place that are unfriendly to the Chinese people, most of all the Beijing Olympics torch relay was in Paris met with disturbances and attacks, hurting the Chinese people’s feelings (伤害了中国人民的感情), this is something we do not want to see.”⁸¹¹ The same was also expressed by other high-ranking officials.⁸¹²

Following up on the previous chapter’s focus on how a crisis in Sino-EU relations was exacerbated through ontological security-related issues, the events of this chapter also showcase these dynamics. It is thus interesting to note how such a similar crisis of identity was to a large extent solved by the two European powers in question increasingly buying into and declaring their support for the Chinese ontological narrative. As the Chinese authorities communicated that the key for solving the issues was in subscribing to their version of mutual respect and equal recognition.⁸¹³ As the result of the negotiations aimed at defusing the tensions with France, then, State Councillor Dai Bingguo and French diplomat Levitte reached an important consensus in order to solve the situation, where the two countries agreed to five points. Essentially, these involved France repeating and restating their support for the Chinese government’s narrative on key issues such as that of Tibet and Taiwan. And the joint statement specifically addresses in point 3, which again goes to show the symbolic importance with which the Chinese government imbued the Olympics, that: “The Olympics is a sporting and friendly event for all the world’s peoples, and politics has no relation with it, the French side wishes and supports for the Beijing Olympics to obtain complete success.”⁸¹⁴ This declaration of the non-political nature of the Olympics in a high profile document of diplomatic negotiations between two of the

⁸¹¹ J. Hu 2008a

⁸¹² Jiechi Yang 2008c

⁸¹³ Jiechi Yang 2008d

⁸¹⁴ Levitte 2008

Security Council's permanent member countries, of course directly demonstrates just how politically charged the Olympics was for the CCP. As treated in further literature, it is also symptomatic of the extent to which Chinese identity and ontological security had been emmeshed with the status-increasing move that was the 2008 Olympics.⁸¹⁵ As Callahan summarised the role of these events for the Chinese identity projection:

To introduce China to the world as a major power, Beijing recently choreographed three mega-events: the 2008 Beijing Olympics presented China as a soft superpower, the National Day military parade in 2009 confirmed that China also has hard power, and the Shanghai World Expo (...) All three were designed to show "The Real China" as a rejuvenated and unified nation that was returning to its rightful place at the center of world affairs: remember that "One World, One Dream" was the slogan for the Olympics.⁸¹⁶

Thus, when Hu Jintao met with Sarkozy a few months later, Hu was unusually straight forward in defining the diplomatic spat as the responsibility of France, that France now had taken the step to rectify: "Recently the French side has taken great efforts and adopted some measures to improve Sino-French relations, we have positively evaluated these efforts, hoping for the bilateral relations to turn over the page on this"⁸¹⁷ However, shortly afterwards, as Sarkozy was preparing to meet again with the Dalai Lama, diplomatic crisis rose all over again, and the repairing of this latest rift entailed an even clearer statement from France on their respect for the

⁸¹⁵ For a comprehensive overview of the Beijing Olympic's role in Chinese politics, see the salient range of contributions in the edited volume by Price and Dayan 2009; For more in-depth treatment of the status and public diplomacy drivers of this event, see X. Xu 2006 and; Preuss and Alfs 2011; Meanwhile Manzenreiter 2010 provides an interesting analysis of the very limited extent to which the CCP succeeded in their ambition of changing the world's perception of China through these games

⁸¹⁶ Callahan 2013, 125

⁸¹⁷ J. Hu 2008c

Chinese government and people. In the meeting between Wen and the French Premier Raffarin, Wen Jiabao summarized this as follows;

The current Sino-French relations are meeting difficulties and the responsibility is not on the Chinese side. The French side should carry out concrete actions, making an energetic and positive response to the grave core concerns of the Chinese side. Our persistence in standing by the fundamental principles of mutual respect, equal benefits, and mutual non-interference in domestic affairs will not change.⁸¹⁸

Correspondingly, in Hu Jintao's meeting with Sarkozy on April 2nd 2009, as the relations between the countries were being patched up, again, he summarized the problematic months by pointing out that Sino-French relations had earlier seen serious difficulties. However, the French side had since reiterated their adherence to the one-China policy, and that Tibet is an inalienable part of China, opposing any independence efforts on their behalf, and as such, "The Chinese side appreciates this and feels happy that Sino-French relations have been restored."⁸¹⁹ In May 2009, Wen was sounding the end to the problematic era of the relationship in what was already the second visit that year, after a European roundtrip, including Brussels and Davos in January, and in the process got the EU-China diplomatic relationship back on track.

As such, speaking at the conclusion of the long delayed 11th China-EU Summit in Prague, considerable expectations awaited his speech during the common press conference with EU President Krauss and EU Commission President Barroso. Laying out three important points for the public, Wen Jiabao was pointing out both how multipolarization was still binding China and the EU together, and that China did not want to seek any G2-like cooperation with the US. Furthermore, he underlined that China had been making great progress economically, but still had a long way to go.

⁸¹⁸ Wen 2008b

⁸¹⁹ J. Hu 2009

Most importantly, though, he emphasized again that “Firstly, Sino-Europe relations’ foundation is mutual respect and treating each other equally, both in the past, in the present and in the future”⁸²⁰ Underlining for a second time in the same speech the discursive construction of China’s ontological security being linked with the EU recognizing Beijing’s ontological narrative, Wen went on to call for the end of the arms embargo and the recognition of MES status.⁸²¹ This thus linked these two issues ever more closely to being an issue of status, recognition and fairness, as viewed from Beijing. It is, furthermore, interesting to note how the reassurance that China would not abandon the EU for a duumvirate with the USA speaks volumes about how the Chinese economic and political position had changed over the last years, as well as how the Chinese perception of themselves had changed. Nevertheless, their insistence on being treated, and granted status as a separate civilization with a separate system, had strengthened further, as the discourses created policy impetuses to more assertively push for such recognition from its European counterparts.

8.5 Conclusions

In tracing the Chinese official discourses throughout a period of profound crisis in the EU-China relationship, the persistence of the foundational Chinese narrative was clear. However, the main discourses predicated on this narrative demonstrated certain changes, as they constituted a range of political and economic development trends in a manner that served to emphasise the successfulness of the Chinese model, and by more clearly asserting a Chinese ‘status upgrade’ in their role in international relations. In analysing the Chinese discourses of their economic success throughout the years

⁸²⁰ Wen 2009

⁸²¹ Wen 2009

preceding and following the financial crisis, most notably, the discourse did not centre around alternative focal points, such as the importance of being integrated into the Western, capitalist system of global free-trade at a fortunate moment, but rather by emphasizing the Chinese model as uniquely successful. In analysing how these discourses permeated the Chinese positions throughout the turn-point era of 2007-2010, the policy impetuses of these discourses seem to have furthered a few notable effects on how, and how assertively, the Chinese side sought to have their ontological security confirmed by the European side.

Although economic concerns formed an important backdrop for the nadir in the relationship, this thesis argues that a main point of discontent was also in the realm of ontological security discrepancies between the two parties. Most notably, a key impetus for the rapid descent of this once and future bilateral 'global axis' is arguably found in how the Chinese sense of self grew more assertive as they sought recognition for the status upgrade they themselves felt they deserved. This, then, more openly challenged the universalism-based ontological security of the European powers France and Germany. Some key point of interest in this regard are worthy of further detailing, namely the increased political salience for China when relating to official visits by the Dalai Lama to European capitals, the increasing importance of seeking to have European parties publicly and officially recognize key parts of the Chinese main discourses on sovereignty and separateness as a precondition of ending the diplomatic crises, and how this effected an important negotiation regarding the China-EU partnership treaty.

As Xi Jinping, then vice-president, formulated it in a key visit to the European Commission in Brussels at the eve of the diplomatic normalization in late 2009:

We must from the beginning to end persist in the principle of equality and mutual trust. The historical experience of the

development of China-EU relations proves that as long as the two sides persist in the principle of "mutual respect and mutual trust, equality-based consultations, and seeking common ground while holding back differences", all along from the general situation of Sino-Europe relations onwards earnestly respect each other's' great concerns, Sino-Europe relations will certainly rule out all kinds of disturbances and move the development forward.⁸²²

Emphasizing even more the central role of the difference of Europe as an Other of China, he thus reasserted that the respect of equality extends to the recognition of China's key concerns, and that this is a precondition of a good relationship. This stronger emphasis on respecting China's concerns can be seen precisely in how the CCP chose to confront European countries more aggressively on the issue of Dalai Lama visits from these years onwards, given that the Dalai Lama had been visiting European countries throughout the last 30-odd years. The Dalai Lama had during the Hu era become an increasingly contentious guest, as Beijing more assertively sought to police his reception abroad. This through both diplomatic reactions and punitive economic measures, regarding the Dalai lama's travels as tantamount to working against that declared core interest of the PRC that is territorial unity.⁸²³ These reactions should also be seen in the context of the economic crisis, because given that these were economically very fraught times, there were no material incentives for China to cause such substantial upheavals with its relations to some of its biggest trade partners. In particular, there were no economic incentives to escalate the issue up on the EU level, as it was done when they cancelled the EU-China summit that the French were about to chair. The decision to temporarily sever normal relations with the world's largest economic bloc, in the aftershocks of the world's largest economic crisis since the Great

⁸²² Xi 2009

⁸²³ For a good backgrounder on the PRC's conflictual relationship with the Dalai Lama, see M. C. Goldstein 1997; For details on Beijing's punitive economic actions, memorably termed the "Dalai Lama effect" on trade with China, see Fuchs and Klann 2013; Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson 2015

Depression, can be said to have little possible material rationale, and all the more connection to reasons of ontological security seeking.

The manner in which the European countries succeeded in diffusing the crises, then, was in essence through recognising the Chinese discourse of the situation. Thus recognising, even though diplomatically forced to do so, the CCP's foundational narrative. As Men dryly notes of the situation:

The meetings between European leaders and the Dalai Lama, in the view of Beijing, amounted to European interference in China's domestic affairs. (...). Interestingly enough, after the meeting with the Dalai Lama, Mr Sarkozy stated, 'I am free as the French president and the EU president, I have values and convictions. Let's not make things tense, the world doesn't need it and it doesn't correspond to reality'. In other words, Mr Sarkozy was criticizing the fact that China had intervened with his decision-making power as both the French president and the EU president.⁸²⁴

The Sino-French declaration solving the situation thus reads that the two parties had agreed to "work with a strategic and long-term perspective and on the basis of respecting each other and taking into account of each other's fundamental interests to strengthen the comprehensive strategic partnership. China and France reiterated their adherence to the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs."⁸²⁵ Clearly Sarkozy's earlier view did not win out. As two China-EU Summits followed in the same year, seeking to catch up on lost time, the long awaited 11th Summit produced a paragraph that explicitly underlines the equality between the parties. Notably, the paragraph also includes an integrated sentence where the EU leaders very explicitly bestows legitimacy on the political system of China, as well as on the

⁸²⁴ Men 2012, 347

⁸²⁵ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009a

basic ontological security narrative of the Chinese, by stating their support for China's development and continued 'Peaceful Rise.'⁸²⁶ This thesis' findings thus supports the assertion made by Crookes, who points to a number of fundamental misunderstandings from the European side creating tensions in the relationship, the first of which is that, "there has been a misjudgement by the EU of China's position in the world as a re-emerged power, which has undermined the whole basis of constructive engagement based on equality, which China values highly at an emotional and semiotic level."⁸²⁷ As this research has demonstrated, the entire process surrounding these crises are clearly indicative of exactly such a misread identity factor shaping the dynamics of the political and diplomatic impasses.

A further example of the kind of discourse that Chinese are sought to encourage from their diplomatic partners is exemplified in the meeting between the EU Parliament Speaker Borelli and Hu Jintao in 2006, with the former emphasizing that the people of Europe are happy to see that China has found a development path that suits its own national conditions and that China has made great achievements in economic and social development.⁸²⁸ This overall exemplifies the link to the equal and separate civilizations-narrative, that had become pivotal to the regime security of the CCP, and their basis for establishing the state's ontological security. In essence, China is special, and good at it. The *ti/yong* distinction of keeping the essence of a separate civilization whilst building on modern technology is the guiding principle. It is of primary importance to underline that this time it actually works with great success, as it is intimately tied to the CCP's performance legitimacy amongst the Chinese population. Overall, the European influence was less keenly relevant as a building block for Chinese identity in this period, but was still of enough relevance to shape Chinese

⁸²⁶ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009b

⁸²⁷ Crookes 2013, 639–40

⁸²⁸ J. Hu 2006b

policies towards the European continent in a number of important ways. Mickhalski and Pan summarize the relationship between the parties as follows: "In the initial phase of the relationship the EU strove to socialize China into the prevailing order. However, once China learnt the rules of engagement it has endeavoured to diffuse its norms and worldviews upon the EU."⁸²⁹ This Chinese view is summarized in a typical statement by Wen Jiabao, reasserting the China and the EU have no fundamental disagreements, and that they both agree on multipolarization and civilizational diversity.⁸³⁰ However, this point of civilizational diversity, directly counters the EU's foundational narrative about universal rights being, precisely, universal.⁸³¹ From the Chinese side, the solution to this impasse was simple, in that it would merely need European recognition of *ti/yong* civilizational diversity, in line with the foundational narrative the CCP had based their government upon. In effect this was not just any diplomatic spat, but a fundamental disagreement that although of little practical, political, or economic importance, carried immense importance for the ontological narrative of each of these two polities.

As such, in spite of the diplomatic thaw between the countries, this split founded upon deep incompatibilities between the two polities' ontological narratives was still not going to go away easily. Following up on the drive to formalise the declarations of a comprehensive strategic partnership further, the 9th EU-China summit was a key moment where the negotiation for a new Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) was launched, meant to be a capstone of the new relationship.⁸³² In order to follow up on the rhetoric defining the bilateral relationship as a core one in the new age of multipolarity, the fact that the China-EU relationship was still mainly institutionalized in the old 1985 Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement, was

⁸²⁹ Michalski and Pan 2017b, 614

⁸³⁰ Wen 2010a

⁸³¹ Brown 2018; Z. Pan 2012b; Men 2011

⁸³² C.-H. Wu forthcoming, 1

increasingly problematic as the relationship evolved rapidly, and as such a new negotiated treaty was the logic next step. However, the simple act of formalising the relationship has not only proved difficult, but elusive. The PCA negotiations were mentioned as a key aspect in the subsequent summit declarations, but after 2009 this reference has disappeared, as the negotiations have been bogged down by a number of issues, most notably European insistence on including a human rights clause, and has de facto been stalled since 2011.⁸³³ This serves to highlight again the importance of identity as a factor in EU-China relations, and the influence of divergences in rather symbolic issues of political values and attitudes to sovereignty and universal rights that are important for both parties' ontological security. As such, to discount these identity concerns from an analysis of China – EU relations entails overlooking one of the most important factors of the political dynamic.

⁸³³ Men 2011, 548

Chapter 9: Europe's Conflicted Place in a New Era -

Beijing, London, and Oslo (2010-2016)

9.1 Introduction: European Problems and Solutions, 2010-2016

The political context of China-Europe relations in the years from 2010 to 2016 has been described as a half-decade of a maturing partnership, following on from the tumultuous divisions that cut short the earlier honeymoon phase.⁸³⁴ In this 'normalization' of the relationship was, however, included the continuation of key tensions over issues of identity and universal values that would still be a key factor shaping China's relationship with the European continent. Concurrent with Xi Jinping's consolidation of power within the Chinese political system and the continued growth of Chinese economic and military capabilities in the world, the Chinese main discourses relating to Europe developed in a more pronounced fashion along a trajectory where a successful Chinese model of development was increasingly contrasted to that of the West, and where a revived version of the Chinese past increasingly was placed as the imagined future of the CCP's national narrative. The empirical material thus demonstrates an increasing readiness by the Chinese government to exert political and economic capital in pursuit of European states' acquiescence to these discourses. As, in essence, the CCP sought to preserve face by more strictly policing European countries' adherence to recognising the Chinese great power-discourse.

⁸³⁴ Zhimin Chen and Armstrong 2012; Shambaugh 2013, 92–94; J. Li et al. 2017

These developments effected both the cause of, and the solution to, two recent examples of Sino-European political and diplomatic crises, namely those related to the UK government's decision to meet with the Dalai Lama, and China's 6 years boycott of Norway in the aftermath of the Nobel Committee awarding the Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. These two cases are well suited to demonstrate how a range of political and economic ties can be adversely affected by demonstrations of ontological security-seeking, as Beijing's leadership increasingly regarded China as a great power demanding respect for their separate model of government. As Xi Jinping declared a 'new era' for the People's Republic, these cases thus demonstrate the continuities with key narratives of bygone eras, as well as detailing how the shifts in the related discourses opened up for a more assertive range of policies. The 6-year diplomatic, and partly economic, boycott of Norway is a good case in point, as Chinese boycotts of European countries were already an established pattern, as detailed in the previous chapter, but never on such a scale or of such a long duration. This change in Chinese policies, and their willingness to escalate the issue is arguably representative of a distinct discursive change. In this, the EU was no longer a rising power, on which companionship China could reach their goal of a more multipolar world order, but rather a weakening entity with issues that meant it was easier for China to serve their goal of legitimacy by coercing European countries, in order to force its will through on political disagreements that were central ontological issues for the CCP.

This chapter will first trace this development of the Chinese leadership's discourses on Europe, and how these reflected the changes in the Chinese foundational narrative. In the second section the political ramifications of these changes are explored, through the analysis of the two cases of Chinese political boycotts towards the UK and Norway. In sum, the chapter will trace these changes in the Chinese leadership's discourses, analysing how they spoke about themselves, Europe, and the world in a different manner, and as such reacting and acting differently in their policies towards the European countries in question.

9.2 Foundational Narrative: Xi and China's Great Power Narrative

The developments in China's discourses regarding Europe were intimately linked to a number of broader changes in the Chinese perceptions of themselves and their place in the international system, that took place during this period. As such, the following section will give a brief overview of changes in the Chinese foundational narrative, and related general foreign policy discourse, before linking these developments to the specific discourses regarding the People's Republic's relations with Europe. The delineation of this chapter to the years 2010 to 2016 implies that the sources analysed derive from both the late years of Hu Jintao's presidency and the early period of Xi Jinping's ascendancy as the most dominant Chinese leader since Deng Xiaoping. The timeframe was chosen because not only it is in concurrence with the Chinese government's freeze of their relations with Norway, but more importantly because straddling the momentous change in power from Hu to Xi allows for a more succinct analysis of continuities and ruptures with regards to the Chinese main discourses, in the midst of pronounced changes to the country's domestic and foreign policy profiles.

With Xi Jinping's ascension to power in 2012/2013, he started off his leadership period through a very symbolically loaded public statement emphasizing a resurgent Chinese narrative, when he brought the entire Politburo's Standing Committee with him to the Chinese National Museum's exhibition on the "Chinese Road to Rejuvenation", during which he gave a speech emphasizing his lessons from the visit: "Through more than 170 years of persistent struggle after the Opium War, the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese nation was the bright prospect on the horizon. Now, the goal of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is closer than ever before in our

history.”⁸³⁵ Exemplifying one of the key strains of the foundational narrative of the CCP’s political project, he explicitly restated it as a clearly temporally defined narrative arc. In essence, the temporal narrative’s aspirations is that of achieving the China Dream through completing the Two Centenary Goals, that traces the future narrative of the Chinese Rise until the 100 years jubilee of the PRC in 2049, at which point China is meant to be a fully developed country.⁸³⁶ In the speech, of course, the continued relevance of the role of Europe in Chinese political identity narration is put on full display, tying into the broader ontological security rationale of the CCP as the guardian of the deliverance from the years of humiliation. Simultaneously it proves a good reference point for the constantly referred to Centennial Goals that showcases how material achievements are a key part of the ontological basis of the current Chinese political project.⁸³⁷

It should be noted that this discursive realignment did not involve the abandonment of the peaceful development slogan as a marker of government policies, as this continued to be used by Xi as a key trope in speeches on foreign policy; rather, it was increasingly taking the back stage in favour of Xi’s own more assertive policy agendas and slogans.⁸³⁸ As Xi Jinping pointed out in a 2013 Politburo study session, that peaceful development should never come at the expense of core national interests.⁸³⁹ This is also demonstrated through the content analysis in fig. 10. The centrality of Xi’s main international policy project, the ‘One Belt, One Road’, in diplomatic communications with Europe is essentially off the charts, as compared to other well-used *tifa*’s, something that both reflects the massive diplomatic offensive undertaken

⁸³⁵ Xi 2014a

⁸³⁶ Xi 2014a

⁸³⁷ Swaine 2015, 4–5; D. Lu 2016; Pu 2017, 2–3

⁸³⁸ Foot 2014; Brown 2016b; Shi 2015; Xuetong Yan 2014; Bekkevold 2018; Ross and Bekkevold 2016; Stenslie and Chen 2016

⁸³⁹ Xi 2014b

in drumming up international support in favour of the initiative, and also reflects how European countries eventually became regarded as a key constituent of the project. Whereas the foundational narrative only changed to an extent over the period of time analysed here, the main discourses saw considerable shifts.

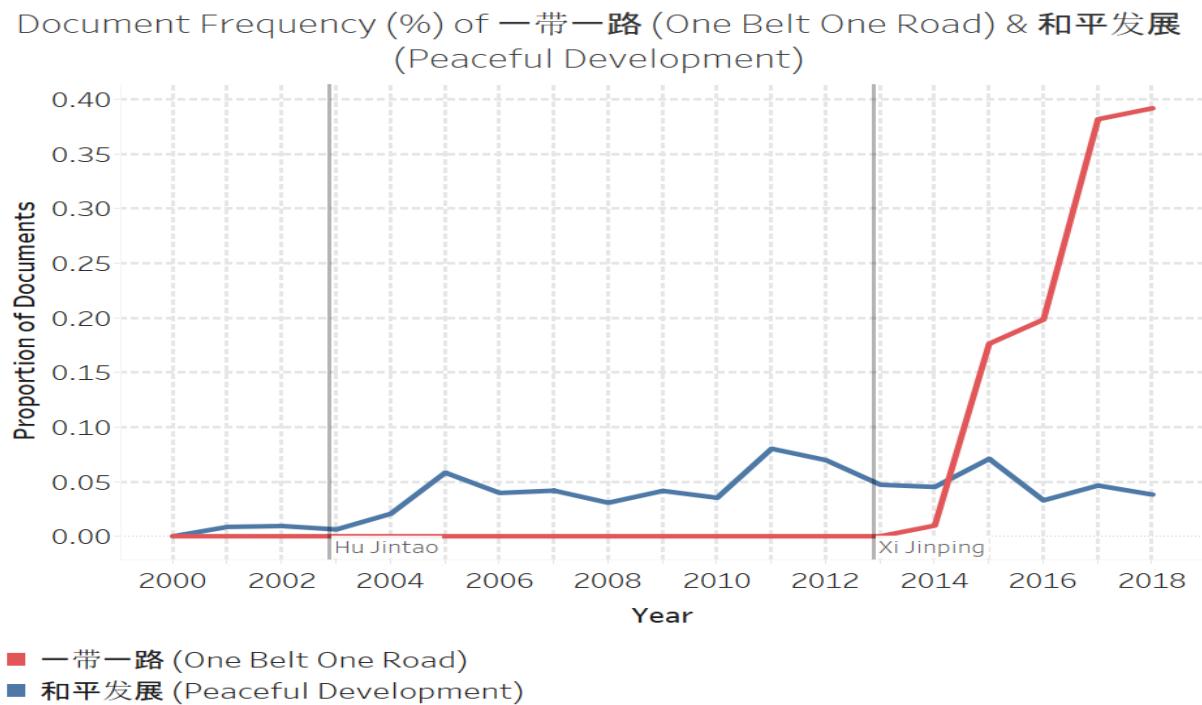


Figure 10: Use of the Terms "One Belt, One Road" and "Peaceful Development" in FMPRC Documents on Europe

The new policy initiatives Xi sought to implement, entered into a domestic political situation hallmarked by both a meteoric rise in international stature, but also in a situation where domestic economic, political and ecologic strains were getting ever more visible.⁸⁴⁰ Xi also struggled successfully against oppositional narratives emphasizing constitutionalism over centralized party leadership as a future vision of China.⁸⁴¹ The slogan of the China Dream, was embraced by Xi in his inaugural speech

⁸⁴⁰ Fewsmith 2016; Magnus 2018

⁸⁴¹ Creemers 2015

at the 12th NPC, in which he emphasized how the China Dream was part and parcel of the Great Rejuvenation narrative, of China rising to its former heights as a society and an international actor.⁸⁴² Thus it illustrates well how the China Dream was meant as a more assertive rhetorical tool, but that is still based on the extant foundational narrative of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people, and tied to the existing Two Centennial Goals of the CCP, whereby at the 100 year anniversary of the PRC in 2049, China would be a strong, prosperous developed country that has successfully achieved its revival, through, as Xi Jinping repeatedly has emphasized, adhering to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.⁸⁴³

This new range of foreign policy slogans and initiatives, does also ring true with one of Xi Jinping's insights, namely that in order to strengthen China internationally, it is important to strengthen the country's soft and discursive power, through seeking to ensure that "the Chinese story is well told".⁸⁴⁴ On this basis, Xi would later also outline two new foreign policy initiatives,⁸⁴⁵ namely that of the 'New Type of Great Power Relations' and the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative later renamed to the 'Belt and Road Initiative,' as a bold restatement of China's place in the world.⁸⁴⁶ These initiatives are focused on the rejuvenation of China, through increasing the centrality of China as the hub of both its near abroad, and the Eurasian continent more widely. As such, the utilization of the old Silk Road moniker is emblematic both of the aim at re-centring China in the international trade patterns, and the drive to re-embed the glories of old.

⁸⁴² Callahan 2012a; Callahan 2009; Jiayu Wang 2017, 831; Xi 2013

⁸⁴³ Xi 2014c

⁸⁴⁴ Xi 2017a, 197–98

⁸⁴⁵ Zeng and Breslin 2016; Nordin and Weissmann 2018; Ferdinand 2016; Callahan 2016

⁸⁴⁶ Callahan 2016; Casarini 2016

One primary thing to note from the European perspective, however, when analysing Xi's initiatives to turn China from a rules-taker to more of a rules-shaper, is the extent to which Europe and the EU was a marginal concern in both the initiatives' formulation and implementation. As Zeng's comprehensive analysis demonstrated, the new type of great power relations, originally coined by Jiang Zemin as a goal for all of Beijing's relations with larger countries, including Europe, was instead under Xi rebranded into an exercise focusing on US-China relations. This outlook on the global political scene thus left little room for the EU. The OBOR also was firstly meant as a Chinese neighbourhood initiative, to the extent that the programme was not even mentioned in the EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, of 2013, and only became a part of the initiative at around the same time as Africa was also included in the planning the year after, in 2014.⁸⁴⁷ In his congratulatory note celebrating 40 years of diplomatic ties with the EU, Xi would still describe their relationship as one of the globe's most important.⁸⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the analysis of Chinese academic discourse from 1998 to 2014 by Zeng and Breslin concludes, that in scholarly works on the new type of great power relationship, the EU is very rarely mentioned, and singular European countries even less so. The overwhelming definition of a great power is the USA, and increasingly also China itself.⁸⁴⁹

This, then, forms a constituent part of the Chinese foundational narrative structured around the idea of China as an equal and separate civilization-turned-polity. However, the texts from these years demonstrate a readjustment of this foundational narrative, towards a further emphasis on how China's successful and separate social model makes it deserve the rights and privileges of a great power. One of the arenas where this readjusted narrative would play out was in Europe, where in the midst of growing

⁸⁴⁷ Xi 2017b; Zeng 2017

⁸⁴⁸ Xi 2017c

⁸⁴⁹ Zeng and Breslin 2016, 785

economic ties there were dispersed serious diplomatic crises tied to this Chinese identity factor. As such, the foundational narrative with regards to Europe was fairly similar to the narrative traced throughout the previous chapters, but with a substantial increase in the emphasis of China going from being a separate civilization seeking equality and redress, to a civilization not only separate but successfully so. This narrative was embedded in the general developments of China's view of itself and its place in the world, and also with regards to Europe.⁸⁵⁰ This alteration of the PRC's foundational narrative further shaped the main Chinese official discourses with regards to Europe. Both in the case of the UK, as a former empire with particular historical and current ties to China, and Norway, as a small state actor on Europe's northern periphery, these general developments in China's Europe discourses, would bring ontological security into play in the relationship with China in particular ways. The discursive changes that shaped the political landscape for the two countries' coming diplomatic crises with Beijing, were arguably also part and parcel of the general developments of China's view of Europe overall.



—Figure 11: Overview of the three-layered China's discursive construct of Europe, 2010-2016

⁸⁵⁰ Zheng 2011

9.3 Main Discourses: Great Power China Reassesses Europe

Based on the foundational Chinese narrative explored above, the four main derived discourses of relevance for the China-Europe relationship framed the developing relationship in a manner demonstrating both continuities and some subtle, but consequential, shifts. (See fig. 11) The first main discourse draws upon the co-rising power poles discourse identified in earlier chapters, but whose main subject position has changed to reassess the relative power positions of China and the EU. To a larger extent it implies China now demanding recognition as a great power in its own right, rather than as a co-developing new power pole in the international multipolar landscape. Second, this is closely related to an increased emphasis on the importance of external recognition of China's status. The third main discourse emphasizes Europe and China as key civilizations of the East and West, but with an increasingly added focus on how the Chinese Eastern civilization is now on the brink of its great renaissance. Fourth, the discourse branding China and the EU as the largest developing country and the largest developed, respectively, on different stages of an overall similar development trajectory, did increasingly recede in favour of an emphasis on the uniqueness of China's socialist model with Chinese characteristics. The idea of China as politically separate and exceptional thus gave rise to a discourse echoing the *ti/yong* discourse of the ancient self-strengtheners only with the exception of this time being successful in the endeavour. This trend is also captured quantitatively, as figure 12 demonstrates the increasing prevalence of mentions of socialist ideology in the diplomatic documents during the Xi era. Simultaneously, the key term of the 'Great Rejuvenation' is an important example of how key discursive

trends that started under Hu, increased immensely in discursive importance and frequency during Xi's leadership.

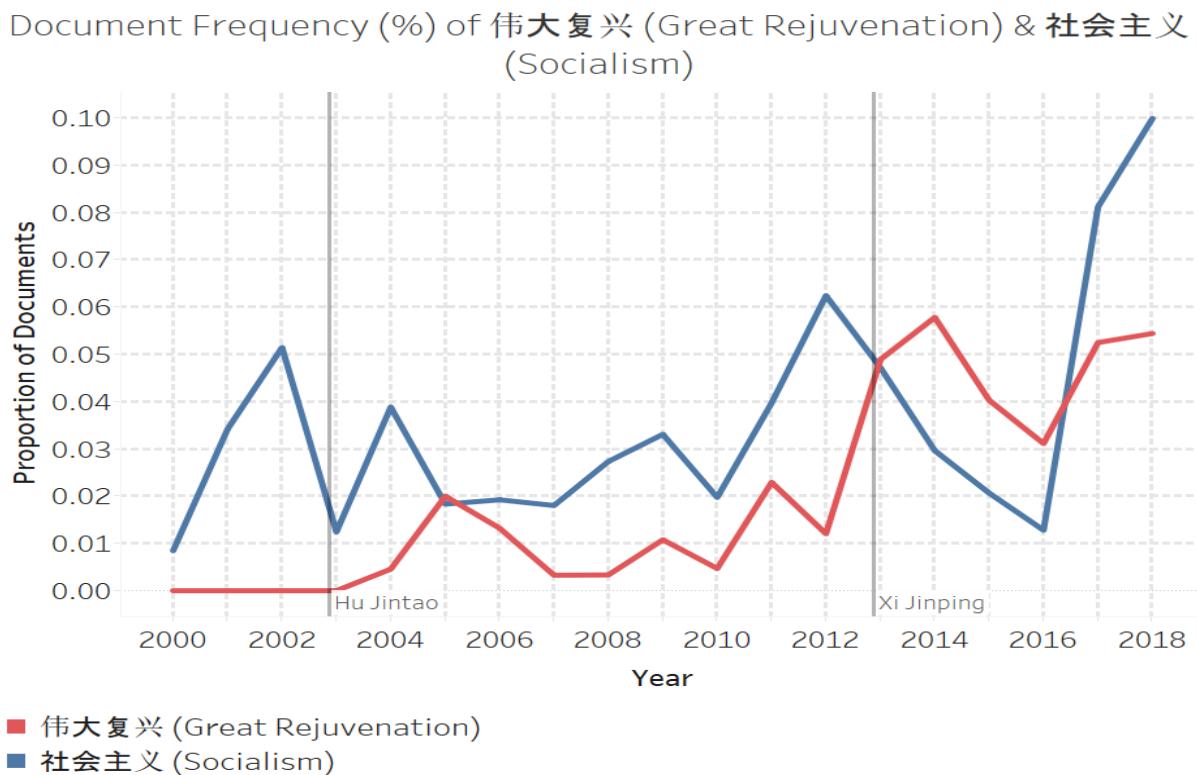


Figure 12: Use of the Terms "Great Rejuvenation" and "Socialism" in FMPRC Documents on Europe

These changing main discourses opened for a number of consequential changes in the derived policy directions. These manifested themselves mainly as an increased drive for securing recognition of China's improved status from its European partners, and increasingly assertive demands for recognition of China's perceived rightful global role, and respect for their social, political and economic model. This assertiveness was thus no longer moderated by the idea of securing European support as an emerging axis of a new multipolar world, but by securing their recognition for the CCP's new discursive constructs of themselves and China's perceived rightful global role.

9.3.1 *Respecting a Great Power's Status*

One of the key developments in the Chinese discursive context for its Europe policies for this period, is thus the gradual reassessment of both their own and the European continent's place in the international system. As mentioned, the simultaneous accrual of economic and political power for the PRC, coupled with repeated European issues along both economic and political lines, is reflected in an increasing Chinese focus on having European countries recognising China's great power interests. This discourse marks a substantial change from earlier language emphasizing the EU as a co-rising power pole and potential alliance partner. The earlier alliance-partner discourse would increasingly disappear out of use in the key rhetoric, in line with the increased focus on both the fundamental civilizational difference, and the perceived subtraction of the relative power gap between the parties.

A case in point with regards to Europe's diminished role, is illustrated through how Xi Jinping would list to a UN summit in Geneva, his ambition to create, respectively, a new type of great power relationship with the US, a comprehensive strategic partnership with Russia, a civilizational partnership with Europe, and stand in solidarity with the BRICS.⁸⁵¹ Comparing this with the PRC rhetoric on a potential China-EU axis from a decade earlier, demonstrates the change in quite plain terms. The 2014 Chinese EU Policy Paper thus frames the relationship by emphasizing how the world, China, and the EU has changed during these last 10 years, and that the world has indeed been both more globalized and multipolar. On this background, the preamble emphasizes two main developments, firstly, that fact that "China's comprehensive national power has been substantially elevated, now playing a critical role in effecting major international and regional issues. But China is still a developing

⁸⁵¹ Xi 2017d

country, with existing prominent question regarding a development that is uneven, uncoordinated, and unsustainable.”⁸⁵²

The second relevant main point in the preamble is that the section on the EU starts out by emphasizing that “The EU because of the influence from the international financial crisis, has encountered its most sever challenge since the Cold War, and need to urgently address a number of deeply rooted structural and systematic issues”⁸⁵³ The economic aspect of the discursive change can be exemplified by Wen’s 2010 speech to the EU-China Business Summit in Brussels, where he heralded the Chinese support for a struggling European economy:

In the cold winter in January 2009, I visited Europe and brought with me not only the confidence needed to overcome the financial crisis, but also a procurement delegation to place orders to the European countries. The EU is a strategic partner to China, and China did not look on unconcerned when some eurozone countries were in trouble. (...) We will continue to render assistance and tide some countries over their difficulties. China is a friend indeed⁸⁵⁴

This discourse of China increasingly demanding to be treated as a great power, with all the status and interest recognition that entails, is further emphasized in the 2014 Chinese Whitepaper on their EU policies. And as fig. 6 of Chapter 7 demonstrated, the focus on Chinese core interests is increasingly prevalent in Beijing’s international diplomatic communications with Europe. The language on human rights is, following from the implied logic of this restatement of civilizational difference, toned down. The additional points thus underline that the EU should in its dialogues, based on mutual respect and non-interference, be paying equal weight to all types of human rights,

⁸⁵² PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014

⁸⁵³ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014

⁸⁵⁴ Wen 2010b

including the citizens, economic, and cultural privileges, and that the EU should furthermore refrain from using single cases to interfere in China's legal sovereignty and internal politics.⁸⁵⁵

This, is in essence, marks a step further away from the idea of Europe as a lodestar with regards to political values. Instead, Beijing engages with Europe as an entity with one particular view on human rights, that is different from an equally valid Chinese view of what constitutes human rights. China is thus to a lesser extent willing to remain a norms-taker, implementing the international norms to a large extent defined by the Western powers in the period after the Second World War. This was clearly formulated in the key decision communicated from the 4th Plenum of the 18th CCP Central Committee in 2014, to ensure that China would "vigorously participate in the formulation of international rules and regulations (国际规则), promote the handling of foreign-related economic and social affairs according to the law, strengthen our country's discourse power (话语权) and influence in international legal affairs."⁸⁵⁶ The Chinese leadership's main discourse on its relations to Europe was thus increasingly based on the conception of regarding itself as a great power, increasingly confident of an alternative mode of governance. Thus, as a matter of seeking ontological security for this great power status, the Chinese government was increasingly demanding the respect they felt belong to a great power in the world.

9.3.2 *Equality and Recognition*

Secondly, although the discourse propagated through the speeches, policy declarations and communiqües analysed here depicts China and Europe as partners and growing powers that together can contribute to making a fairer and more

⁸⁵⁵ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014

⁸⁵⁶ CCP Central Committee 2014

democratic political system, the discourse of Europe and China as equal but fundamentally different civilizations is still a key representation. As articulated in a typical manner by Hu Jintao; “All countries, no matter if they are large or small, poor or rich, are equal members of the international society. (...) Our world is abundant with different colours, it is impossible to have only one model. One should agree to recognize the world’s diversity, respect each country’s history, culture, system of society, and development path.”⁸⁵⁷ This depiction of civilizational equality was further deepened by Xi Jinping, who during his keynote speech in Bruges would extend the equality between Europe and China further through stating that they were both essentially at similar stages of facing socioeconomic challenges. Thus, he exemplified again the discursive change from the earlier emphasis on Europe and China as a developed continent and a developing country, respectively. “China and Europe are both in a crucial period of their development, both are facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges (...) China is the world’s largest developing country. China’s development has acquired historical progress, the economy has in total already leapt to the second largest in the world.”⁸⁵⁸

For a further restatement of same Chinese assessment of global trends, Xi’s speech to the UN in Geneva, was a further underlining of the Chinese emphasis on equality and recognition as a great power within the sovereignty doctrine.⁸⁵⁹ In his speech Xi very explicitly drew upon the European heritage of this doctrine at the Peace of Westphalia, and linking this directly to the Chinese ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,’ as part of a coherent historical arch in international relations, of which the Chinese discourse now portrayed China as a main protector of the principles fleshed out by

⁸⁵⁷ J. Hu 2016a

⁸⁵⁸ Xi 2014f

⁸⁵⁹ Xi 2017d

the European great powers centuries ago, and which the European countries had increasingly turned their back to: "Throughout the history of modern times, the establishment of a fair and reasonable international order is the goal that mankind is striving for."⁸⁶⁰

9.3.3 *A Great Civilization, Rejuvenated*

Another main discourse predicated on the foundational narrative of the PRC as the representative of a distinct and separate civilization, is the increased focus on the rejuvenation and rebirth of the great Chinese civilization. This altered discourse increasingly emphasizes China not only as a civilization with long historical roots, but one that has in its essence been preserved unadulterated for thousands of years, and is now about to flourish back to its rightful position after being weakened though a century of Western influences. The Chinese civilization that has stayed unique to the nation for so long, is also closer than ever to being fully rejuvenated after the 100 years of shame. This main discourse was held out by Xi Jinping as one of the key reasons why China needs a new foreign policy, in order to better reflect its new position in the world.⁸⁶¹

In a 2014 speech at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris Xi Jinping explicated further on this basic view of the world as divided into separate and distinct civilizations with deep roots. Drawing on the old discursive construct of the Chinese as a civilizational essence (*ti*) as opposed to the applied technology (*yong*) of the West, this distinction is also symptomatic of a broader trend amongst non-Western states embracing civilizational identities.⁸⁶² In the Chinese case this extends to a scholarly fascination

⁸⁶⁰ Xi 2017d

⁸⁶¹ Xi 2017e

⁸⁶² Coker 2019

for Huntington's Clash of Civilizations thesis, although in line with the political speeches quoted here, one of the main debates revolves around the degree to which different civilizations predicates a clash, or peaceful co-existence.⁸⁶³ As Gries summarizes the political repercussions of this civilizational narrative: "Many Chinese nationalists fear that modernization will lead to 'peaceful evolution': cultural convergence or Westernization. By reifying cultural differences, Huntington creates space for a non-Western but modern China."⁸⁶⁴ This latter point, again, ties into the same dilemma of technology and values as the *ti/yong* dilemma the early Chinese reformers were struggling with.

Hence, Xi goes on for a long while detailing the various foreign influences on Chinese culture, from painting styles to Buddhism, but emphasizing how even Buddhism ended up as Buddhism "with Chinese Characteristics", whilst the Chinese civilization still had staid stable an solid throughout 5000 years. Thus, "blindly copying other civilizations is like chopping off ones toes to fit into another man's shoes."⁸⁶⁵ This main discourse also stayed central with regards to the Chinese view of Europe, as communicated through Xi Jinping's leadership till date:

China is the Eastern civilization's important representative, whilst Europe is the Western civilization's birthplace. (...) China advocates "harmony without uniformity", and the EU people emphasizes "unity of diversity". Let China and Europe work hard together, to promote all of mankind's civilizations' flowers to compete and blossom.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶³ Jisi Wang 2009; Wang Jisi 1995; Callahan 2005a; Callahan 2006a, 12–14

⁸⁶⁴ Gries 2004, 41

⁸⁶⁵ Xi 2014d

⁸⁶⁶ Xi 2014f

As the 2014 Whitepaper on the EU summarizes it, China hopes that together with Europe they can bring together the two great civilizations of East and West, “establishing in common a prosperous model for different civilizations harmoniously staying different, through pluralism, mutual reflection, and mutual learning.”⁸⁶⁷ As Xi Jinping would later explicate further, in poetic terms, illustrating the incompatibility between the world’s social systems as based on fundamental civilizations differences:

China cannot copy wholesale the other countries’ government systems and development models, not only would it not fit us but it could bring catastrophic consequences. Over 2000 years ago the Chinese people had already come to understand this principle: ‘Tangerine trees grown in the South yield tangerines, whereas grown in the North it yields [sour] trifoliate oranges, even though the leaves look similar the taste is not the same. How come? Because the water and soil is different.’⁸⁶⁸

This stronger emphasis on the polity of the PRC as the political embodiment of the Chinese civilization, writ large, is a momentous continuation and intensification of the extant discourses from decades earlier, where this aspect was downplayed in favour of a focus on economic cooperation and convergence.⁸⁶⁹ As such, Coker has termed China as a prime example of the advent in contemporary international relations of the ‘civilizational state’, due to the PRC’s increased insistence on embodying an essentially unchanging and self-contained axiomatic cultural essence.⁸⁷⁰

9.3.4 *Successful Marxist-Confucian Self-Strengtheners*

Intimately tied to the idea of the rebirth of the unique Chinese civilization in its rightful place internationally, is the increasingly vocal assertion that links this

⁸⁶⁷ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014

⁸⁶⁸ Xi 2014f

⁸⁶⁹ Callahan 2012a

⁸⁷⁰ Coker 2019, 30

civilizational distinction to the Communist Party as the only appropriate vehicle for this thousand-year-old civilization. The Communist and Confucian strands are thus increasingly brought together to explain the successful Chinese model. One can trace the echoes of the former Self-Strengthening that sought to modernise China without changing the country's old authoritarian model. Only this time, as the main discourse goes, the CCP actually managed this feat with great success. As formulated by Xi Jinping at the College of Europe in Bruges:

The Chinese people painfully sought for a road that fit China's national conditions. exploring long and hard for a path that would suit China's national conditions. They experimented with constitutional monarchy, imperial restoration, parliamentarism, multi-party system and presidential government, yet the result was that they all did not work. Finally, China chose the road of socialism (...) The unique traditional culture, the unique historical fate, the unique national spirit, preordained that China would inevitably only follow a development road that suits its own national characteristics. We embarked on such a road, and achieved success.⁸⁷¹

There is thus under Xi Jinping a new emphasis on China's development model as being able to successfully modernise and provide itself with a great power status and material welfare, whilst retaining its position as a separate political and ethical system. This narrative thus seeks to smooth out the storytelling of the Chinese nation, as being unbroken and beholden to same set of traditional values, despite all the tumults, political experimentations and radical changes of China's modern history. It is, of course, easy to spot the inherent tensions in this construct, but creatively rewriting or overlooking these tensions are part of the political struggle over any narrative. The welding of the Chinese civilization to the Chinese Communist Party, was increasingly taking a more dominant role in the public discourse, even to the extent of supplanting

⁸⁷¹ Xi 2014f

Marxist elements.⁸⁷² This is, however, only up to a point. As such, arguably one of the more interesting new elements of the main discourses upon which the CCP seeks to shore up their ontological security and popular legitimacy, is precisely by seeking to transcend what for a century was considered to be the direct conflict between communism and traditional Chinese culture and philosophy, into a CCP-defined amalgam of the Chinese civilization. As Xi Jinping repeatedly has emphasized, “only socialism can save China, only Socialism with Chinese characteristics can develop China”⁸⁷³ Westernization, on the other hand, had according to Xi only lead to chaos in the developing countries that were forced to undertake it after the Cold War.⁸⁷⁴ This more forceful ideological turn against Westernization, is part and parcel of the accelerating offensive against universal values throughout the party system, as exemplified in the leaked “Document no. 9” circulated to the CCP cadres warning of the need to redouble efforts at withstanding the threats of Western democracy and universal values.⁸⁷⁵ The aim of combining into one both the, very much Western-derived, socialist values, and the traditional values that the CCP until recently was vehemently against, is well summarized by Xi to a Politburo study session in 2014: “Cultivating and promoting Socialism’s core values must be based on China’s splendid traditional culture’s solid core values”⁸⁷⁶ This welding of the somewhat awkward fit between Marxist dialectics combined with a Party-approved version of Confucius, is further exemplified by the large-scale spread of Confucius institutes as the spearhead of Chinese soft-power efforts, or notably when Xi Jinping became the first CCP leader to attend the yearly celebrations marking Confucius’ death.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷² de Burgh and Feng 2017

⁸⁷³ Xi 2012

⁸⁷⁴ Xi 2018

⁸⁷⁵ Central Committee of the CCP’s General Office 2013; Buckley 2013

⁸⁷⁶ Xi 2014e

⁸⁷⁷ Coker 2019, 105; Yiqian Zhang 2014

9.4 Political Repercussions: New European Challenges to the Narrative

9.4.1 *Political Background*

As demonstrated in the sections above, the main discourses relevant to China's policies towards Europe showcased certain significant changes. In essence, the Chinese leadership propagated a set of discourses centred on the idea that China had taken a substantial leap on the narrative trajectory that had long been the fundament for the CCP's legitimacy and was now seeking recognition from Europe on a different level than in earlier decades. The ascendance of Xi Jinping as the most dominant Chinese leader since, at least, Deng Xiaoping, dovetailed with this increasingly assertive set of discourses. These discourses would then feed into a derived set of policy directions that sought to bring the relations with the European countries more in line with the recognition sought for China's self-perceived new status in the world. The Chinese IR scholar Yan Xuetong has summarized the shift from the Deng era's policy of keeping a low profile, to what he terms as Xi's policy of 'Striving for Achievement', where the goal of the former was economic gains, while the focus of the latter is on strengthening political support and recognition from abroad.⁸⁷⁸ Arguably, the more assertive identity recognition drive following from these discursive changes was an important contributing factor to two crises in the relationship between China and European countries, namely the boycott and later embrace of the relationship with the UK, and the 6-year freeze in China's relations with Norway. The following section will briefly present each of these events, before going on to explore how these political imbroglios were shaped by a particularly Chinese mode of ontological security seeking.

⁸⁷⁸ Xuetong Yan 2014, 182–84

Overall, the years from 2010 to 2016 witnessed an increasing realization amongst European leaders of the limits of their power to 'Europeanise' China through their multi-pronged engagement with the country.⁸⁷⁹ In economic terms, the decade following the financial crises saw one of the fastest periods of development in China-EU trade and investment ties, even though this continued rapid deepening of the economic relationship happened on the background of unparalleled economic and political stress for the European Union, and would eventually lay some of the groundwork for later tensions to arise in Europe with regards to both the trade flows and the influx of Chinese FDI.⁸⁸⁰ In many ways, these two developments can be said to be interrelated, as the waning European influence after the Great Recession, both emphasized the increasing realignment of the two parties relative power and status. Importantly, the Euro-crisis and the deep-rooted economic and political challenges within the Union that the crisis laid bare, caused a re-evaluation of the EU that reverberated beyond elite policy circles in China, also to the general populace.⁸⁸¹ As summarized by Michael Cox; "The global image of Europe could not be more different. Thus, whereas China seems to be (and in many respects is) on 'the up', Europe looks to be 'on the way down'."⁸⁸² In line with this realignment, the increasingly assertive civilizational-centric character of the Chinese regime's basis of ontological security, was co-constituted with Beijing's view of their European partners.

Thus, the diplomatic conflict between the UK and China was, yet again, an example of the Chinese government seeking to impose their view on something constituting a

⁸⁷⁹ Godement and Vasselier 2017; Gottwald 2010; EU Commission 2019; ETNC 2018; C.-H. Wu forthcoming

⁸⁸⁰ Farnell and Crookes 2016, 226–29; Berkofsky 2013; BDI 2019

⁸⁸¹ Chaban, Holland, and Ryan 2009; Li Zhang 2016

⁸⁸² Cox 2018, 231

threat to their ontological security and geographical sovereignty. The 14th Dalai Lama was planning to a trip to the UK in May, where he was to receive the Templeton Prize for his spiritual work.⁸⁸³ When then-UK Prime Minister David Cameron signalled that he found it reasonable to meet with the Dalai Lama during his trip to the UK, the Chinese immediately issued stark warnings against such a meeting to find place. As it became known to the public some weeks later, the Chinese government even decided to signal their displeasure through cancelling the planned trip of State Councillor Dai Bingguo.⁸⁸⁴

Despite these warnings, David Cameron decided to meet with the Dalai Lama in May 2012. In keeping with former Prime Minister Gordon Brown's then quite successful strategy of avoiding to antagonise the Chinese, he met with the Dalai Lama not in the PM's official residence, but instead in the St. Paul's Cathedral. Thus emphasizing the intention to meet with the Dalai Lama in his function as a religious figure, and not a political leader.⁸⁸⁵ However, this time around this diplomatic signalling was met with massive Chinese condemnation. The Chinese government ceased all ministerial-level contact, and later forced David Cameron to cancel a planned visit to Beijing, as no Chinese official was ostensibly available to meeting with him.⁸⁸⁶ Immediately after the meeting, Chinese called the UK ambassador on the carpet and warned that what had transpired constituted a "grave interference in Chinese internal affairs, harmed China's core interests, and hurt the feelings of the Chinese people".⁸⁸⁷

All throughout this period of intense volatility in the UK-China relationship, Norway was going through a similarly testing time after having been judged by Beijing to

⁸⁸³ Branigan 2012

⁸⁸⁴ Branigan 2012

⁸⁸⁵ BBC News 2012

⁸⁸⁶ Watt 2013

⁸⁸⁷ T. Song 2012

transgress against these same Chinese core interests and important concerns. Unlike the usually year-long Chinese boycotts treated earlier in this thesis, the Chinese diplomatic freeze towards Norway lasted for a total of more than 6 years, from 2010 to 2016. The duration of a Chinese political boycott stretching for more than half a decade, is quite unprecedented in the contemporary history of China-Europe relations, and makes the case of China-Norway ties another salient testing case for the role of ontological security in Chinese policies towards European countries.

The boycott of Norway came about as a result of Norwegian Nobel Committee deciding in October 2010, in spite of intense Chinese lobbying,⁸⁸⁸ to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo for his “long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.”⁸⁸⁹ With Liu Xiaobo still imprisoned in Chinese jail, where he would later pass away in 2017, the prize was given in absentia. Chinese authorities reacted with fury to Liu Xiaobo’s award, and the Norwegian government’s customary endorsement of the Nobel Committee’s choice. The charge was in line with the one raised towards the UK, arguing the award constituted serious interference in China’s political and legal affairs.⁸⁹⁰ Beijing submitted protests to Norwegian representatives both in Beijing and Oslo, and sought to pressure other countries not to send representatives to the award ceremony.⁸⁹¹ Former Norwegian ambassador Holvik said in an interview, he had heard there were high-level discussions in Beijing on whether the Norwegian ambassador should be expelled, but this was decided against, probably because it would serve to worsen an already strained relationship with Western countries.⁸⁹² In Chinese state media the Dalai Lama’s Peace Prize was

⁸⁸⁸ Lundestad 2015, 250–60; Xi 2010

⁸⁸⁹ The Norwegian Nobel Committee 2010

⁸⁹⁰ China.com.cn 2010

⁸⁹¹ Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson 2015, 101–5

given renewed emphasis as a proof of the Nobel Committee's continuing intention to westernize, split and weaken China.⁸⁹³

Accordingly, a Chinese political boycott towards Norway was enacted. For more than six years after Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, there was no bilateral political contact between Norway and China on the governmental level.⁸⁹⁴ Although there continued to be contacts between the countries in multilateral settings, the extent and duration of the political boycott was of a rather singular nature, and reflected the determination of Chinese authorities to discourage outside interference, especially from other European governments, in affairs deemed sensitive for the survival of the party system. Like in the UK, the economic repercussions were less severe than often feared.⁸⁹⁵ The factor of the Nobel Committee's official independence from Norwegian political authorities, unlike what is sometimes asserted the Nobel Peace Prize is not awarded by the Norwegian Parliament,⁸⁹⁶ also made the government's process of appeasing the Chinese demands extra difficult.

9.4.2 *The Boycotts and the Identity Factor*

The same main Chinese discourses on their relations with Europe permeated Beijing's relations with both the UK and Norway throughout this period. This main discourse of recognition as an equal was clearly on display in both cases. As the joint statement between China and the UK in 2014, a keystone in the normalization of the relationship after the Chinese boycott, stated as one of the many points;

The two sides are willing to deepen their understanding of each other's development path and enhance political mutual trust. The

⁸⁹³ Yi 2010; H. Liu 2010

⁸⁹⁴ Brende 2017; Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson 2017

⁸⁹⁵ Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson 2015

⁸⁹⁶ Blackwill and Harris 2016, 129

two sides emphasize the significance of promoting and protecting human rights and the rule of law, and are willing to strengthen human rights dialogue on the basis of equality and mutual respect. As a long-term policy of the British side, the UK recognizes that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China and does not support 'Tibet independence'.⁸⁹⁷

This example illustrates the balance point, again, between the permissible with regards to the respective actors' ontological security. Human rights are explicitly mentioned in the text, but the universalist notions of human rights are demarcated within the discourse of civilizational equality and coexistence of different social systems. This thus provides a firewall that in essence entails the message that no other country is in a position to tell China what to do. On a press conference in 2011 after David Cameron had expressed publicly his view on the importance of human rights, Wen Jiabao responded in pointed, and illustrative, fashion: "On human rights, China and the UK should respect each other, respect the facts, treat each other as equals, engage in more cooperation than finger-pointing and resolve our differences through dialogue".⁸⁹⁸

The increased Chinese focus on having their new great power status recognized, further accentuated the importance of this issue. It deserves to be noted that Chinese officials keep up the practice of referring to the large European countries, such as the UK, as great powers. However, a key thing to note is the increasing use of defining China as another one of these great powers, as for example Li Keqiang expressed to David Cameron, in emphasizing that the two countries should treat each other as equals, and respect each other's core interests, given that "both China and the UK are great powers with worldwide influence (中英都是世界上有影响的大国).⁸⁹⁹ Arguably,

⁸⁹⁷ FMPRC 2014

⁸⁹⁸ BBC News 2011

⁸⁹⁹ K. Li 2013

the status upgrade that China sought recognition of can be seen as manifested in the change of the Chinese approach to the Dalai Lama visit that triggered the crisis detailed in this chapter. As noted earlier, the Dalai Lama's travels to visit various European countries and their heads of states and governments, is not at all a new phenomenon, but has rather been a staple of the exiled Tibetan leader's travel plans for decades. In fact, only 4 years earlier, then British PM Gordon Brown had met with the Dalai Lama in similar circumstances in 2008. As summarized by Brown and Crossick:

Surprisingly the UK, which in Chinese eyes has been the least favourite European country at least during the long years of negotiations over the hand-back of Hong Kong, avoided similar repercussions when Prime Minister Gordon Brown met the Dalai Lama. This was due to Downing Street's recognition of the sensitive nature of the meeting by hosting it at Lambeth Palace, the home of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and meeting the Dalai Lama solely as a religious leader.⁹⁰⁰

However, when David Cameron, and his deputy Nick Clegg sought to apply the very same recipe through meeting the Dalai Lama in the St. Paul's Cathedral, they were to find that over the last few years the Chinese position had changed fundamentally, thus throwing the bilateral relationship into another serious crisis.⁹⁰¹

This was not only due to an increased Chinese sensitivity over the issue in the aftermath of the 2008 protests in Tibet,⁹⁰² but also because as a general trend in the Chinese world view was opening for a range of policy directions that opened for a far more assertive pursuit of acquiescence of the Chinese foundational narrative from its European counterparts. The Chinese demand for symbolic recognition of their self-

⁹⁰⁰ Brown and Crossick 2009

⁹⁰¹ Brown 2016a, 42–43

⁹⁰² R. Barnett 2009; Y. Huang and Fahmy 2013

perceived new standing in the world, is also brought into light by the symbolically significant act of the in 2014, when in the planning of the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit meant as an important event to demarcate the full normalization of the ties, the Chinese reportedly threatened to cancel the entire trip, unless Li was granted a reception with Queen Elizabeth II.⁹⁰³ That the Chinese would seek this kind of symbolic recognition, which was out of the ordinary according to the UK diplomatic protocol, since the Queen usually only receives Heads of State and not Heads of Government, and that they would insist on forcing the matter through threatening to cancel this important official visit altogether, speaks volumes of the role of ontological security-seeking in Beijing's relations with European countries. Premier Li did indeed get to meet the Queen at Windsor Castle,⁹⁰⁴ and the UK government would later enact a large-scale charm offensive towards the Chinese government, including an extremely lavish spectacle for Chinese President Xi Jinping on his visit in 2015.⁹⁰⁵

During a year of Chinese boycott of ministerial contact, including the absence of Chinese senior officials at the 2012 London Olympics, the Chinese repeatedly insisted that the onus was on the British to take the first step to repair the relations they had transgressed against, similar to the rhetoric applied towards Norway in the same time period. At the end of July 2012 Dai Bingguo finally arrived in the UK to attend the Olympics Opening Ceremony in place of more senior political figures, and proclaimed the will to move forward, and that it was necessary to overcome the current difficulties in the relationship.⁹⁰⁶ In 2013 David Cameron did bow to the pressure, partly

⁹⁰³ Elliott and Lewis 2014; Stacey 2014

⁹⁰⁴ K. Li 2014; In China's English-language coverage of the event, it was pointed out how this entailed being granted the same status as Angela Merkel, who was once granted audience with the Queen despite not being Germany's formal Head of State. See C. Zhang 2014

⁹⁰⁵ Odell 2015; X. Yan 2014, 177–78

⁹⁰⁶ Dai 2012

motivated by a need to increase FDI in the UK, and declared to the Parliament, in the same vein as the French declaration some years earlier, that the UK respected China's sovereignty, and did not support Tibetan independence.⁹⁰⁷ Cameron's comments to the British Parliament then led to a phone conversation shortly after, between the UK Foreign Secretary Hague, and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.⁹⁰⁸

The phone call between Wang Yi and Hague laid out the terms of the reestablishment of normal relations, with Hague making sure to say all the right things. As the Chinese transcript of the conversation details, Hague expressed recognition of key strands of the Chinese foundational narrative, by expressing that "the UK welcomes China's strength, prosperity and success (...) respects China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, recognizes that Tibet is a part of China, does not support 'Tibetan independence', fully recognized the sensitivity of Tibet issues, and is willing to properly handle it on the basis of respecting China's deep concerns."⁹⁰⁹ As in the case of France some years earlier, this statement of recognition and the implied changes in political practices lead to a normalization of the relationship, that was later to be followed by a rapid accelerating in Sino-UK ties. The cabinet of David Cameron thus made relations with China in to one of the centrepieces of their foreign policies.⁹¹⁰ Thus, in September of the same year, Wang Yi said that after a lot of hard work, the Sino-UK relationship had overcome the hardship, and entered a new phase. However, he was soon to emphasise the implicit conditions of this new phase in the relationship, namely that "both sides should earnestly respect each other's core interests and important concerns (双方应切实尊重彼此的核心利益和重大关切)"⁹¹¹

⁹⁰⁷ Reilly 2017, 177

⁹⁰⁸ Hope 2013

⁹⁰⁹ Yi Wang 2013a

⁹¹⁰ Odell 2015; Watt 2013

⁹¹¹ Yi Wang 2013b

The case of Norwegian political and diplomatic efforts at manoeuvring the bilateral relationship with China towards normalization, also clearly displays how the issue was framed by the Chinese through the same main discursive structures. Furthermore, in demarcating how the solution, similar to the case of the UK, involved substantial and official Norwegian acquiescence to recognize, legitimise, and give face to the Chinese Communist Party's key discourses. This pattern was also recognized by the Norwegian government, who thus sought to model their solutions after the statement that had normalized the Danish-Chinese relationship after their recent diplomatic spat following a reception of the Dalai Lama.⁹¹² After a number of false starts, and later leaked negotiation efforts, one of which reportedly stranded based essentially on the then-Norwegian Prime Minister's assessment that the deal being proposed, would be too starkly at odds with the tenets of the Norwegian self-image, and as such pose a challenge to the Norwegian ontological security, a solution was found after six years.⁹¹³ Notably, part of that process entailed Norway's Prime Minister breaking custom by not meeting with the Dalai Lama during his 2014 visit to Oslo, an action she described as a "necessary sacrifice to prove to China that being in dialogue with them is important."⁹¹⁴ The painstakingly negotiated agreement that came to the fore as Norwegian-Chinese relations were normalized in late December 2016,⁹¹⁵ was the "Statement of China and Norway on normalization of bilateral relations".⁹¹⁶ From the Chinese side the reaction to the statement was focused on how "Norway has had the chance to deeply reflect on its mistakes,"⁹¹⁷ emphasizing the

⁹¹² The Danish Parliament 2009; Osbakk 2015

⁹¹³ Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson 2017, 84–85; Gjerstad and Skard 2016

⁹¹⁴ NRK 2014b; NRK 2014a

⁹¹⁵ Lohne 2017; Gjerstad, Skard, and Lund 2016; Meiyi Li 2016; K. Li 2016; Johnsen 2016; Xi 2017f

⁹¹⁶ Government of Norway and Government of PRC 2016; Brende 2017; Sættem, Hedvig, and Svaar 2016

⁹¹⁷ Meiyi Li 2016; See also Hua 2016b; Hua 2016a

international signal effect of having subjected a European country to six years of disgrace for interfering with internal Chinese affairs.

The official English language text, with syntax and the key *tifa* vocabulary showing the Chinese language influence, starts out by praising Norway for being one of the first countries to recognize China, and pointing to long and friendly relations between the two countries prior to the Peace Prize of 2010, when “due to the Nobel Peace Prize award and events connected to the Prize, China-Norway relations have deteriorated.”⁹¹⁸ It then goes on to declare, illustrating again the Chinese preoccupation with being recognized, that “both sides will develop friendly relations on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit.” Point no. 3 on the list entails certain core messages that also resonates with the solutions to diplomatic crises that other European countries have had with China, as covered in this and earlier chapters; namely the explicit recognition of the separateness and the success of the Chinese political model, and explicit praise for the Chinese governments development efforts.⁹¹⁹ In addition to this, it also stated the intention of not interfering in Chinese core interests or major concerns again:

The Norwegian Government fully respects China's development path and social system, and highly commends its historic and unparalleled development that has taken place. The Norwegian Government reiterates its commitment to the one-China policy, fully respects China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, attaches high importance to China's core interests and major concerns, will not support actions that undermine them, and will do its best to avoid any future damage to the bilateral relations.⁹²⁰

⁹¹⁸ Government of Norway and Government of PRC 2016

⁹¹⁹ FMPRC 2016

⁹²⁰ Government of Norway and Government of PRC 2016

The first sentence, does in itself mark a pronounced change in the discourse of the Norwegian political establishment over the 6 years of freeze. This general trend is well exemplified by comparing two instances of the Minister of Foreign Affairs' yearly keynote address to the Norwegian Parliament; in 2011, China was admonished to respect human rights and freedom of speech, two years later this phrase was supplanted by the formulation that Norway respects China's right to choose its own development path.⁹²¹ Norwegian politicians originally thought it enough to keep repeating that the Nobel Committee was separate from the government, and that the congratulatory remarks and the symbolic ties between the official Norway and the Peace Prize in display though the ceremonial setup, was merely the standard procedure. This approach was in essence the same as what had been applied earlier, when the Dalai Lama received the Peace Prize in 1989, or during later visits. However, this time around it would relatively soon become clear that for a more self-assertive China, this approach was no longer enough. In confirming one of the general points argued for here, the Chinese rhetoric applied towards Norway in the 1989 case of the Dalai Lama's Peace Prize, and the rhetoric in the case of Liu Xiaobo 20 years later was not substantially different in terms of its foundational narrative.⁹²² However, the Chinese discursive changes in the intervening years provided political drivers in the direction of far more assertive efforts at pushing European actors to recognize the CCP's policy prescriptions.

⁹²¹ See, respectively, Støre 2011; Eide 2013

⁹²² Jerdén 2014

9.5 Conclusions

This chapter argues that our understanding of the Chinese punitive reactions towards the two European countries in question can be better understood through including the identity aspect of a rising power seeking to shore up its ontological security, and whose main narrative had increasingly changed to accentuate the demand for respect and recognition from its international peer group. European recognition of the Dalai Lama and Liu Xiaobo as political operators, promoted an image of the PRC that is not in line with that of the CCP, and thus challenged the Communist Party's legitimacy to power amongst an international public. This new willingness to escalate this issue, is in part representative of key discursive changes, where the EU was no longer a rising power on which companionship China could reach their goal of a more multipolar world order, but rather a weakening entity. Thus, the derived policy direction entailed that it was easier for China to serve their goal of legitimacy by policing European nations on what was regarded as key ontological issues for the CCP, such as the Dalai Lama or the recognition of political dissidents. As seen in the preceding chapters, the role of the European continent in the foreign policy debate in China had already changed. The Chinese emphasis on their relationship with the US over that of Europe was further demonstrated through a number of symbolical matters. As Godement and Vasselier summarize it: "When did China ever cancel a state visit to the United States, as it did with the EU in 2008 over a disagreement about the Dalai Lama? The US-China high level strategic and economic dialogue has never missed a beat. The "Annual" EU-China high level economic and trade dialogue did not happen in 2011, 2012, and 2014."⁹²³

⁹²³ Godement and Vasselier 2017, 21

The case of Norway and the case of the UK, share two further key common denominators of interest to this thesis' research question. First, both of the cases involved China spending substantial amounts of political, diplomatic and economic capital on policing transgressions of the CCP's national narratives tightly linked to their ontological security. This even though the tight Chinese grip of domestic news meant that the effect of the Dalai Lama visit and the Peace Prize, respectively, would have been negligible as far as the domestic political scene goes. As Chinese Vice MFA Fu Ying admitted to the secretary of the Nobel Committee, in a meeting arranged in order to dissuade any future Prize going to a Chinese dissident, when he underlined that the Chinese people would hardly understand the point of such a Prize anyway, and the CCP's grip of the media would ensure limited coverage.⁹²⁴ However, the Chinese government still went to extremes hardly seen by any country in the history of the Peace Prize since the Second World War. The cases' effects were also deeply counterproductive for the Chinese soft power efforts, towards which substantial resources had been spent by the CCP, Luttwak thus summarizes the case of China's boycott towards Norway as, "Aside from its particular, almost comical, aspects, this episode is not atypical of China's recent international conduct in being both highly energetic and definitely counterproductive."⁹²⁵ Second, both of these cases involved the Chinese government spending even more resources and enacting even harsher punitive reactions against the UK and Norway, than they had done for comparable cases involving the same countries only years earlier. During this half-decade, then, the Chinese understanding of themselves, and their rightful place in the world, saw substantial continuities of the foundational narrative on which basis they sought ontological security and recognition in the world.

⁹²⁴ Lunestedt 2015, 253

⁹²⁵ Luttwak 2012, 212

These large-scale, and economically unsound, boycotts were enacted by the Chinese government at occasions where they perceived their European partners, the UK and Norway, did not sufficiently recognize the ontological narrative of the Chinese polity. Hence the solution also closely integrated with ontological security-seeking measures, essentially asking for recognition of Chinese status, and confirming the Chinese narrative as separate, successful, and worthy of great power-deference. This goes down again to issues of identity being factors still referred and related to by even members of the Chinese diplomacy. In the case of the UK, the symbolically important story of Li Keqiang demanding, counter to protocol, audience with the Queen as a key Chinese precondition for the normalization of the relationship, as very illustrative of the degree to which symbolic recognition of China's status, and granting them face in both the international and domestic social context, took precedence over economic logic in the conduct of Chinese foreign policy towards a key European country.

Arguably, this line of symbolic recognition was followed upon by the UK government a few years later, when Xi Jinping received a no-pomp-spared official visit to the UK, including golden carts and military parades through London to Buckingham Palace. "President Xi considers the so-called golden era of UK-China relations are one of his major diplomatic triumphs since he came to power. The Chinese state media have meticulously reported how the UK rolled out the reddest of the red carpets to welcome President Xi together with other exuberant royal treatments during the state visit"⁹²⁶ In the case of Norway, after a number of tribulations, the final communique symbolically included a sentence explicitly expressing Norway's respect for the Chinese political system and praising the CCP's ability to lift people out of poverty. This Norwegian recognition demarcated a sharp break with Norwegian foreign policy tradition. As Neumann has pointed out, this was the first time a Norwegian MFA

⁹²⁶ J. Yu 2016

explicitly recognized the virtue of an authoritarian regime, since the important post-war Kråkerøy-speech of 1948 defined Norway's doctrine of belonging to the liberal-democratic international camp.⁹²⁷

Overall then, the tension between these two discursive constructs of China's new role in the world, at the same time strong and fragile, having moved up to the top tier of global powers whilst simultaneously fearing Western influence, this tension created a situation that was very conducive of the forms of extremely strong measures taken in order to safeguard the Chinese foundational narrative abroad. "However, symbolic infringements on reciprocal respect may ironically cause its disproportionate retaliation. (...) China's retaliation is often resolute but symbolic, in order for the bilateral talk to resume."⁹²⁸ China was, in effect, insecure enough about its ontological security to strike down on misrecognition of it from abroad, whilst powerful enough to strongarm these European countries' China policies. As such, large amounts of economic and political capital were spent by the Chinese in order to, in essence, have these European countries kowtowing to the CCP's narrative of China. This should serve to accentuate the argument that such behaviour can be difficultly be explained without bringing the factor of Chinese identity, and Beijing's strive for ontological security.

⁹²⁷ I. B. Neumann 2018a

⁹²⁸ C. Shih and Huang 2015, 19

Part IV: Concluding Remarks

Chapter 10: Conclusion

10.1 Summary: The China-Europe Identity Nexus

In addressing the research question of 'how does Europe matter for Chinese identity, and how does identity matter for China's current-day policies towards Europe?', this thesis concludes that key political events in the China-Europe relationship indeed cannot be fully accounted for without bringing Chinese identity issues into the equation. Overall, the results of this research project demonstrate that Chinese perceptions of their own identity, and Europe's role in the wider network of meaning sustaining this identity, has not only been strongly conceptually intertwined throughout history, but is also an important factor in current day political relations between China and the EU, as well as with singular European countries. The case of China-Europe relations thus joins a growing body of literature analysing how identity concerns often rooted in the history of the relevant polities have led them to embrace a particular range of foreign policies, even when other available and viable political choices would have entailed larger economic or diplomatic benefits.

This thesis thus contends, in essence, that until now the analyses of China-Europe relations have been suffering from exactly the predicament that has been outlined by Wang Zheng and Callahan, amongst others; namely being too singularly focused on a narrow subset of factors, in particular on the economic dimension.⁹²⁹ This thus entails missing out on considerable insights that comes from adding identity issues into the account. Some of the key political developments in the relationship between

⁹²⁹ Z. Wang 2012, 11

China and Europe over the last decades can hardly be fully explained through rationalist analysis, focused on economic factors and power dynamics. Instead, such developments were compatible with the applied analytical framework of ontological security, focusing on the importance of identity processes in international relations. The divergences in rather symbolic issues of political values that are important for both parties' ontological security, have proved to be key factors shaping the dynamics of the China-Europe relationship. As such, to discount these identity concerns from an analysis of China's foreign policies towards Europe entails overlooking one of the most salient variables of the political dynamic. This conclusion on the explanatory power of the China-Europe identity nexus, is found in the sum of conclusions stemming from this thesis' analyses of over a century's worth of texts and political acts relevant to Chinese Europe policies.

The two-pronged research design of this thesis has explored the issue on two analytical levels, through the diachronic and the synchronic section, respectively. The results of these investigations are deeply interrelated, but varies in temporal relevance and level of analysis. The main empirical findings of these two sections are thus summarized according to this bifurcated structure. The diachronic section has, in Chapters 4 to 6, undertaken a historical reading of the Chinese narratives of Europe, and how it has related to Chinese ontological security seeking as political entrepreneurs sought to re-establish foundational narratives for the various iterations of a new Chinese polity after the fall of the Qing dynasty. The analysis identified the intimate connection between the various political projects of China in the late-Qing, the post-Imperial, and the post-War eras, and how the image of Europe was situated in the construction of novel national narratives. In mapping these representations, this thesis identified a number of foundational narratives that has structured the role of Europe in the Chinese discourse, and as such Europe's relevance to the Chinese political projects of ontological security seeking in the modern era. These foundational narratives were identified and classified based on two main structuring features;

firstly, the extent and modality to which Europe and the European countries are regarded as an Other, as related to the particular Self of the relevant Chinese political project. Secondly, how Europe as a political, technological and ethical concept is regarded as tied to China in terms of the narrative's temporal aspect. As figure 13 illustrates, these foundational narratives changed profoundly over a, historically speaking, relatively short time period, as China went through a century of both great political upheaval and ideological dynamism.

Foundational Narrative	Important Political Era	Modality of European Otherness	Temporal Position of Europe in Narrative
Barbarian Europe	Late Dynastic Period	A barbaric Other, but recognisable within extant cosmology	Outer barbarian in traditional Sinocentric system, dynastic cycles
Threatening and Advanced Europe	Self-Strengthening Movement / Late Qing Era	A radically different Other	To be emulated in technological matters, and kept separate in ethical matters (<i>ti/yong</i>)
Ideal Europe	Early Republican Era	An ideal future Self to strive for	To be a future reference point for both technological and ethical/political development

Capitalist Europe	Early CCP Era	An Other within a new cosmology, but less radical Other than the USA	To be surpassed technologically and politically
Useful & Equal Europe	Reform Era	A coexistent Civilization. Similar in technological terms, equal in value, but fundamentally different	To be emulated technologically, but kept separate politically (<i>ti/yong</i>)

Figure 13: Overview of Chinese Foundational Narratives of Europe

Through the analysis of political and ideological textual monuments from these relevant political eras, a number of ideational developments of broader relevance became clear. As the historical background in Chapter 4 demonstrated, the Chinese idea of Europe was at the outset a distant one, reflecting the relative isolation between these two civilizational centres throughout most of history. At the threshold of the colonial era, this entailed that the repeated defeats at the hands of the European powers dealt a body blow to the Chinese cosmology, and the ontological security of traditional Chinese identity. This challenge to the ontological security of the traditional Chinese world order, and the Chinese polity itself, would give rise to repeated political and philosophical convulsions over the coming century, in which Europe would emerge as a nodal point for the various Chinese attempts at re-establishing an ontological security narrative for a reformed Chinese polity. In Chapter 5 the role of the Chinese idea of Europe in these fundamental political and

ideological upheavals was analysed through the two key cases of the Self-Strengthening Movement of the late Qing dynasty; and secondly, the years giving birth to the early Republican era. In this 50-year period, a dynastic imperial system lasting for millennia was reshaped through a number of revolutions, rebellions, wars and world wars. These two key eras thus showcased two distinctly dissimilar dominant narratives of Europe. The Self-Strengthening Movement of the late Qing dynasty, essentially sought to readjust from traditional Sinocentrism to establishing ontological security through implementing European technologies, but insisting on Chinese political and moral superiority. This was famously summarized as the principle of *ti/yong*; taking the Chinese culture as the essence, whilst utilising European technology for Chinese ends.

As the contradictions inherent to this distinction between the socio-economic basis of an industrial society and the technology resulting from it became ever harder to transverse, a more radical reform movement sought to instead implement also socio-economic and political reforms, building from a new ideational foundation of how human societies, China included, all are evolving based on the same “universal laws” (公理). Thus, in the case of the Early Republic, a second distinct narrative became dominant. This foundational narrative sought rather to establish a Chinese polity whose ontological security was based on emulating not only the technology but also the political and philosophical structures of Europe, and seeking confirmation for this new identity now also outside the borders of the Chinese polity itself. Overall, the development of the Chinese discourse through this period clearly demonstrated how Chinese ontological security seeking, and the resultant political processes, was intimately entwined with the Chinese narratives of Europe. This entailed a wholesale reformulation of the ontological essence of a Chinese polity, decentring it from that of a singular universal empire of ‘All under Heaven,’ to that of being only one nation-state amongst many, seeking approval and a seat amongst the others in the European-defined family of nations.

This Republican foundational narrative then gave way, as analysed in Chapter 6, to yet another fundamental renegotiation of the discursive basis for the Chinese polity, as the Chinese Communist Party came to power after the Second World War. The global political and ideological landscape of the Cold War meant that the role of the former colonial powers of Western Europe would play a substantially smaller role as a constituent factor of this new Chinese foundational narrative. However, the related narratives of Europe saw distinct and important changes through this period. This was demonstrated through the analysis of the two key historical periods of the chapter; the first case being that of the early days of CCP's New China, as the communist party-state was built and articulated with Mao at the helm, and the second case covering the time of Deng Xiaoping's reforms, that saw yet another transformation of the ideological basis of the Chinese polity. In the early era of the CCP's New China, the main discursive change was the how the predominant narrative of Europe was changed from a colonial Other of the imperialist world, to being in the "second world", a battlefield in the midst of an ideological struggle in which China solidarized with sections of the continent, thus less of an Other than was the US. This narrative prepared the ground for an early change in the Chinese strategy towards the Europe, and made Europe a less contentious place to learn from in the early years, before the opening towards the US progressed further. During Deng Xiaoping's years of reform, Europe was regarded as less ideologically relevant, reflecting the ideological changes in China towards pragmatism. However, the idea of Europe as partly separated from the US continued to open a discursive space for a clear support for the European integration project.

As regards more current-day relevant arguments based on this research, this thesis argues that the post-1989 Chinese fundamental narrative of China and Europe as 'equal but separate civilizations,' opened a space for a particular identity dynamic to play out in the relationship between these two actors. In this latest significant change

in the Chinese narrative of the continent, Europe's role as an ideological subject position for China to define itself against increased its relevance. The concurrent Chinese discourses of Europe based on this narrative framed the political and diplomatic field in ways that carried broad political repercussions. The much advertised 'new assertiveness' under the leadership of Xi Jinping, is a reality, but is far more representative of continuities in the Chinese foreign policy discourses than what is often recognized. In a sense, the extant discourses of the Hu Jintao era already contained the same subject positions, Xi Jinping's rhetoric is thus arguably different as a matter of degree, rather than a matter of kind. The foundational narrative of the 'Chinese Characteristics' in opposition to the idea of universal values, is thus likely to only continue to create tensions in the Chinse relationship with Europe, and even more to the extent that the spread of Chinese economic and political interests entails it may confront European interests in various sectors and a wider range of geographical locations on the globe than before. Africa is one prime test case for how these two powers may manage to transcend such differences in third-party locales.⁹³⁰

In the synchronic section, the investigation proceeded from the historical analysis, to investigate the degree to which Chinese identity concerns were a factor in contemporary political relations between China and Europe. This change to a different level of analysis, entailed tracing in more detail how the foundational narratives co-constituted a set of discourses on China's relations with Europe, that in effect structured the Chinese policy responses in three cases of key conflictual events over the last two decades. These cases then served as 'crucial cases' for probing the existence of an ontological security driven 'identity factor' in China's Europe policies. Additionally, these were 'hard cases,' in the sense that the presence of an 'identity factor' in the discourses and practices of these key political cases, proves its overall relevance as a factor in China-Europe relations. The investigation combined three

⁹³⁰ See e.g. discussions in Carrozza 2018

main analytical moves, as illustrated in figure 14, below: First, it traced the foundational narrative forming the base of Chinese ontological security, establishing how it framed the debates of the era. Second, it analysed the main discourses derived from the foundational narrative, at the level of the concrete contemporary political and diplomatic issues of the time. Third, it explored the political repercussions of these discourses and how the identity factor served as a salient element in the key political issues of the contemporary era of Sino-European relations.



Figure 14: Overview of the three-layered Chinese discursive construct of Europe, 2016

The case of the diplomatic processes surrounding the proposed lifting of the EU's arms embargo, as detailed in Chapter 7, confirmed how identity questions were a considerable factor shaping the crisis that demarcated a 'tipping point' in China-EU relations. As the analysed empirical material showed, the post-1989 foundational narrative formed the basis for a second layer of Chinese main discourses of Europe, through which the Chinese framed their relationship. Key amongst them were the discourses about being co-rising power poles, representing distinct political models,

but of equal value. Arguably, these discourses opened a policy space where a number of issues became particularly important political drivers in terms of securing recognition of the ontological status of the Chinese identity. These included; seeking recognition for a 'different' political regime, and for territorial sovereignty, and seeking Europe's cooperation as common partners in global multipolarization. As the chapter's analysis demonstrated, for Beijing the issue causing a diplomatic crisis was not so much about being denied access to European arms. Rather this was about being denied 'face', as the EU in effect refused to give China a symbolic status upgrade. As this issue led to a stop in the discussion of a Brussels-Beijing axis in international relations, this showcased how Beijing was ready to undertake actions to preserve their ontological security, that is difficultly understandable if employing only rationalist economic or political logic to the case.

Chapter 8 further traced the development of contemporary China-Europe relations, by focusing on yet another key conflictual inflexion point of the relationship; the breakdown in relations happening in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics, as the 2008 EU-China summit for the first time got cancelled by the Chinese. This was due to a number of diplomatic rows, in particular including the French and German political leaders' decisions to meet with the Dalai Lama. The analysis found the foundational Chinese narrative of Europe to be unaltered, but traced notable changes in the derived main discourses, mainly that the discourse of the EU as China's co-rising power pole weakened as Chinese official discourses increasingly emphasized the success of their economic model after the financial crisis. The main discourse on being granted equal but distinct status stayed permanent, and if anything was reflecting a more aggressive twist as seen in the diplomatic conflicts regarding the Dalai Lama, related to a more assertive range of foreign policy repercussions. Thus, although economic concerns formed a notable backdrop to the nadir in China-Europe relations, this thesis argued the main point of discontent was in the realm of ontological security discrepancies between the two parties. As the Chinese sense of self grew more assertive they

increasingly sought recognition for their foundational narrative as a great power founded on differing values, and thus more openly challenged the universalism-based ontological security of the European powers France and Germany. From the Chinese side, the solution to the crises was thus simply for the Europeans to recognize the principle of *ti/yong* civilizational diversity. As demonstrated, this form of identity recognition was indeed how the impasse was resolved, as Germany and France both officially communicated recognition, even though diplomatically strong-armed to do so, of the CCP's foundational narrative. In effect this was not just any diplomatic spat, but a fundamental disagreement that although of bereft of much practical political or economic importance, carried immense importance for the ontological narrative of each of these two polities.

As analysed in Chapter 9, this key tension did not subside even as the overall China-Europe relationship was normalized. The rise of Xi Jinping as the most dominant Chinese leader since Deng, dovetailed with an increasingly assertive set of main discourses on Europe, that fed into a set of policy directions that drove the identity factor's impact on the diplomatic crises in China-UK and China-Norway relations in the years 2010-2016. The Chinese foundational narrative with regards to Europe showed through this period a further shift to increase in the emphasis of China as a civilization not only separate, but successfully so. Concurrently, the Chinese main discourses relating to Europe developed in a more pronounced fashion along a trajectory where a successful Chinese model of development was increasingly contrasted to that of the West, and where a revived version of the Chinese past increasingly was placed as an idealized future of the CCP's national narrative. The derived policy directions thus entailed an increasing readiness by the Chinese government to spend political and economic capital in pursuit of European states' acquiescence. Hence the solution was again closely related to what is described as an ontological security-seeking measure, essentially pushing for the European countries' recognition of Chinese status, and confirming the Chinese narrative as separate,

successful, and worthy of great power-deference. Contributing to a broader debate in the literature,⁹³¹ over the extent to which Xi Jinping's foreign policies is based on radically different conceptions over China's place in the international society than those of his immediate predecessor. Chapter 9 concluded through the lens of the foundational narrative of China with regards to Europe, that the high-profile and eye-catching number of foreign policy initiatives and new discursive actions from Xi Jinping rather reflects an intensification of already extant discourses, rather than a radical break.

In sum, the Chinese discourses of themselves with regards to Europe, based on a foundational narrative reflecting cultural and political dilemmas with long roots in Chinese modern history, was a constituent part in shaping current Chinese conceptions of their political goals. This identity effect was also demonstrated by two common denominators of the two most recent cases analysed, namely how they both involved Beijing spending substantial amounts of political, diplomatic, and economic capital on policing against transgressions of the CCP's national narratives, even though CCP censorship entailed that both of these stories would have limited impact domestically. Furthermore, both of these cases involved the Chinese government spending even more resources and enacting even harsher punitive reactions against the UK and Norway, than they had done for comparable cases involving the same countries only years earlier. Overall, the empirical material researched throughout the synchronic section of the thesis thus demonstrated the changing Chinese discursive field regarding Europe, and corroborated, how this entailed identity questions being a considerable factor shaping the Chinese side's policies towards their European counterparts. This China-European identity nexus has thus been demonstrated to matter today, as it did in the past.

⁹³¹ Jerdén 2014; Doshi 2019; Friedberg 2014

10.2 Final Remarks: Contributions and Implications

Contemporary China-Europe relations have been through a number of vagaries over the last two decades. In the span of few years the relationship has gone from highs of speculations about a new great power axis, to lows of political boycotts and punitive economic measures. This volatile dynamic in China's policies towards Europe is increasingly difficult to explain through the political economy lens that has commonly been applied. When Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's insistence on being invited to see the Queen becomes a key foreign policy flashpoint following 18 months of Chinese diplomatic boycott of the UK, it should become clear that there are other factors at play in the relationship between two of the world's most important powers besides merely economic or geopolitical rationality. As even the realist Kissinger formulated it with regards to the future of China-US relations: "This is the key problem of our time. Each of us is strong enough to create situations around the world in which it can impose its preferences, but the importance of the relationship will be whether each side can believe that they have achieved enough to be compatible with their convictions and with their histories."⁹³² This thesis thus argues that the importance of analysing the identity these convictions are predicated upon, and the history on which it is based, is no less of an issue for China's relations with Europe; a continent with which it has an even longer and more fraught history than with the US. However, a major drawback of the current literature is that it has explored this Chinese identity factor's relevance in all of China's most important foreign policy dyads, but somehow the case of China's relations with Europe has been overlooked. This omission is all the more consequential in light of the fact that Europe has been perhaps the single most central foreign actor in the re-negotiations of Chinese social and political identity from

⁹³² Kissinger 2018

the colonial era's violent introduction to modernity. As China continues to grow more consequential for both Europe and the global order in general, this thesis guiding rationale has been to address this key gap in the analysis of relations between two of the world's foremost power centres.

Addressing this gap through this thesis' theoretical approach, has thus entailed making a contribution to the literature at the intersection of the four related issues introduced earlier. First, by contributing to the field of China-Europe relations; secondly, through making this contribution through investigating the role of identity, a factor that has been strangely absent from the already too limited range of literature on one of the world's key relationships. In addition to these empirical contributions, in theoretical terms the thesis has added to, thirdly; the scholarship on identity dynamics in Chinese foreign policy in general, by further introducing the analytical prism of ontological security theory, and fourthly; by utilising this case of China's Europe policies to contribute to ontological security theory building. Starting out with the first of these four scholarly contributions, the case for further expanding the literature on Europe-China relations, and in particular EU-China relations should not need too much explication. In a world that has rapidly moved past the post-Cold War unipolar moment, the tendency of the international relations literature to gravitate around a body of hub-and-spokes style works focusing on American interaction with other foreign actors, should be further supplemented by literature focusing on bilateral relations between the other poles in the international system. This thesis has thus contributed to the growing literature between the two most influential non-American poles in the international system, that of China and the EU.

As to the second empirical point, this addition to the China-Europe literature has contributed through focusing on an aspect of this relationship that has long been underexplored, namely the role of identity. This thesis has thus sought to ascertain whether Europe played a role in the Chinese ontological security dilemmas since the

fall of Qing dynasty. Furthermore, it has on this basis probed further whether the identity factor also plays a role in the current era, through investigating key contemporary political crises in China-Europe relations. The resulting analysis did establish that the empirical material supports both the assumptions related to the crucial case, and the hard case aspects of the research question. In other words, the empirical analysis supports the proposition that identity factors were prevalent drivers in these key political and diplomatic cases. Ontological security seeking constituted an important consideration as the Chinese formulated and implemented their policies towards Europe in this period. The different foundational narratives of the Chinese polity and how these were constituted with regards to Europe, opened up for different discourses based on these foundational narratives, and these discourses then constituted a particular political space for the Chinese actions in their relationship with Europe. Through tracing these changing Chinese discourses, and Europe's role in the identity configuration of these, it has become clear the extent to which the variations in these discourses shaped the political incentives for China's Europe policies in quite radically different ways over the last century. In other words, the identity factor turned out to be a crucial one in the China-Europe relationship, and Beijing was proved ready to undertake actions to preserve their ontological security, that goes beyond what would be expected if employing only economic or rational-political logic to the analysis of Chinese Europe policies.

With regards to the two theoretical motivations of this thesis, the first was aimed at addressing the fact that the growing theoretical field of ontological security studies has only rarely been applied to Chinese cases. However, the argument was that this approach could contribute saliently to analyses of China's politics of identity. By providing a clear analytical framework able to integrate investigations of current-day political relevance with analysis of the narrative-driven dynamics of identity-construction, the ontological security approach indeed demonstrated its salience. Moreover, the theoretical framework proved itself particularly suited for the Chinese

case, given how the framework consciously avoids the reification of the nation-state. The Chinese historical experience entails that identity analysis of China should avoid the more teleologically nation-state based approaches often prevalent in other theoretical frameworks based even more predominantly on the European experiences. As we have seen, this history of having a millennia-old cosmology and related political structure suddenly and fundamentally challenged, resulted in attempts at reconstituting the ontological basis of the polity through a number of widely varying ideologies, political organisation models, and the related foundational narratives; from denial to Europeanising republicanism, and from constitutional monarchy to various brands of communism,

Concurrently, the second theoretical issue motivating this thesis, was the argument that in the same way as the ontological security approach can contribute to the analysis of China, so analyses of the Chinese case can contribute to the development of the ontological security theory. Given the novelty of these theoretical contributions, I will detail them briefly below, whilst also indicating some implications for these concepts in terms of further research. This thesis' undertaking of a broad study of China, from the mid-19th Century till today, has thus contributed to widening the conceptual universe of ontological security studies though the inclusion of a case that is both temporally, geographically, and culturally dissimilar from the main body of works. In the process, this thesis has proved a salient arena for further exploring two extant but undercovered concepts in ontological security theory, as well as implementing and testing three Chinese-derived expansions of the conceptual framework. With regards to what the case of China has been able to contribute with in terms of conceptual exploration, the two distinct avenues explored were those of the role of ontological security seeking and narrative entrepreneurs, and secondly; the role of the past and mnemonic structures in identity narratives.

As such, this investigation concludes that the use of the concept of ontological security seeking as a key analytical tool, is a particularly important prism for investigating the underexplored issue of states seeking to fundamentally change their regularized relationships with other actors, and adapt the foundational narratives of the polity, in order to achieve legitimacy. Not the least this includes the role of narrative entrepreneurs as political actors negotiating new foundational narrative frameworks for a polity. Secondly, this thesis also forms a contribution to the growing literature on how identity processes plays out through different modalities in polities that entered modernity through externally imposed social processes rather than as the result of organic development. Such historical backgrounds reverberate through the institutionalized memories of a society, as it provides a particular background for the temporally based narratives seeking to draw a coherently emplotted arc from this past to the future. The analysis of the historical and contemporary texts demonstrates how China shares the traits of other non-Western empire with memories of colonial trauma. This, in that they are more concerned with their identity narratives being intersubjectively acknowledged by foreign actors, and more conscious about their status recognition, a dynamic that arguably has proved integral to Chinese Europe policies over the last decades.

Furthermore, the thesis also concludes that three Chinese-derived concepts have contributed saliently to the ontological security framework throughout this investigation of Chinese identity dynamics, and that these can also be of wider relevance to other polities in the region, as well as globally. These three conceptual developments are, firstly; to recognize more explicitly the importance of external status recognition and the importance of face dynamics. Relating to Buzan's call to better include face as a concept into international relations theories,⁹³³ this thesis suggests that within the ontological security framework it is salient to recognize it as

⁹³³ Buzan 2018

a particular mode of external recognition seeking. There are two distinct features of Chinese foreign policy for which the utilization of face as an analytical concept is particularly salient. As the empirical sections of this thesis has demonstrated, these are firstly, the dominant presence of apology diplomacy as an onus of Chinese foreign relations, and secondly, the role of ritualized recognition. This also relates further to the second conceptual expansion, namely the role of *guanxi*, or the extent to which the analysis has traced a pronounced Chinese focus on ritualized ontological security through particularist bilateral role relations rather than universal rules. This operationalization reflects the aforementioned definition of face as the reciprocated recognition of relational hierarchy, and utilizes this as an analytical framework for investigating particular modes of Chinese ontological security seeking, as empirically observed at multiple key points in contemporary Europe-China relations. Thus, this thesis argues for the operationalization of the difference between polities whose ontological security is founded with a more pronounced focus on seeking recognition from others based on a universalist view of the polity's fundamental values, versus a polity that seeks ontological status recognition based on parochial, bilateral, relationality. In such a model, modern China is defined as the latter type.

The third conceptual expansion concerns the extent to which materiality informs the ontological security status by engaging with the concept of material success, and political and economic functionality as one possible mode of ontological security seeking. This dynamic is intimately related to the Chinese conceptualization of *ti/yong* as conceptual framework to address the inherent tensions of externally driven modernity as it relates to the traditional cosmology of non-Western actors in the international system. This concept should thus be relevant not only for China, but for a wider range of emerging powers in the international system. Furthermore, the broader Chinese relevance of the old *ti/yong* dilemma is striking, as the Chinese leadership argues in favour of separate civilizational rights whilst seeking to straddle

the homogeneous drive of modern economic and technological modes of organization. As Neumann has summarized the dilemma in his treatise on Russia:

Russian thinking about the country's place in the world starts from a contradiction. On the one hand, given its self-perception as great, Russia should do its own thing. On the other hand, given that the states system is a self-help system where units have to relate to the most effective models available for how to organise or suffer the consequences, backward Russia has to own up to cutting-edge models -- European or otherwise -- or suffer marginalisation.⁹³⁴

A similar dilemma has been at the core of the Chinese ontological security crisis of the late Qing dynasty. However, the *ti/yong* discourse has played the role of serving as a solution to this seemingly intractable dilemma, by constructing a discourse that opens for the approach of copying a number of more efficient technologies, whilst sheltering this process from more general identity issues, this then making the process more politically viable. This also ties intimately into the 'tacit social compact' of the current political regime, whose domestic legitimacy has been founded precisely on its abilities to deliver rapid economic gains to the populace. Furthermore, in line with the stated goals of the Chinese Communist Party, the *ti/yong* dilemma that has for a long time been a key fault line in the Chinese foundational narratives, may turn out to meet with a change of axial proportions, if the CCP manages to achieve lasting material success based on a competing political paradigm from that of the West.⁹³⁵

Drawing upon these conceptualisations, and the role they have been demonstrated to play in China-Europe relations, there are certain implications of wider relevance for

⁹³⁴ I. B. Neumann 2016, 6

⁹³⁵ On this note, a particularly interesting debate revolves around the overlap of two of the current age's most important megatrends, namely the rise of China, and the advent of Big Data-driven AI capabilities, and how these two may combine to create a new form of "Digital Leninism". See e.g. Browne 2017; N. Wright 2018; K.-F. Lee 2018; Millward 2018

the further study of Chinese foreign policy that will be briefly sketched out. With reference to the ongoing discourse about whether the current Sino-US competition equals a ‘new cold war’, it is important to note the stark contrast of China’s current relational, particularist vision as compared to the Soviet Communist international universalist proselytising. However, given the rules-based foundation of the established world order, such a differing approach is no less of a fundamental challenge. This predisposition is at the core of the concerns raised in Western capitals about the growing role of China in international politics. “Westerners preferred to mediate international relationships through a ‘de-personalized, formal, rationalized caucus of international law’ (...) [China] seems to want ‘special civilizational rights’, either in the absence of an agreed rewrite of the rules or as a way of challenging them.”⁹³⁶. The degree to which China in the future chooses to define its identity in particularistic and civilizational terms, is thus one of the main avenues through which Chinese ontological security seeking will shape the future of the international order. Overall, these conceptual additions to ontological security theory underpins this thesis’ argument for a circumscribed de-universalization of ontological security theory. Ontological security is a concept that when defined at the higher level of generality, is a universal drive for polities to seek stable self-identities, the modalities through which this process is sought achieved differ to an extent that the Western-centric development of the theory so far has insufficiently reflected. These conceptual developments thus contribute to a better understanding of the specificities of the role of Chinese ontological security seeking in the country’s foreign policies in general. Hence, they also contribute to our understanding of these processes for other rising powers of the global South, at a moment when understanding these actors’ motivations on the international arena is becoming ever more important.

⁹³⁶ Coker 2019, 181

As a final remark, then, this thesis contends that current megatrends of global integration and convergence are likely to increase the salience of the ontological security approach.⁹³⁷ When, in the age of globalization and immigrations flows, political participation has seen a pivot away from economically based class-voting, to one where identity is becoming a prime yardstick,⁹³⁸ exploring the underlying dynamics of mass identity formation is ever more important.⁹³⁹ The theoretical vantage point of ontological security is a particularly good lens through which to analyse the deep-rooted issues of identity and insecurity that is based on the foundations of identity politics; namely who are 'we' and who are the 'other'? Importantly, populism and identity grievances are not exclusive to the Western world, although the majority of the ink spilt is on this.⁹⁴⁰ This myopia is both academically and politically unsustainable, and will be increasingly so.

As globalization and the spread of industrialization makes the world's economic and political power centres increasingly 'non-Western,' it is all the more reason to analyse how these effects play out in the rising power centres of the world.⁹⁴¹ Most significantly, the interplay between these two developments is in itself consequential, as centuries-old conceptions of political and economic dominance are being challenged, and the demographic, political and economic realities of the globe are being fundamentally reshaped. The identities of the world's rising powers are being

⁹³⁷ For a brief overview of globalization's challenges for extant political structures see e.g. Giddens 1991; Barber 2010; Kinnvall and Jönsson 2002; Calhoun 2007; Kinnvall, Manners, and Mitzen 2018

⁹³⁸ A key tenet of the research on identities is the fact that humans live and interact through a number of different identities, amongst them attachments to different territories with separate or interlinked narratives, as such one may have nested identities as both a Münchener, Bavarian, German, and European. Lebow 2016, 130

⁹³⁹ Giddens 1991; Kinnvall 2004a; Barber 2010; Kinnvall and Jönsson 2002; Calhoun 2007

⁹⁴⁰ Müller 2014; Applebaum 2016; Müller 2016; Krastev 2007; Judis 2016; Wiarda 2013

⁹⁴¹ Zakaria 2016; Müller 2016; Judis 2016

reshaped at the same moment as these new powers are reshaping global politics. As such, even more scholarly attention should be allotted to understanding this interlinked dynamic by a deeper exploration of the identity factors driving these rising non-Western powers' foreign policies. By analysing the role of ontological security in China's policies towards Europe, this thesis offers one such contribution to the literature.

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