



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**CHINESE EXCEPTIONALISM: A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO THE
PEACEFUL RISE OF CHINA**

Master's Thesis

Esra Eymen CANSU

Department of International Relations

August 2023



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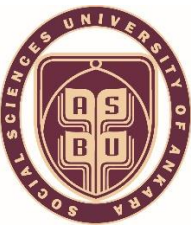
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THESIS APPROVAL

This is to certify that the defense examination for the thesis titled “Chinese Exceptionalism: A Conceptual Approach to The Peaceful Rise Of China” prepared by Esra Eymen CANSU with student number 195414007 studying in the field of International Relations Department International Relations Program has been conducted in accordance with the related clauses of the Graduate Studies and Examination Code of YÖK (Council of Higher Education) on 23/08/2023 at 11:00, and has been approved by the unanimous vote.

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...../...../.....

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Director, The Graduate School

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ÖZET

Günümüzde dünya siyasetinin hangi yöne evrileceğini anlamak adına Asya'nın gelişiminin ve değişiminin göz önünde bulundurulması kaçınılmaz bir gerekliliktir. Bu kapsamda, yükselen bir güç olarak Çin'in kurgulamış olduğu dünya düzeni tasavvurunu, bu düzen içinde kendisini istisnai olarak nasıl konumlandığını, diğer aktörlerle olan ilişkilerini nasıl tanımladığını ve evrensellik olgusuna dair yaklaşımını anlamak ayrıca önem arz etmektedir. Yeni küresel düzenin ne yönde şekilleneceğine dair tartışmaların giderek arttığı akademik yazında bu tez, her geçen gün daha güçlü olan Çin'i istisnai kılan olgulara ışık tutmayı, Çin pratiğinin çeşitli alanlarda nasıl yankı bulduğunu ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, istisnacılığa dair kapsamlı literatüre açıklık getirmekte, Çin'in "diğer"lerinden hangi yönleriyle, nasıl farklı olduğu iddiasını içeren istisnacılık söylemi ile barışçıl yükselişi ve gelişimini nasıl ele aldığına dair kavrayış sunmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda çalışma, akademik literatür hükümet raporları ve haber makaleleri gibi ikincil kaynaklardan yararlanılan nitel araştırma yöntemine başvurularak oluşturulmuştur. Çalışmada "ahenkli toplum" ve "insanlık için ortak gelecek" başta olmak üzere, Çin'in üst düzey yetkililerinin barışçıl yükseliş paradigması hakkındaki söylemleri analiz edilmekte ve Çin istisnacılığına dair değişen ve gelişen retoriğe katkıları incelenmektedir. Çalışma, Çin istisnacılığının tarihi, kültürel ve stratejik boyutları iç içe geçen çok yönlü bir söylem olarak geliştiğini ortaya koymakta ve Çin'in yükselişini, dış politika tasavvurunu ve uluslararası düzende varlığını nasıl konumlandığı anlamak adına önemli bir mercek sağladığı değerlendirilmektedir. Çin istisnacılığı söylemine dair kavram ve söylem analizi olarak bu tez, Çin'in gelişen küresel rolünü çevreleyen söylemi zenginleştirerek uluslararası ilişkiler alanındaki dinamik tartışmalara katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: istisnacılık, Çin istisnacılığı, barışçıl yükseliş, ahenkli toplum, insanlık için ortak gelecek

ABSTRACT

In the present era of global politics, discerning the prospective trajectory of world affairs necessitates an inevitable imperative to intricately consider the evolution and metamorphosis of Asia. Within this contextual ambit, the envisioning of a global order by China, endowed as a rising power, assumes a cardinal import. Elucidating China's conceptualization of this global schema, its distinct positioning of itself as an exceptional entity therein, its explication of interrelations with other actors, and its perspective on the universality phenomenon, emerge as imperative undertakings. Amid the escalating discourse within the academic literature regarding the evolving contours of the emerging global order, this thesis endeavors to emphasize on the facets that render China increasingly exceptional, elucidating how China's praxis resonates across diverse domains. The study brings lucidity to the expansive literature on exceptionalism, offering insights into how China's narrative of exceptionalism, which encapsulates assertions of differentiation from the "others," intersects with its narrative of peaceful rise and development. In line with this trajectory, the study has been constructed through the application of a qualitative research methodology, drawing upon secondary sources, including but not limited to academic literature, government reports, and news articles. Within the study, the discourse of China's high-ranking officials regarding the paradigm of peaceful rise is subjected to analysis, encompassing examinations of prominent articulations such as "harmonious society" and "shared future for humanity." The investigation delves into the evolving and advancing rhetoric pertaining to Chinese exceptionalism, thereby contributing to an exploration of its shifting and burgeoning contributions.

Keywords: Exceptionalism, Chinese Exceptionalism, Peaceful Rise, Harmonious Society, and Shared Future for Humanity

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rise of China as a significant participant in the sphere of global politics within recent decades has incited substantial discourse within the community of international relations scholars and practitioners. The expanding economic impact, increasing military prominence, and growing political sway of Beijing have garnered worldwide attention, leading to a host of inquiries and reservations. These inquiries revolve around the enduring intentions of China, whether it aims to collaborate with or contest the prevailing global framework, and subsequently, how nations should formulate their actions, responses, and interactions in relation to this evolving scenario.

Starting from the late 19th century, the concept of “Manifest Destiny” has been a guiding force for the United States, asserting that the nation is destined to spread liberal democracy and capitalism not only across North America but also throughout the global sphere. This notion has influenced the aspirations of the US elite in their pursuit to establish and sustain the nation’s global leadership. However, this aspiration for global dominance has not gone uncontested. Shortly after World War II, when the US appeared unrivaled in economic and military terms, the Soviet Union emerged as a formidable challenger on economic, ideological, and military fronts, posing a direct rivalry to the US’s global hegemony.

To counter this “communist threat” and protect its leadership in the international arena, the US employed various strategies, ranging from forming alliances to constructing soft power influence and engaging in ideological battles. This battle against communism involved not only the governing elites but also intellectual figures who played crucial roles. Given the prominent position of the US in the global economy and politics, mainstream academia in the US held a central role in producing knowledge worldwide.

During the era of the Cold War, the American social sciences community, particularly scholars in economics and international relations, utilized their dominance in generating knowledge to support the interests of their nation. In essence, throughout the Cold War period, numerous American intellectuals served both their state by contributing to policy formulation and global standing, and produced intellectual resources that reinforced the legitimacy of US hegemony.

Following the aftermath of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union witnessed a transformative shift in global dynamics during the 1990s, as the United States emerged as the singular superpower, ushering in a period of unipolarity within the international system. This divergence from the predictions of Francis Fukuyama and his contemporaries challenged the notion that the conclusion of the Cold War heralded the culmination of history and the unassailability of liberal democracy as an ideology.

This period also witnessed a significant reconfiguration of the world's economic epicenter, as East Asia supplanted the Western hemisphere. This shift triggered a transformation within the international order, evolving it from unipolarity toward a more nuanced form of multipolarity. During this transition, a diverse array of civilizations and political entities sought acknowledgment and legitimacy, presenting alternative paradigms of governance and societal frameworks in contrast to the Western model of liberal democracy.

Notably, China's enigmatic ascent has stood out prominently within this evolving landscape. With its unique political-economic system, China's rise has become a focal point in the discourse, capturing global attention and raising critical questions about the future trajectory of international relations and the potential reshaping of the prevailing global order.

Fundamentally, the swift and remarkable ascent of China as a significant global influence, coupled with its prospective implications for the predominant US-led international framework, has revitalized scholarly deliberations concerning the notion of hegemony. This renewed focus has triggered a surge in investigations encompassing subjects like the transition of hegemony and the intricate interplay between China and the United States.

However, it's imperative to acknowledge that the predominant share of these inquiries conducted within the Western international relations community has been predominantly shaped by conventional viewpoints and scholars who are intricately entwined within the intricate interrelation of power and knowledge within the nation. Their analyses primarily revolve around a US & Europe-centric viewpoint, with a focus on countering China's rise as a challenger to the American way of life. Consequently, they assess China's ascent through the lens of US security and propose policy options to address the perceived "China threat".

In effect, the mainstream Western IR community produces knowledge aligned with the interests of the ruling class and, consequently, speaks directly to them. Furthermore, in their examinations, these scholars predominantly rely on official Chinese documents and statements, often neglecting the diverse array of ideas and future visions about China that emanate from intellectuals and ordinary citizens within the extensive Chinese public sphere.

However, subsequent to Xi Jinping's assumption of leadership in November 2012, China's growing prominence on the global stage has become even more apparent, leading many to speculate that the nation was shifting from a strategy of maintaining a low profile (*taoguang yanghui*) to adopting a more proactive and occasionally assertive stance in its international dealings. This shift is closely tied to the recurring emphasis from Chinese leaders over the past decade that China's rise would be conducted in a peaceful manner, devoid of any intentions to establish hegemony (Information Office of the State Council, 2011).

Buzan (2014: 381-420) analyzes this rhetoric of "peaceful rise" as an expression of Chinese grand strategy, deeply rooted in the nation's process of reform and opening up. It stands as a central concept in forming a comprehensive strategy for China's rise to great power status. While not without its ambiguities and internal contradictions, "peaceful rise" outlines a feasible framework, uniquely marking China's resurgence as a major global power. Buzan raises the pivotal question of whether China seeks a harmonious global and regional environment as an intrinsic objective or merely as a means to support its own developmental and ascending trajectory. He contemplates whether "peaceful rise" was only a transitional approach, now that China has gained strength, or if it embodies a long-term strategy.

Buzan (2014) presents the concept of a "cold peaceful rise" for China's ascent, envisioning a scenario characterized by tensions, which may estrange its neighboring nations and fortify the US's influence in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean. Essentially, China exhibits a proclivity to deviate from the prevailing global framework, with a proactive inclination to reshape it in manners that align with its strategic interests. Concurrently, China aims to evade involvement in resource-intensive conflicts that could impede its domestic advancement and hinder its economic expansion.

In accordingly, now the question arises, how do these ongoing dialogues surrounding China intersect with the broader discourse on international order and the dynamics of global politics? While this in itself doesn't inevitably lead to armed conflict, there exists substantial supporting evidence indicating that China's ascent could present a legitimate challenge to the prevailing international system. This challenge is partly due to China's conceptualizations about the ideal structure of the international order, one that aligns with its own interests. As such, the question arises: What transformations might transpire within the current international order to accommodate China's preferences and objectives? Furthermore, how does China intend to pursue these aims, and what are the ultimate goals it seeks to achieve?

In order to achieve this, this dissertation introduces the concept of "Chinese exceptionalism" as a theoretical framework or perspective to more effectively analyze China's interactions

within international politics and its foreign policy decisions. Within this dissertation, the central contention is that the Chinese political perspective—namely, its self-perception and its perception of the global landscape—entails a sense of being unique and virtuous. This perception has in turn significantly influenced how China engages in the realm of international politics. I contend that this mindset of exceptionalism furnishes us with an improved comprehension and a more comprehensive interpretation of China's engagements in international relations, surpassing what conventional theories of international relations offer.

1.1. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effect of the change in China's foreign policy, in other words, the new foreign policy style, on the Chinese exceptionalism narrative, which is one of the important elements of the established Chinese political and communication culture, especially through the value dimension of this narrative.

To achieve this purpose, this thesis will begin by acknowledging that the narrative of exceptionalism is not exclusive to China. Subsequently, this study will delve into the historical origins of the Chinese exceptionalism narrative and explore how it has evolved in various historical contexts in the case of China. Uncovering the value dimension of this narrative will also be a key focus for exploring the issues related to the Chinese exceptionalism.

With this conceptual framework in mind, this study will analyze exceptionalist foreign policy choices made during the Xi Jinping era, which will shed light on the foreign policy style of that era. In the concluding section, this study will assess the impact of the new foreign policy trajectory that emerged during Xi Jinping's era on the Chinese exceptionalism narrative, particularly in terms of values.

1.2. Methodology of the Study

The core focus of this thesis lies in the examination of the influence of prevailing perceptions within the Chinese worldview concerning the global order on China's interactions within international relations. Specifically, this thesis delves into how China's international relations are impacted by the tenets of Chinese exceptionalism. Through an analysis of the rhetoric employed by significant figures and influential voices in China, and subsequently the underlying worldview that informs their expressions—manifested through speeches, written works, etc.

This dissertation aims to construct a narrative elucidating the interpretation and application of Chinese exceptionalism within Chinese political activities and international affairs. Rather than delving into the endeavor of uncovering the ultimate essence of the “real China” or engaging in debates over the peaceful or non-peaceful nature of China’s ascent, this study’s inquiry centers on a more fundamental analysis:

R1: What dynamics are unfolding engaging in debates over the peaceful or non-peaceful nature of China’s exceptionalism? and

R2: What insights can we glean regarding the Chinese worldview—how China perceives itself and its position as an exceptional nation in the global context.

To conduct my empirical research and substantiate my hypotheses, I employ a content analysis approach to scrutinize secondary sources. This analytical method allows me to identify common themes and points of alignment among these sources, which in turn serve as effective tools for demonstrating the manifestation of exceptionalism concepts and their correlation with China’s actions. The sources primarily emanate from the Chinese academic sphere. It is worth noting that, by following the contents particularly from the Information Office of the State Council, People’s Republic of China, official narratives, I can insist that Chinese academics exhibit a greater propensity to express their genuine viewpoints, rendering them a more valuable resource for both comprehensive information and diverse ideas.

Additionally, the table below displays the scholarly works, with a focus on books, extensively referenced in this thesis for the purpose of analyzing narratives related to Chinese exceptionalism.

List of Chinese Exceptionalism Related Books & Book Chapters				
Author Names	Publication Year	Press	Title	Keywords
Kenneth Lieberthal	2001	International Studies Review, Wiley	China's Grand Strategy and Chinese Exceptionalism	
Ronald Skeldon	2007	NIAS Press	The Chinese Overseas: The End of Exceptionalism	Book Chapter-Beyond Chinatown: New Chinese Migration and the Global Expansion of China
Louise Edwards	2008	Journal of Contemporary History	The 'Problem of China' and Chinese Exceptionalism	
Hon-Fai Chen	2009	Journal of Classical Sociology	Reflexive Exceptionalism: On the Relevance of Tocqueville's America for Modern China	
Feng Zhang	2011	European Journal of International Relations, Sagepub	The Rise of Chinese Exceptionalism in International Relations	American exceptionalism, China's rise, Chinese exceptionalism, culture, history, myth
Chris Alden, Dan Large	2011	Journal of Contemporary China	China's exceptionalism and the challenges of delivering difference in Africa	
Gilbert Rozman	2012	Stanford University Press	East Asia National Identities: Common Roots and Chinese Exceptionalism	Book
Chongyi Feng	2012	International Association for East-West Studies	Universal Truth versus Chinese Exceptionalism: An Ideological Dilemma	
William Callahan	2012	The Journal of Asian Studies, Cambridge	Sino-speak: Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History	
Benjamin Ho	2013	RSIS Working Papers	The Rising Chorus of Chinese Exceptionalism	Book
Feng Zhang	2013	ANU Research Publications	Chinese Exceptionalism in the Intellectual World of China's Foreign Policy	Book
Huisheng Shou	2013	Journal of Chinese political science	The Myth of Chinese Exceptionalism: The Case of Welfare Transition in a Globalized Economy	
Benjamin Ho	2014	Alternatives, Sagepub	Understanding Chinese Exceptionalism: China's Rise, Its Goodness, And Greatness	Chinese politics, Chinese exceptionalism, moral goodness, national greatness
William Callahan	2014	Palgrave Studies in International Relations	Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History	Qing Dynasty, World Order, Chinese Nation, Chinese Nationalism, Interstate Relation
Raquel Vaz-Pinto	2014	Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional	Peaceful Rise and the Limits of Chinese Exceptionalism	
Yuan-kang Wang	2015	Responding to China's Rise	The Myth of Chinese Exceptionalism: A Historical Perspective on China's Rise	Ming Dynasty, Wall Building, Tributary State, Tribute System, Chinese Foreign Policy
Anita Chan	2015	Cornell University Press	Introduction. The Fallacy of Chinese Exceptionalism	-Book/(Chinese Workers in Comparative Perspective)

Xin Li	2016	Management and Organization Review, Cambridge	The Danger of Chinese Exceptionalism	
Fenggang Yang	2016	Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion	Exceptionalism or Chinamerica: Measuring Religious Change in the Globalizing World Today	
Aldo Musacchio, Sergio G. Lazzarini	2016	Oxford Scholarship	Chinese Exceptionalism or New Global Varieties of State Capitalism	Book Chapter – “Regulating the Visible Hand?: The Institutional Implications of Chinese State Capitalism”
Elizabeth Economy	2017	Hoover Institution	The China Model: Unexceptional Exceptionalism	
Alastair Iain Johnston	2018	Harvard University Press	Is Chinese Exceptionalism Undermining China's Foreign Policy Interests?	Book(The China Questions)
Chih Yuan Woon	2018	Geopolitics, Taylor& Francis	China's Contingencies: Critical Geopolitics, Chinese Exceptionalism and the Uses of History	
Jun Zhang	2018	Dialogues in Human Geography	Not Chinese Exceptionalism, But Comparative Institutionalism!	
Katarina Sárvari	2019	Köz-gazdaság	Modern Constructions of China's Exceptionalism in International Relations	
Congyan Cai	2019	Oxford University Press	The Rise of China and International law: Taking Chinese Exceptionalism Seriously	Book
Thomas P. Narins, John Agnew	2020	Alternatives, Sagepub	Missing From The Map: Chinese Exceptionalism, Sovereignty Regimes and the Belt Road Initiative	
Björn Alexander Düben	2020	Problems of Post-Communism	Xi Jinping and the End of Chinese Exceptionalism	
Benjamin Ho	2021	Amsterdam University Press	China's Political Worldview and Chinese Exceptionalism	Book
Xiaoting Li	2021	International Studies Review	Saving National IR from Exceptionalism: The Dialogic Spirit and Self-Reflection in Chinese IR Theory	national IR, exceptionalism, self-reflection
Angela Huyue Zhang	2021	Oxford	Chinese Antitrust Exceptionalism: How the Rise of China Challenges Global Regulation	Book
Jabin T. Jacob, Bhim Subba	2022	China Report	Towards Exceptionalism: The Communist Party of China and its Uses of History	Communist Party of China (CPC), Party History, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, Sinicisation[of Marxism, Chinese Dream, Party Centenary

Table 1: List of Chinese Exceptionalism Related Books & Book Chapters

Source: Compiled by the Author

1.3. Contribution of the Study

Centered on the discourse surrounding China's distinctive rise within the global order, this research aims to augment existing scholarship by elucidating the intricate interplay between the generation of scholarly knowledge and the established power dynamics within both Chinese and US societies. Additionally, this study sheds light on the localized nature of information about China. In essence, by scrutinizing works authored by conventional and critical scholars from Western and Chinese origins, this investigation contributes to the broader endeavor of diversifying intellectual knowledge and promoting a more inclusive perspective within international relations.

It is important to note, however, that the task of decolonizing IR knowledge is complex and multifaceted. This study does not attempt to single-handedly resolve this matter; rather, it recognizes that the resolution requires collaborative knowledge production involving scholars from diverse intellectual backgrounds worldwide. Therefore, this thesis should be regarded as a step toward these collaborative efforts, rather than a definitive solution.

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into five chapters that comprehensively examine the phenomenon of China's ascent on the global stage and its interplay with the concept of Chinese exceptionalism.

In Chapter I, the discussion centers on China's rapid emergence as a major player in the international arena, delving into the multifaceted implications and debates arising from its rise while Chapter II delves deep into the realm of Chinese exceptionalism, investigating existing literature and the ongoing discourse surrounding both China's ascent and the concept of exceptionalism. Furthermore, this chapter analyzes the alignment of mainstream international relations theories with Chinese exceptionalism and probes into whether this exceptionalism poses a challenge to the global status quo or rather maintains it.

Followingly, chapter II also takes a historical perspective, meticulously exploring the characteristics of Chinese exceptionalism across various eras, including imperial, revolutionary, and contemporary China. This chapter draws distinctions between Chinese exceptionalism and its American counterpart.

Chapter III extensively scrutinizes the practical manifestation of Chinese exceptionalism, particularly during the tenures of Hu Jintao and, more significantly, Xi Jinping. Through an in-

depth analysis, this chapter evaluates how Chinese exceptionalism has operated within these administrations.

In the concluding, the study draws together its findings and insights, offering a comprehensive overview of Chinese exceptionalism and its implications. It explores how China is strategically reestablishing its role in global politics, providing a thoughtful synthesis of the preceding chapters.

In summation, this thesis offers a thorough examination of China's rise within the framework of Chinese exceptionalism, traversing historical, theoretical, and practical dimensions to provide a nuanced understanding of China's evolving position in the international order.



CHAPTER II

EXISTING LITERATURE AND CHINESE EXCEPTIONALISM

THEORETICAL OUTLINE

Each and every country's own and unique history, ideology, cultural and national values, the aspect of geographical border, economic and political distinct appears to represent exceptionalism. It can be argued that how a country differentiates from other country, especially in the position of exception. To take example, for understanding the great power competition in the area of their 'exceptionalism' and their policy impacts on the world political and economic affairs. As it has been referred by Lipset (1997), Madsen (1998) and Hodgson (2010), to identify the exceptionalism of USA that its "absence of feudalism historically, Puritan roots, endowment of a large continent with abundant natural resources, melting-pot ethnic composition, democratic ideology combining republicanism, egalitarianism, individualism, and populism, and its great sense of confidence and responsibility".

While the concept of "exceptionalism" has a long historical background in scientific research, it wasn't widely circulated as a term until relatively recently. A database search of social science indexes for the phrase "exceptionalism" reveals that, with one notable exception, it remained absent from literature until the late 1950s (Ceaser, 2012: 7-8).

2.1. Debating Chinese Exceptionalism

The concept of "Chinese exceptionalism" firstly coined by Kang Xiaoguang (2004) in 2004, in his study Xiaoguang (2004) argued the concept of exceptionalism through the 25 years reform of Chinese government. In accordingly, another Chinese scholar, Liu Yawei (2010), most recently argued and linked the Chinese exceptionalism as "Chinese peaceful rise". The concept of 'Chinese exceptionalism,' as critiqued by Peng (2005), has seemingly gained prominence. Within this framework, certain Chinese scholars perceive Chinese culture, philosophy, and cognitive patterns as distinctive and unparalleled. This perspective contends that certain established theories, predominantly rooted in Western paradigms, fall short in capturing the nuanced intricacies intrinsic to China's distinctive attributes.

Followingly the argument of "American exceptionalism" and "great powers exceptionalism", Chinese exceptionalism (*Zhongguo teshulun*) is quietly different, which

creates a new place in the academic discourse of foreign affairs in international political system. As it shows that Chinese distinct civilization, history, cultural differences have diverse and multi-level impact on world affairs. Scholars like Henry Kissinger (2011) observes the similarities between China and American exceptionalism, as he stated that “assumes its (China and American) national values to be both unique and of a kind or which other people naturally aspire. Reconciling the two versions of exceptionalism is the deepest challenge of the Sino-American relationship” (p. A21).

Identifying the exceptionalism of China serves yet another important reason, with consequences for how we consider the foreign actions of China. Inside international politics, analysts are constantly asking what China thinks and wants: “The great strategic issue of our times is not only the rising power of China, but whether its worldview and applied theory will reproduce, converge or take a separate path from the world order and the ideas produced in the era of trans-Atlantic dominance” (Evans, 2010: 55; see also Legro, 2007; Leonard, 2008). However, addressing this matter in a theoretically abstract manner proves limited in its usefulness. The majority of international relations theories offer minimal direction regarding China’s specific requirements, apart from a handful of broad forecasts. For instance, there’s the pragmatic notion that China should expand its overseas interests (Gilpin, 1981). In light of this, constructivist perspectives direct their attention to the substance of political ideologies. These perspectives operate under the belief that China’s desires are contingent upon its national ideological framework governing the approach to achieving foreign policy objectives (Legro, 2007). However, these ideas can only be understood by careful analysis of the foreign-policy discourse and conduct in China.

The core principles underpinning China’s burgeoning exceptionalism center on the values of peace and reconciliation, which are inherently virtuous in their essence. These ideals underscore China’s foreign policy as being rooted in pacifism and collaboration, as emphasized by various Chinese scholars. This narrative suggests that China has the potential to embody a novel form of great power, one distinct from the Western archetype. Advocates posit that China’s perspective entails viewing other nations as subjects of varying degrees of cooperation, rather than as targets for conquest and dominance as seen throughout Western history (Zhao, 2009: 89).

It is asserted that China stands opposed to imposing a singular ideology or value system that excludes others. This commitment to embracing diversity is believed to stem from the traditional Chinese cultural concept of ‘*Li bu wang jiao*’ (The Chinese do not go to foreign lands to teach ritual) (Zhao, 2009: 124). This notion has further evolved into the doctrine of

‘Hua bu zhi yi’ (the Chinese don’t govern foreign peoples), culminating in the argument that China has historically rejected expansion and conquest as foreign policy objectives (Pan, 2007).

However, following the argument of Kang Xiaoguang (2004), and Liu Yawei (2010), another notion of Chinese exceptionalism through the Chinese peaceful rise or peaceful development argued by Zheng Bijian (2005) who is a very influential scholar, has important role on the top leaders of CCP. As Zheng Bijian (2005), “China’s rise to major-power status will nor, and should not, follow the conventional pattern of conflict or war between great powers”.

2.2. Debating China’s Peaceful Rise and Chinese Exceptionalism

The theoretical construct of China’s exceptionalism, advocated by prominent intellectual elites to assert that China’s peaceful rise will not culminate in adversarial confrontation, comprises four discrete constituents as expounded by Wang. These constituents encompass the following facets: China’s historical trajectory eschews proclivities for outward expansion; China’s potency is imbued with an inherent disposition towards non-aggressive motives; China strategically accords primacy to defensive postures, as epitomized by the iconic symbolism of the Great Wall; China’s global architectural underpinnings manifest benign attributes, substantiated through the empirical illustrations provided by the Tributary System. Within the Chinese paradigm, the ideological tenets of China’s exceptionalism not only function as a theoretical framework underpinning a trajectory of non-belligerence, but also serve as operative policy paradigms and discursive constructs. (Wang, 2015)

f, Zheng Bijian (2005) emphasized four reasons why China’s rise will not be identified as hegemonic cause rather it’s rise will be liked with the patterns of the great powers changing policy and their rise and fall in the international system. In accordingly, the reasons identified by Zheng Bijian (2005) describes followingly-

Firstly, as it has been very clear that China is not interested to pursue in the global system through ideological agenda, as such agenda was very frequent in the time cold war between USA led capitalist bloc versus Soviet Union led communist bloc. As what Zheng’s articulated and emphasized in his study that China is much more interested in trading business of Computers or any kind of technological matters rather than to export such a revolution or ideology (p.10).

Secondly, Zheng showed the China's rise as peaceful rise because they don't have any policy to establish military bases in foreign countries or they don't have military oriented foreign policy, as what he argued USA's foreign policy is fully military and imperialist power oriented to establish military bases in foreign countries. Though, in reality, it is little bit false argument, because China have so many military bases in overseas such as in Djibouti, Sri Lanka, planned to establish in Pakistan and Myanmar.

Thirdly, Zheng's actually suggest why China adopt the western industrialization policy for the industrial and sustainable development to make their energy much effective and efficient.

Fourthly, for China's neighbor, China may not create large level of emigration policy, as Zheng's identified it as a tool of China's peaceful rise.

Followingly the idea of Zheng Bijian (2005), another Chinese scholar Hu Angang (2011) believes the same idea for China's peaceful rise. Through the systematic observations, Angang (2011) identified the Chinese exceptionalism in several arguments such as firstly, China's past and historical experience with humiliations from foreign invasions guided them to root out their current and future foreign policy, as he argued the China's traditional approach of "not doing to others what you do not want others to do to you", accordingly, "China will neither pursue a hegemonic foreign policy nor impose its own will on others." Secondly, Angang (2011) identified why China must accept the "resource-efficient, environmentally friendly superpower focused on green development" policy rather than to follow and adopt the western industrial based development model which has highly energy consumption and environmental costs. Thirdly, Angang (2011) argued how Chinese leadership policy has much more people-oriented policy. As he emphasized that China's leadership adopt the resolution for economic inequality, addresses the people's health care, energy efficiency and environmental challenges, which set up the domestic policy of China and accordingly, this kind of domestic policy push China to do not make belligerent and offensive policy in the agenda of their foreign policy. Fourthly, China's exceptionalism may identify through the knowledge economy as Hu defined as "transition from a knowledge-closed nation into a knowledge-open nation and from a country lagging in science and technology into a country spearheading global innovation, which must be defined less by competition than by cooperation". In accordingly Hu (2011) argued, therefore, that "China's rise represents an opportunity for the rest of the world rather than a threat".

However, in literatures, which, of course, follow the action rather than theory, as what the Chinese previous advisers such as Zheng Bijian (2005) or Hu Angang (2011) described the China's peaceful rise and China's exceptionalism. Certain Western analysts might contend that

the concepts of a peaceful ascent and Chinese exceptionalism could be construed as strategic diplomatic maneuvers orchestrated by Chinese leadership. These maneuvers could be aimed at allaying the apprehensions of neighboring nations of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and other influential global powers concerning the potential emergence of a militarily potent and expansionist China.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the existence of an alternate perspective within this discourse. Scholars such as Wang Jian, Li Xiaoning, Qiao Liang, Wang Xianghui, Xin zhanguo shidai (2004), and Xiong Guangkai (2003) espouse a critical stance toward the growing traction of the notion of China's peaceful ascent. They express reservations about what they perceive as the oversimplified and overly optimistic portrayal of China's rise, which is becoming increasingly prominent within the People's Republic of China. Since the introduction of Zheng's (2005) formulation, Chinese critics have maintained a degree of skepticism about the extent of its reception, both domestically and on the international stage.

Another illustration comes from the perspective of Yan Xuetong (2005), who observes that the concept of China's peaceful rise is fraught with confusion and inefficacy due to three divergent interpretations of the terms "rise" and "peaceful." The initial interpretation envisions both "rise" and "peaceful" as objectives, positing that China aims to ascend uniquely, deviating from the historical norm of powers achieving prominence through military means. The second interpretation regards "peaceful" as a method and "rise" as the ultimate goal, implying that China merely employs the notion of peaceful means to attain its desired outcome: elevation. Conversely, the third interpretation regards "peaceful" as the goal and "rise" as the method, thus portraying China's intention as contributing to global harmony (p. 2).

As Yan (2005) contends, tensions stemming from these divergent meanings are bound to emerge during the policy formulation process. The dynamism of international politics renders governments adaptable, rather than rigidly adhering to a single commitment. This, according to Yan (2005), underscores that the notion of a peaceful rise is more of an aspirational ideal rather than a pragmatic reality.

A military analyst, such as Xiaofeng Wang (2018) and Major General Luo Yuan, holds a critical stance towards concepts of pacifism, such as "heping zhuyi," and the broader pan-pacifist approach, referred to as "fan hepinghu," which have gained prominence within segments of the Chinese foreign policy circle. Luo Yuan articulates his critique unequivocally, suggesting that embracing such pacifist ideologies could potentially steer China down a trajectory resembling post-World War II Japan's experience. In Luo's view, this course of

action would inadvertently lead China into a strategic quagmire orchestrated by the United States, effectively preventing its ascent to the status of a superpower.

2.3. Debating China's Dream and Chinese Exceptionalism

The most assertive and overt criticism of Chinese exceptionalism is encapsulated in the influential 2010 book "The China Dream". Authored by Senior Colonel Liu Mingfu (2010), who serves as the Director of the Institute of Military Development at the National Defense University, the work presents a forceful perspective. Liu (2010) explicitly advocates for China to adopt a new strategic mindset termed "military rise" (sushi juegi). This approach is advocated with the objective of attaining and solidifying a global leadership position, enabling China to effectively compete against the United States. Notably, Liu (2010) contends that China's ascendancy conforms to the established pattern of power shifts within the international system. Consequently, he rejects the notion of Chinese exceptionalism, asserting the inevitability of a hegemonic confrontation. Liu's (2010) viewpoint reflects a subset of sentiments found among select international relations scholars, influential opinion leaders, and particularly military strategists. In the pages of his book, Liu Mingfu (2010: 21) explicitly states that "the overarching aim of China's modernization is to become the preeminent global power (tuhao qiangguo)".

To substantiate this strategic objective, Liu (2010) presents the argument that a consistent aspiration for preeminence has been shared among China's paramount leaders spanning the past century. Citing historical instances, he underscores that this ambition has been echoed by influential figures. For instance, during the 1911 Revolution, Sun Yat-sen articulated his vision to elevate China to the status of "the world's foremost affluent and potent nation (shijie diyi fugiang zhiguo)". Mao's Great Leap Forward initiative, Liu (2010) contends, was essentially an endeavor to surpass the United States. Moreover, Deng Xiaoping's implementation of the "keeping a low-profile strategy (taoguang wang bui)" was devised to advance Chinese national revitalization, positioning it above all other nations by the middle of the twenty-first century, following a three-step progression (Liu, 2010: 3-16).

In accordance with Liu's (2010) perspective, the transition of China into the singular global superpower in lieu of the United States, an occurrence he terms "superpower succession (guenjun guojia gengti)," is a development that appears imminent. Liu urges both Chinese leadership and the populace to maintain a pragmatic stance, cautioning against nurturing any illusions regarding benevolent intentions from the United States with regard to China's

ascendancy. He also advises against harboring expectations of harmonious coexistence between the established superpower and the emergent one. In Liu's evaluation, the United States is resolute in its determination to counteract China across economic, political, ideological, and notably, military dimensions.

Liu's (2010) analysis finds resonance among numerous analysts within the Chinese military establishment. This sentiment is reflected in Minister of Defense Liang Guanglie's assertion that the attainment of peace requires proactive efforts, aligning with Liu's (2010) position that China should expedite its military modernization. Within the perspective of military analysts, the primary avenue for China's ascent, as Liu emphasizes, revolves around the establishment of a robust armed force capable of engaging in competition with the United States on this particular front. Liu (2010) contends that this strategic endeavor is not solely driven by China's intent to overcome the United States but is largely motivated by the United States' desire to overcome China (p. 273). Liu (2010) advocates that achieving the status of a military superpower should stand as the "Chinese dream." He posits that the absence of this aspiration would leave China only facing "nightmares".

2.4. Debating China's National Identity via Foreign Policy and Chinese Exceptionalism

Jin Linbo encapsulates the essence of the Chinese worldview by contextualizing it within the realms of national identity and foreign policy. He posits that while China's historical disposition toward isolationism and an inward focus has exerted considerable influence over its foreign policy, contemporary circumstances have engendered a pertinent inquiry: namely, how to effectively reconcile the backing of the international system with the enduring recollections of historical victimization and the concurrent rise of nationalism. Moreover, the juxtaposition of China in the interplay between traditional Chinese worldviews and the modern perceptions influenced by the Western paradigm holds continued significance for both China itself and the global arena.

While Ming Wan delves into the impact of Beijing's endorsement of the non-interference principle on the formation of the Chinese national identity. He asserts that the incorporation of non-interference as a guiding tenet has served to mitigate the considerable uncertainties arising from the dynamics of domestic Chinese politics and global events (p. 257). However, despite China's elevated international standing and the consequential awareness of foreign nations' domestic affairs, it is imperative to scrutinize the continued adherence to the non-intervention

principle. This perspective aligns with Rozman's assertion in 2012 that such adherence warrants a more thorough examination.

The discussions surrounding Chinese optimism and exceptionalism underscore the significance of Hu Angang's (2011) work, marked by its originality, intricate nature, forward-thinking approach, and comprehensive coverage. These dialogues also unveil the diversity inherent within China's intellectual community. Each individual reader, naturally, is capable of forming their own evaluation of the author's analyses, the prospects associated with China's ascent, and the resultant implications for global peace and prosperity in the twenty-first century.

It is reasonable to infer, however, that the array of concepts, debates, and visions contending within China holds significance not only for the nation's internal developmental trajectory but also for its interactions with the international sphere. As a proponent of Chinese optimism and exceptionalism, Hu Angang's (2011) contributions can expand the knowledge base and enrich the comprehension of the critical matters and enduring challenges confronting this swiftly transforming nation. When viewed from a broader standpoint, this engaging and forward-looking book may also contribute to fostering worldwide acknowledgment that in the new global landscape, all entities must devise innovative approaches for contemplating matters of power and responsibility.

2.5. Response of International Relations Theories to Chinese Exceptionalism

In the realm of international relations and global politics, it is a prevalent occurrence to observe the pivotal roles played by unipolar and multipolar nations, both from a theoretical and empirical standpoint within the field of International Relations. However, it's worth noting that the predominant IR theories are rooted in Western perspectives, wherein countries outside the Western sphere, particularly emerging potent nations like China, assume highly effective roles in bolstering global peace and security. This efficacy is discernible through a distinctive theoretical lens encompassing various facets such as social, economic, and political dimensions.

Given this context, this dissertation's contention revolves around identifying the most suitable IR theories that elucidate the ascendance of China within the international system. It prompts the query of whether a divergent viewpoint is imperative to comprehensively grasp China's trajectory, as well as the foreign policies of other non-Western regions. The underlying objective of this thesis is to surpass the potentiality of non-Western IR studies, aiming to establish a distinct "Chinese Exceptionalism". This notion stems from the inadequacy of Western IR theories in explicating China's ascent. A critical analysis is reasonable to discern

how China's rise contributes to the evolution of both Western and Chinese IR theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, this assessment should ascertain whether these theories effectively capture the nuances intrinsic to China's circumstance, while also functioning within the wider context of evolving power dynamics and shifts in global relations.

Equally significant is the inclusion of localized voices and experiences originating from non-Western sources. This facet holds the potential for projecting unique perspectives on international relations, thereby enriching the existing theoretical paradigms that govern global interactions.

This segment of the study undertakes an analysis of the perspectives put forth by postclassical realism, neorealism, and neoliberal institutionalism concerning the conceptualization of hegemony, the mechanisms underpinning the establishment of hegemony, and the dynamics characterizing the interplay between an established hegemonic power and a potential contender(s). The objective is to glean insights into the phenomenon of Chinese exceptionalism. Subsequently, the examination progresses to a deliberation on the ascent of China within the framework of a realist global order.

Following this, the investigation delves into the discourse from a neoliberal institutionalist vantage point, addressing the discourse surrounding hegemony and its compatibility with the distinctive traits of Chinese exceptionalism. Lastly, this section concludes by engaging in a discourse concerning the trajectory of China's exceptionalism within the context of an intricately interdependent global landscape.

2.5.1. Realism, Rising Powers IR, and Chinese Exceptionalism

Up until the conclusion of the Cold War, the realist discourse pertaining to the international interactions of ascending and emergent powers closely mirrored the principles of classical realism. However, this stance has undergone transformation consequent to the termination of bipolarity. As a result, a novel realist paradigm concerning burgeoning international relations has emerged, wherein the dissolution of bipolar power dynamics is perceived to engender heightened instability, yet concurrently holds the potential for alleviating conflict pressures in the aftermath of the Cold War era. A significant proponent of this perspective is Kenneth Waltz (1979), who underscores the fundamental influence of the anarchical structure characterizing the global system, compelling states to adopt self-reliant strategies as a means of ensuring their survival. These strategies, by their very nature, render state conduct unrestricted in nature.

Consequently, Waltz's (1979) neorealism posits that China, like other states operating within this anarchic milieu, is poised to engage in power struggles, territorial contests, and

resource acquisition while staunchly safeguarding its interests. This pursuit of power and security is rooted in the imperative of survival, which underscores the competitive nature of international interactions within this framework.

John Mearsheimer's offensive realism, as outlined in his work from 2001, posits an inexorable inclination of ascending powers towards expansionist behaviors. He envisions an unavoidable clash looming between the established status quo power (the US) and its ascending power rival (China), as viewed through the lens of the "power transition theory". Mearsheimer (2006) postulates that the most potent nations inherently endeavor to establish hegemony within their regional spheres, while concurrently preventing any potential emergence of dominant rival powers in other global regions (Mearsheimer, 2006: 160).

Consequently, Mearsheimer (2006) contends that China, as an ascending power, will naturally strive for supremacy and will have no viable recourse other than seeking to replace the existing global leader, the United States, in order to effectively safeguard its national interests. From his perspective, China's pursuit of securing its national interests necessitates a trajectory of militarization, which in turn dictates a policy orientation vis-à-vis the United States. Ultimately, Mearsheimer predicts that the US will be compelled to confront China if it intends to sustain its prevailing hegemonic position, as alternatives would be limited.

Mearsheimer's perspective (2001) centers on China's ascent and predicts an inevitable conflict between the US and China. This projection is predominantly grounded in security concerns rather than a non-militaristic viewpoint, thereby demonstrating the influence of constructivism. Offensive realism, akin to neorealism and constructivism, emphasizes a particular trajectory in China's rise. Conversely, there exist other scholars who could be categorized as optimistic realists. These scholars underscore the significance of power, yet within the context of China's constrained capabilities.

For instance, Shambaugh (2004) contends that China lacks both the intention and the capacity to establish a self-centric order. Charles L. Glaser, on the other hand, argues that due to the relatively diminished structural pressures exerted by both nations in terms of their power, intentions, and informational dynamics, the likelihood of conflict between China and the US is minimal. He further posits that direct conventional attacks between the two countries are improbable due to their possession of nuclear weapons and their geographical separation.

Realist theories expound upon China's ascent by primarily focusing on its burgeoning military prowess. John Mearsheimer (2010), within the realist framework, expresses concerns that China is prone to succumb to the allure of supplanting US hegemony. He posits that China's trajectory will inevitably lead it to eschew a subordinate role, opting instead to champion a

multipolar global landscape in an endeavor to break free from the confines of US unilateralism (Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 387).

In essence, realist theory emerges as a formidable source of apprehension concerning China's upward trajectory. The core assumption underpinning this paradigm postulates that the rise of potent nations will inherently introduce disruptions to the international order. Consequently, realist scholars paint a rather somber panorama of the post-Cold War Asian order. They envisage China's ascent as a potential challenge to the prevailing order characterized by the dominion of global American hegemony. This apprehension extends to a belief that China's economic and military capabilities could act as disruptive forces, unsettling the established global order.

Neoclassical realism, a derivative of realist theories in international relations, introduces a fresh iteration by amalgamating the national policies of states with an assessment of their resources and capabilities within the international system. This variant aims to explain the foreign policies pursued by states. Within the realist paradigm, the conflicts linked to the "Balance of Power Theory" have been harnessed as a novel premise to decipher the foreign policy decisions of nations. Neoclassical realists acknowledge the paramount importance of power in shaping foreign policy orientations (Wohlforth, 1993; Rose, 1998). They define power as the capacity of states to wield influence over other states or the resources at their disposal for this purpose, as in the current context, by employing exceptionalism strategies, China is utilizing its capacity of influence on other states.

While structuralist realism, which resides within the broader realist framework, employs a limited set of variables to account for recurring phenomena within the international system. In contrast, neoclassical realism, as a framework for understanding foreign policy, endeavors to expound upon the foreign policies pursued by states, transcending the confines of repetitive international patterns. In its analysis of state foreign policies, neoclassical realism encompasses not only the distribution of resources or capacity in the international arena but also factors inherent to national politics. This expanded framework incorporates a greater array of variables. For a comprehensive grasp of the foreign policy actions undertaken by China and the USA, a thorough understanding of the intricacies inherent to each respective state is imperative.

2.5.2. Liberal Paradigm and Chinese Exceptionalism

The liberal frameworks within the realm of international relations, while discussing China's exceptionalism, notably accentuate the significant role of interdependence as a catalyst for China's ascent marked by peaceful intentions (Weede 2010, 209). Advocates of this perspective

contend that the deepening interdependence, coupled with its enduring ramifications on both domestic and global politics, stands as a pivotal factor in ensuring the tranquility of China's rise. Similar to the realist paradigm, liberalism too presents both pessimistic and optimistic narratives regarding China's emergence.

The less sanguine aspects of liberal theory underscore the pivotal influence of domestic societal preferences and their subsequent impact on a state's foreign policies. These proponents assert that as China seeks to reshape the existing order, its government might undertake actions that potentially engender discord between China's domestic political system and the liberal international framework. Escalating discontent and economic demands emanating from the emerging middle class could propel China into a foreseeable clash with other nations and corporations worldwide, potentially culminating in a more assertive approach. Furthermore, theorists advance the notion that a surge in nationalism, coupled with the fragility of China's domestic governance and the specter of domestic political upheaval, might veer China's otherwise peaceful ascent off course.

The optimists' perspective is grounded in two key suppositions. Firstly, they contend that both internal and external interests of China are not inherently predisposed toward conflict. Moreover, these interests are perceived as being predominantly aligned towards collective objectives rather than antagonistic ones. Advocates of this viewpoint assert that China will increasingly adopt and adhere to established rules, norms, and principles as it integrates into the global order, ultimately contributing to its preservation. The prevailing notion is that China's economic expansion will foster enhanced interaction, thereby creating a network of non-state collective interests that align with foreign policies (Keller and Rawski, 2007; Shambaugh, 2004). In addition, certain analysts predict that the process of domestic political liberalization within China will yield an "inside-out" ripple effect. This, in turn, is anticipated to catalyze a shift toward a more cooperative stance in China's foreign policy outlook (Liu, 2006: 63).

G. John Ikenberry (2008; 2011) asserts that as China progressively integrates itself into the existing international framework, it simultaneously evolves into a proponent of the prevailing global order. Ikenberry (2008) underscores that the intricate network of multilateral institutions and security agreements inherent to the global liberal order encourages states to cooperate and achieve greater integration. This cooperative engagement serves to foster mutually beneficial relationships over the long term. He posits that China's continued pursuit of an integrationist strategy will veer it away from seeking overt authority or leadership.

In contrast, Ikenberry (2008) contends that the liberal international order will persist even if the United States were to retract its involvement. As such, he argues that China and other emerging nations lack the capacity to significantly alter the fundamental rules and norms that were originally established by the United States. Liberal theorists, including proponents of Western liberalism, expound upon the rise of China by largely emphasizing its economic prowess. Within this viewpoint, it is argued that China's ascent will yield optimistic advantages for Southeast Asia, the broader continent, and the global economy as a whole.

Furthermore, in pursuit of equilibrium in power dynamics and regional stability, China adopts a strategic course by engaging with international organizations. A notable instance of this approach is evidenced through its interactions with entities like ASEAN and its involvement in the establishment of legislation such as the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area.

Concluding this viewpoint, the scholar briefly underscores the principle that the greater the institutionalization and comprehensiveness of the existing order, the more formidable the challenge for a nascent ascending state to disrupt it. This, in turn, leads to a scenario wherein China becomes more intricately integrated within the international system. This integration ultimately aligns more closely with the prevailing order, as opposed to the establishment of an alternative order originating from China (Ikenberry, 2008: 92).

2.5.3. Constructivism and Chinese Exceptionalism

For constructivist scholars, the landscape of international relations is predominantly shaped not solely by tangible forces, but also through the exchange of ideas and the mutual comprehension of various actors. Within this framework, constructing a definition of the global order places a heightened emphasis on the pivotal role of ideas, norms, historical contexts, cultural nuances, and identities. These elements emerge and evolve within the context of social structures and the interactions between various entities. Recognizing the significance of these multifaceted components, constructivism provides a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the origins and drivers underpinning Asia's international relations. This understanding surpasses the limitations of a purely materialistic perspective, shedding light on dimensions that are not solely governed by material considerations.

Although Wendt's (1979) theory doesn't provide a definitive stance on how China's rise will unfold within the context of Western International Relations Theory (IRT), the theory does suggest that conflicts or cooperation could emerge based on divergent ideas or value-driven disparities. However, Qin Yaqing (2010), a prominent Chinese scholar specializing in constructivism, offers a clarifying perspective on China's ascent by highlighting its unique

stance on norms and values. Yaqing's standpoint is rooted in distinct aspects of Chinese thought, dialectics, and their particular conception of human society (Yaqing, 2010: 131). She posits that China possesses the agency to introduce its own interpretation of norms and values. Furthermore, she suggests that China might endeavor to reshape the international system in line with its distinct norms and values, aiming to render its ascent harmonious within the broader international framework constructed by China.

Constructivism serves as an apt framework for comprehending the feasibility of a distinct form of regionalism in the rising and emerging powerful nations context. It takes into account the normative and cultural considerations that influence the actions of China, offering insights into the emergence of regional institutions and dialogues in the post-Cold War landscape. This theory provides a nuanced explanation for the formation, origins, and evolution of the initial regional coalition in Asia, namely ASEAN. Notably, the constructivist lens surpasses the explanatory capabilities of both realist and liberalist perspectives in this regard.

Moreover, constructivist scholars' direct attention towards a significant ideational contrast between China and the predominant Western powers. They also delve into the examination of Asian regional institutions and highlight the divergence of these institutions from approaches derived from Western paradigms. This framework offers an alternate viewpoint for Chinese scholars as it does not perceive China's ascendancy as an inherently substantial threat to the global order and international stability.

2.6. Chinese Exceptionalism in A Realist Global Context: An Imperilment to the Current System?

For a significant number of realist thinkers inclined towards a pessimistic outlook, China occupies the foremost position as a contender within the international system. While certain scholars acknowledge Russia and India as additional challengers (Ahrari, 2011; Ndkarni, 2010), the prevailing consensus since the late 1980s and early 1990s designates China as the sole aspiring regional hegemon endowed with the potential capacity to question the existing international system dominated by the United States.

Notwithstanding China's official rhetoric emphasizing a "peaceful rise" and the establishment of a "harmonious world order," realists remain convinced that China's post-2008 foreign policy marked by assertiveness, particularly in relation to the East and South China Seas, serves as a genuine indicator of its future intentions for revisionism (Christensen, 2001:

7-9, 2015: 30-34; Friedberg, 2005: 17-18; Mearsheimer, 2001: 372-401; Swaine, 2010: 2-4; Wang, Y-K, 2001: 191-209).

As per Mearsheimer's (2001) assertions, the present scenario in Asia can be characterized as a state of balanced multipolarity. Nonetheless, if China succeeds in maintaining comparably robust economic growth rates, a shift is anticipated in the forthcoming years, resulting in an altered structure of unbalanced multipolarity. In this reshaped landscape, China is poised to emerge as a potential regional hegemon.

Within this framework, Mearsheimer (2001) aligns his arguments with those of offensive realism. He contends that China is likely to emulate the historical trajectory of the United States and endeavor to recalibrate the distribution of power within its own region. This recalibration is envisaged through China's strategic pursuit of maximizing the disparity in power between itself and other contenders in the Asian sphere.

When the costs associated with altering the established order appear rational, China is anticipated to endeavor in reshaping the prevailing international system. To accomplish this aim, Beijing is projected to adopt a strategy that unfolds in two distinct phases. In the initial phase, the priority will be to establish dominance over the Asian region. Mearsheimer posits that, in pursuit of this objective, China might undertake a strategic approach akin to the Japanese Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. This approach could involve China asserting a Chinese equivalent of the Monroe Doctrine, aimed at minimizing US military presence in the Asian realm. Should this strategy prove successful, it would potentially pave the way for China to subsequently challenge the United States' influence in other global regions (Mearsheimer, 2001: 381, 387, 396-401; 2004: 2-4; 2010: 389-390).

In essence, within the context of pessimistic realist perspectives, the forceful and forward-looking approach exhibited by China in its foreign policy, particularly after 2008, is interpreted as indicative of its forthcoming intent to contest the leadership of the United States and potentially assert its dominance, primarily within the East Asian sphere. The anticipatory outlook from this realist viewpoint suggests that challenging times loom on the horizon.

2.7. Exceptionalism and the Ascendancy of Chinese World Order: An Emergent Status Quo Power?

Expanding upon the preceding discourse concerning literature on exceptionalism, an argument emerges that Chinese exceptionalism, in its most comprehensive context, is intricately tied to the *idea of China* itself. Chinese exceptionalism can be delineated as a

complex amalgamation of ideas that collectively constitute a creed or ideology distinctly Chinese in nature. This body of thought continues to hold substantial influence among the Chinese populace and permeates the political culture, effectively shaping the Chinese perspective on the nation's power and influence.

In a certain context, rhetoric of Chinese exceptionalism is frequently employed to underscore the distinctiveness of China compared to other entities, while concurrently highlighting its perceived destiny as a central global entity, often encapsulated by the term 'zhongguo' (center of the world). A notable illustration of this concept is found in the idea of 'tianxia' (or 'all-under-heaven') propagated by Chinese philosopher Zhao Tingyang. This notion profoundly influences how Chinese scholars perceive China's positioning within the global sphere.

Of greater significance, this distinctiveness is frequently underscored as a distinctive Chinese contribution to the realm of global politics. This emphasis serves the purpose of challenging the normative regulations governing contemporary international politics, thereby calling into question the established normative framework.

As per Callahan's (2013) analysis, Zhao's endeavor to portray the Under-Heaven system as a universal remedy for global issues constitutes a novel interpretation of Confucianism's hierarchical structure. This reinterpretation accentuates the prioritization of order over freedom, ethics over legal frameworks, and governance by elites over democratic principles and human rights. In light of this, Zhao's aspiration to transcend the confines of China's historical traditions is driven by the intention, as elucidated by Callahan (2013), to not only "reimagine China" but also to foster a broader reconsideration of the world.

Contemporary reevaluations of China's identity are manifest in endeavors to depict it as a distinctive force. This portrayal positions China not as an imitator of Western paradigms, but rather as a nation leveraging its rich cultural and ideological heritage to differentiate itself from the West (Callahan, 2015). Additionally, Chinese exceptionalism fulfills the role of providing legitimacy to the rule of the Communist Party within the country. This is especially pertinent since despite its widespread global impact and presence, China's influence retains a degree of limitation, categorizing it as a "partial power" in terms of its overall influence (Shambaugh, 2013).

Put differently, the advancement of a global order rooted in Chinese principles, regardless of whether it aligns precisely with the concept of Tianxia, is intricately linked to the safeguarding of China's internal governance. This connection hinges upon a singular entity: the Chinese Communist Party. The ability of the CCP to articulate a vision for an international

order is contingent upon its success in fulfilling domestic goals. Conversely, to attain its objectives on the domestic front, the CCP must actively ensure that the international order is conducive to its interests.

An avenue to achieve this objective involves Beijing positioning itself as an extraordinary power characterized by distinctiveness and commandability. This distinctiveness is emphasized in contrast to the Western powers, with China being perceived as intrinsically inclined towards peace. Moreover, China seeks to establish its virtue through the assertion of moral supremacy, positioning itself as the preeminent exemplar in various domains. This strategic approach aligns with China's endeavors to restore its national eminence and global stature (Callahan, 2013). Establishing a moral or ethical foundation becomes imperative in this context, as it serves to counter potential accusations that China is relentlessly pursuing growth without regard for other considerations.

Consequently, Chinese exceptionalism offers a platform for the Chinese government to navigate the discourse in a manner that aligns with its goal of projecting the nation as ethically principled. This pursuit is executed through a dual approach: firstly, by propagating a favorable portrayal of China that underscores its inclination toward peace, avoidance of hegemony, and distinctiveness; and secondly, by safeguarding the integrity of the Chinese identity, which is deemed valuable and virtuous. This is juxtaposed against perceived subversive values such as the rule of law, liberal democracy, and civil society. These values, if embraced, could potentially erode the authority of the Communist Party, which is of paramount importance.

2.8. Conceptualizing Exceptionalism: Assessing the Narratives of Chinese Exceptionalism

In essence, the concept of exceptionalism pertains to the characteristic of distinctiveness, uniqueness, and differentiation from a cohort of elements assumed to possess homogeneity. Consequently, an element is deemed exceptional if it exhibits an identity or resemblance with other phenomena within its categorical domain.

When a country attains exceptional status, it diverges from the aggregate of other countries, possessing distinct phenomena that confer uniqueness upon it. Relative to the entirety of elements, this distinctiveness serves as a foundation for an implied assertion of superiority. The exceptional country's distinctive and novel characteristics manifest its capacity for innovation and differentiation, transcending the homogeneity prevalent in the macro-level collective.

Particularly, this implicit claim of superiority and the revelation of novel distinctions find expression in the discourse of numerous historical societies.

The fundamental premise underlying the notion of exceptionality is predicated on the recognition that a country diverges from others across various dimensions, wherein most countries conceive their existence to be imbued with a distinct role, purpose, or ideal in historical contexts.

Exceptionalism plays a pivotal role in societal self-definition, shaping perceptions of origin, identity, and the interpretation of unfolding events. Narratives rooted in historical and cultural contexts establish a collective backdrop to reinforce shared identity and common ideals. Accentuating distinctiveness, particularly in cultural and political realms, engenders a unique state identity and informs novel policy trajectories.

Drawing on the extant literature pertaining to the influence of state identity on politics and foreign policy, it can be posited that this discourse serves as a significant reference point for various political behaviors and decisions (Onuf, 2012). A country characterized by uniqueness and exclusivity across multiple dimensions formulates its foreign policy based on its perceived advantages and values, utilizing its interactions with other nations and societies to promote and propagate distinct attributes. This promotional aspect also underpins the structure and content of the foreign policy of the United States during the 20th century.

2.9. From American Exceptionalism to Chinese Exceptionalism

The perception of a nation or country as exceptional is not an exclusive phenomenon for any particular state. Throughout history, various countries have laid claim to their distinctiveness and exceptionalism in comparison to other nations worldwide. Notably, France draws upon its social exceptionalism to assert its revolutionary and confrontational political culture (Desan, 2011: 138), United Kingdom emphasizes its political institutionalization, distinguishing it from Continental Europe (de la Escosura, 2004), the USA propagates a “new world” discourse, and China underscores its cultural and philosophical distinctiveness (Chaziza, 2018).

2.9.1. American Exceptionalism

The impact of the discourse on American exceptionalism manifested primarily through idealism in its foreign policy. This influence became particularly evident with the introduction of the concept of the “new world order” following the First World War, while the values

espoused, especially after the Second World War, significantly shaped American foreign policy. The widespread acceptance of Wilson's principles post-World War I and the establishment of the League of Nations, exemplifying a distinct institutionalization compared to prior diplomatic systems, is perceived as the United States' contribution to the establishment of international law, thus accentuating the exceptional standing of the country and its perceived mission for humanity.

The post-World War II international order facilitated the ascent of the USA to superpower status, affording the nation the capability to pursue foreign policy aligned with its inherent values and exert influence on a global scale. During this period, American foreign policy engendered the perception of the USA as a bulwark against threats such as communism, socialism, or the Eastern Bloc. This responsibility of upholding the established order as the leader of Western democracies resulted in the Western Bloc rallying behind American exceptionalism, bolstering confidence in American leadership. Consequently, the endorsement of USA exceptionalism, particularly by Western nations, markedly enhanced the efficacy of "the discourse of American exceptionalism" in foreign policy and the international arena, while also reinforcing its validity within American society.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the conspicuous and predominant role of the USA in international politics provided it with the capacity to shape the global landscape in accordance with its own value system (Kissinger, 2002: 224). Within the constructed liberal character of the international order, countries and societies acknowledged as allies by the USA developed the perception that their embraced values were safeguarded under American leadership, thereby underscoring the US' primacy in the world system. Despite certain negative appraisals of American dominance, even in impoverished and marginalized regions, there exists a perspective that acknowledges its constructive role in promoting the establishment of certain universal values (Wallerstein, 2004: 11).

Throughout the Cold War era, the discourse of American exceptionalism attained notable salience within the international community, accentuating America's preeminence and distinctive position in global politics, with the overarching aim of safeguarding worldwide peace and stability. Presented as the custodian of freedom and democracy, America's exceptional model drew considerable attention for its propagation and sustenance during this epoch.

The denouement of the Cold War witnessed the USA's ascendance as the singular superpower on the global stage, thereby fortifying the role of American exceptionalism as the "World Police," thus augmenting the nation's effectiveness in the realm of international

politics. Concurrently, novel international theses and approaches have surfaced, positing the American political and economic system, along with its underlying values, as the most optimal choice for the world. This development has contributed to the conjuncture leading to the proposition of the “end of history” thesis (Fukuyama, 1989), in which fresh international arguments and perspectives have emerged, advocating in favor of the American political and economic system and the values upon which it is founded.

This theory posits the USA as an exceptional and preeminent nation, juxtaposing an “other” identity, culture, and states in an ideological framework, subjecting them to demonization. Simultaneously, it emphasizes the universal character of American exceptionalism as a core value. This narrative reinforces the legitimacy of America’s global efficacy and superiority, envisioning the widespread adoption of American political methods, liberal democracy, and free-market economy principles worldwide. As a result, an international milieu emerges, characterized by institutionalizations and alliances predicated on the values that constitute a substantial dimension of the narrative of American exceptionalism (Brzezinski, 1998: 28-29). Ultimately, this portrayal presents the country as an ideal, exemplary, superior, and uniquely distinctive choice for the world, encompassing its distinct political culture, economic system, and values.

The post-Cold War era ushered in a transformative period that sparked debates both domestically and internationally concerning American exceptionalism. Proponents underscored the salience of American exceptionalism in providing robust leadership and fostering global peace, advocating for the USA to adopt a pioneering and proactive stance. Conversely, dissenting opinions emerged, attributing American exceptionalism to the USA’s hegemonic aspirations and critiquing its unilateral policy approaches. These divergent perspectives have significantly influenced the discourse on American exceptionalism within the field of international relations.

2.9.2. Historical Development of the Concept

The origin of the “American exceptionalism” narrative is commonly linked to John Winthrop, the inaugural governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. When addressing the Puritan immigrants, he asserted, “We shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us.” The phrase “the city upon the hill” in Winthrop’s address is frequently cited as the pivotal moment marking the inception of the “American exceptionalism” discourse (Pease, 2009: 77).

Throughout American history, the discourse of American exceptionalism has consistently found resonance in the rhetoric of almost every American president, starting from George Washington. However, it is worth noting that until recent times, the term “exceptionalism” was not extensively prevalent, leading to a situation where the concept of exceptionalism was present without a well-defined label. Likewise, Ronald Reagan, widely regarded as one of the trailblazers of exceptionalism, did not explicitly employ the term “exceptionalism” in his speeches. Nevertheless, in his farewell address, he assimilated John Winthrop’s expression, appending the qualifier “shining” to introduce the notion of a “shining city on the hill.” Reagan consistently accentuated America’s supremacy and distinctiveness, lauding its fundamental principles of liberty, democracy, and human rights, while asserting America’s historical and cultural distinctiveness within the framework of the discourse of American exceptionalism.

Despite the absence of explicit usage of the term “exceptionalism,” prominent American elites have employed diverse expressions, including “empire of liberty,” “a shining city on a hill,” “the last best hope of Earth,” “the leader of the free world,” and “the indispensable nation” over the course of the last two centuries (Walt, 2011). These formulations rhetorically emphasize America’s exceptionalism in a compelling manner.

The discursive content of American exceptionalism, encapsulating multiple ideas within a singular expression, has undergone transformations across varying historical contexts, resulting in divergent interpretations over time. One perspective accentuates America’s “distinctiveness”, while another accentuates its uniqueness, thus accentuating the nation’s exceptional standing. The US is “exemplary” standpoint posits that the United States serves as a model for emulation by other nations (Pease, 2009: 9). Concerning these distinct connotations, a facet of this narrative pertaining to America’s exceptional status revolves around the dimension of values, assumedly carried by the USA. In essence, its possession of presumed superior values and efforts to disseminate these values globally contribute to its characterization as exceptional.

The proclamations pertaining to American exceptionalism emanate from the prevailing belief that the United States embodies a distinctive moral virtue. Underlying this conviction is the notion that the USA represents a nation deeply committed to peace, the primacy of law, the protection of human rights, and the cultivation of freedom (Walt, 2011). Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the American Declaration of Independence and the nation’s third president, played a significant role in advocating for American exceptionalism during its formative years. Jefferson conceived of the USA as a grandiose “empire of liberty” (Steele, 2012). He contended that American exceptionalism derives its sustenance from universally embraced values, thereby

setting the United States apart from other countries. In Jefferson's perspective, American exceptionalism constitutes an ideology grounded in the principles of natural rights, human liberty, and equality, profoundly shaping the identity of the nation.

In addition to influential executive elites, the concept of American exceptionalism has also been subjected to scrutiny by eminent intellectuals. During the 19th century, Alexis de Tocqueville, a French politician and philosopher, visited the United States and conducted observations on democratic equality, the potency of civil society, and individual liberties, all of which he documented in his seminal work "Democracy in America." In this text, Tocqueville advanced the argument that America underwent a distinctive experience and possessed a distinctive model of democracy, differentiating it from other countries in the realms of politics, society, and culture. His exhaustive investigation into the structural attributes, societal dynamics, and democratic principles of American governance elevates his work as one of the primary sources in intellectual discourse pertaining to American exceptionalism within the domain of international relations.

American exceptionalism, despite exhibiting varying connotations to different individuals and across diverse temporal contexts, converges on a shared focal point: the idea that the United States possesses unparalleled capabilities and responsibilities to ameliorate the world (Sullivan, 2019). Consequently, the prevailing views surrounding the narrative of American exceptionalism imply that the United States is endowed with authoritative agency to assume a constructive and exceptional role in the global arena. A noteworthy dimension pertaining to this implication is the presumption evident in numerous assertions that ascribe uniqueness to American values and extol them as an object of universal veneration (Walt, 2011).

The narrative of American exceptionalism, which involves the conviction in the distinctive nature of American values and a perceived mission, engenders a drive towards universalizing the American experience. The perspective emphasizing the missionary aspect of American exceptionalism posits that Americans, both as individuals and as representatives of the state (the USA), occupy a unique position and possess a leadership obligation vis-à-vis other societies and peoples, stemming from their values and historical mission. Consequently, the core of the discourse on American exceptionalism centers on the notion of a universal mission, where the USA is compelled to exhibit its exceptional mission in its interactions with other countries and societies. Within this context, when American leaders refer to the exclusive responsibilities of the USA, they allude to the nation's distinctiveness and the consequent obligations that necessitate the assumption of special responsibilities (Walt, 2011).

Within the domain of American exceptionalism, scholars have discerned two distinct and widely recognized interpretations, which reveal its paradoxical yet fundamental character and illuminate its pragmatic and discursive efficacy in the context of foreign policy: isolationism and internationalism (Kane, 2008; Lieven, 2004; Hunt, 1987).

The recognition of America's distinct political, historical, and cultural attributes and the consequent obligations, as postulated by Henry Kissinger (2000: 11), has materialized in foreign policy through two distinct proclivities: the inclination toward normative influence on other societies and the aspiration to promote its own values globally. The former, entailing the propensity to offer guidance to other societies, necessitates attaining success and flawlessness in the domestic politics and governance of the USA. Consequently, the USA, as a nation that has successfully established a democratic polity within its borders, endeavors to serve as an exemplar to the international community. According to Kissinger, this mission, prioritizing the internal stability and perfection of the USA, is particularly reflected in the policy of isolationism in foreign affairs. It is only through a secure, prosperous America, inwardly focused and fostering a faultless living environment, that the nation can serve as an illuminating model for other countries.

The second perspective, as opposed to prioritizing an isolationist "America First" approach with a focus on safeguarding national interests and domestic matters, highlights a policy driven by idealism and a sense of responsibility, centered on the ambition to disseminate American values globally. Under this viewpoint, the USA should actively exhibit leadership by propagating its elevated values and conception of freedom on an international scale, assuming an influential role in global politics, and, when required, engaging in direct involvement in world affairs.

According to this perspective, which advocates the USA's role as the "world police," the USA's responsibility differs from the empires of the old world, colonial, and imperialist orders. This responsibility entails the dissemination of exceptional American values, such as freedom, democracy, and development, to the global populace. Consequently, this discourse theoretically aligns with the anti-colonial stance found in the tradition of American diplomacy. Kissinger's views demonstrate that, notwithstanding the contradictions and discrepancies within the USA's foreign policy tradition, the two opposing poles of isolationism and idealistic interventionism are theoretically rooted in the concept of American exceptionalism.

These two interpretations, emanating from American exceptionalism and exerting influence on foreign policy orientations, elicit criticism from various perspectives: internationalism faces scrutiny for its potential to undermine the USA's leadership and efficacy in addressing global

challenges adequately; conversely, isolationism is subject to critique for the perceived hegemonic aspirations of the USA and its inclination towards an assertive approach towards other nations. Both policy stances are regarded as potentially yielding unfavorable consequences and exacerbating intricacies within the realm of international relations.

2.9.3. From Diverse Perspectives: The Evolution of American Exceptionalism and the Emergence of Chinese Exceptionalism

Initially, when the United States was characterized as “exceptional” by figures like Tocqueville and foreign travelers, the term was employed to convey that this “first new nation” possessed distinctive qualities, rendering it an outlier within the global context, without necessarily implying its superiority over other nations. (Tocqueville, 1838). As observed by Lipset, owing to the absence of feudal structures, monarchies, and aristocratic systems, the American creed encompassed principles of liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire economics. (Lipset, 1963) Of particular significance was the emphasis on the individual, who vociferously advocated for the protection of their rights on a personal level. In contrast to Callahan’s evaluation of Chinese theorists on exceptionalism, where “Chinese civilization is not just uniquely unique but ‘uniquely superior,’” Lipset perceives American exceptionalism as a “double-edged sword,” embodying both its finest and most challenging aspects, contingent upon the specific attribute under scrutiny. (Callahan, 2013)

As the United States assumed a more prominent role in global affairs, the concept of American exceptionalism began to evolve to encompass these new responsibilities, notably during President Woodrow Wilson’s administration in the midst of the First World War. According to Stanley Hoffmann’s characterization of the “Wilsonian syndrome,” American exceptionalism came to be marked by two contradictory inclinations. The initial inclination, rooted in the ideals of the Founding Fathers and their intention to steer clear of “entangling alliances,” was characterized as isolationism. (Hoffmann, 2005) Consequently, the United States could serve as a model for others without becoming entangled in the affairs of foreign nations, paradoxically echoing an argument put forth by many Chinese exceptionalists in reference to their own country in contemporary times.

Certain Chinese scholars undertake a focused examination of the formative phase of American history to elucidate the divergent developmental trajectory of China. (Qianfan, 2013; Yawen, 2013) The second inclination permitted the United States to engage in interventions aimed at “making the world safe for democracy,” a strategy intended to safeguard American interests while concurrently projecting its core values. However, with the United States’ power

reaching unparalleled levels, especially following the conclusion of the Cold War, which left America as the sole superpower, and the advocacy of neo-conservatives for a “New World Order” led by the United States, the cautionary principles that had been in place since the nation’s inception began to erode. While certain components of this new policy had been established as early as 1992, it was the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that rendered a novel form of unilateralism in response to global terrorism, grounded in military dominance, acceptable to a broader audience beyond its initially more restricted support base.

Hoffmann posits that the “new exceptionalists” put forth several arguments, commencing with the elevation of the U.S. Constitution above all other legal frameworks, including international law, and the steadfast exclusion of any transfer, amalgamation, or delegation of American sovereignty. (Hoffmann, 2005) Another recurrent theme regards American foreign policy initiatives as a manifestation of “benevolent imperialism,” casting the United States as “a Behemoth with a conscience,” in the parlance of Robert Kagan. (Kagan, 2002)

Even proponents of some of the fundamental principles of American exceptionalism, including the proactive promotion of democratization in developing nations, have acknowledged how unilateralist policies of this nature have directly contributed to the erosion of American global popularity and influence. This decline occurs simultaneously with the ascent of China, emerging as the foremost viable alternative to Washington’s model of free markets and democracy since the end of the Cold War. As articulated by James Mann as early as 2007, “the Iraq war isn’t over, but one thing’s already clear: China won.” (Revista de Prensa, 2023) Mann contends that the shortcomings of U.S. foreign policy, characterized by an emphasis on military power and the linkage of democracy promotion to the use of force, combined with the enduring strength and economic success of the Chinese Communist Party, have ushered in a fresh challenge for the future of liberal democracy and pose a threat to the global cause of freedom.

American exceptionalism can be broadly defined as the belief that “Western civilization represents the apex of this history, and that the United States embodies the best and most advanced stage of Western- civilization and, therefore, human history to date” . (Saito, 2010) This perspective translates into a policy approach wherein the United States endeavors to impose “the U.S. model onto international economic, political, and legal system as well as individual states across the planet.” (Ceaser, 2012) Arguably, American exceptionalism can be attributed to factors such as its religious heritage, commitment to liberty, geographical circumstances, and material prosperity. According to Buzan, American exceptionalism exhibits

four key characteristics: liberalism, moralism, isolationism/unilateralism, and anti-statism. (Buzan, 2004)

American exceptionalism can be fundamentally defined as a cognitive and behavioral paradigm that distinguishes Americanism as a unique and superior construct among other nations. This cognitive framework, accentuating the American way of life, is nearly synonymous with the concept of American exceptionalism. Consequently, American exceptionalism is fundamentally grounded in the assertion of American superiority, thus constructing a modernity that is underpinned by this proposition.

Hence, when delving into the realm of Chinese exceptionalism, it can be contended that within the Chinese context, there exists a faction that posits a comparable correlation with an inherent Chinese way of life, evincing a more liberal disposition. Pertinent developments underscoring such a correlation encompass the emergence of constructs such as the “Beijing consensus” juxtaposed with the “Washington consensus” and the “Chinese dream” set against the backdrop of the “American dream.” (Ramo, 2004). Advocates of this perspective endorse a foreign policy approach that leans closer to internationalism. Nevertheless, it is discernible that there is resistance to an overwhelming liberal inclination. Besides, terminologies like the “Chinese way of life,” “Beijing consensus,” or “internationalism” consistently incorporate the phrase unique “Chinese characteristics.” (Kennedy, 2010)

According to Bradford and Posner, the concept of American exceptionalism is not an exclusive phenomenon; it is a trait shared by all major powers, including China, wherein these powers advocate for international legal principles that “reflect their values and advance their interests.” They contend that “the United States is no more than any other powerful country.” (Bradford and Posner, 2011). In their perspective, American exceptionalism is defined by a focus on “negative liberties and market” and “military force to maintain global order” coupled with the utilization of military force to uphold global order. In contrast, Chinese exceptionalism is distinguished by a strong emphasis on sovereignty and developmentalism. This differentiation implies that China may possess a form of exceptionalism distinct from that of the United States, potentially resulting in divergent implications for the international legal order.

2.9.4. The Formation of Chinese Exceptionalism as a Reflex to American Exceptionalism

The concept of exceptionalism, which molds China’s regional and global vision, occupies a pivotal role within China’s grand strategic framework. Chinese exceptionalism, having

evolved into a potent instrument in the strategicization of China's national identity, stands as a foundational reference point for elucidating Beijing's foreign policy choices and conduct by amalgamating China's strategic thought traditions. Furthermore, China's geopolitical imagination, instrumental in shaping its pursuit of a novel international order, is being constructed upon alternative ideologies and worldviews developed in light of the burgeoning exceptionalist discourse. This scenario presents an opportunity for an incremental progression that could potentially bring about normative shifts within the international system.

When discussing the concept of Chinese exceptionalism, it is possible to discern various approaches that illuminate its nuances. The initial approach defines Chinese exceptionalism as Sinocentrism, which contrasts with American centrism and its associated universal values (Rozman, 2012). In the second approach, when compared to American exceptionalism, Chinese exceptionalism is characterized by its deficiencies and weaknesses, underscoring its defensive and introspective attributes (Buzan, 2010; Zhang, 2011). The third approach posits that exceptionalism, due to its internalization of cultural and moral values, inherently carries problematic aspects. Consequently, it is argued that Chinese exceptionalism represents an alternative hegemonic aspiration. Rather than advocating American centrism, it champions Sinocentrism; instead of endorsing Westernization, it propagates Easternization; and in lieu of American exceptionalism, it asserts Chinese exceptionalism. Nevertheless, the common thread that unifies these three approaches is undeniably China's perception of itself as the center of the region (Kim, 2008).

The 2005 article authored by Zheng Bijian, a senior Chinese official, and published in the Foreign Affairs journal, holds paramount significance as it delineates the core tenets of the "peaceful rise" policy and endeavors to expound upon Chinese exceptionalism in a more explicit manner (Bijian, 2005). From this standpoint, Chinese exceptionalism is delineated as a doctrine that amalgamates economic and societal values while eschewing military confrontation within the realm of great power competition. Within this context, China commits itself to not replicating the paths taken by countries such as Germany, which resorted to violent means to exploit global resources, resulting in the First World War, or Japan during the Second World War. Furthermore, in contrast to the Cold War era, China does not aim to exemplify great powers vying for dominance. Instead, China's objective is depicted as transcending ideological disparities to engage in collaborative efforts with other nations across the globe, fostering peace, development, and cooperation. In contrast, Zheng indirectly references China's internal dynamics, suggesting that achieving the status of a "modernized, moderately developed country" through improvements in living standards may be an improbable goal to attain by

2050. Consequently, faced with substantial domestic challenges, Zheng emphasizes China's pursuit of international peace rather than a quest for global hegemony or supremacy.

In the realm of Chinese exceptionalism, another pivotal element is the profound influence of strategic culture and security perspectives on China's policy formulations. When examining China's historical record, there are indeed instances suggesting expansionist tendencies. However, counterbalancing this historical backdrop is the presence of a peaceful strategic culture deeply rooted in the Confucian tradition, which vehemently opposes the application of military force. In this context, the sixteen-character principles articulated by President Jiang Zemin, which mirror China's geopolitical orientation, assume a pivotal role in shaping not only regional dynamics but also the broader landscape of U.S.-China relations (Johnson, 2009).

As emphasized by Edward Burman, comprehending the essence of China's ascent requires the recognition of its distinct attribute as a "covert power" (Burman, 2008). In contrast to pursuing a direct, assertive, and militarily focused approach, China's longstanding governance tradition has consistently embraced a strategy characterized by indirect, soft, and economic influence, occasionally entailing elements of coercion, restraint, and diplomatic pressure. Consequently, it is contended that China's ascension possesses notable qualitative disparities when juxtaposed with Western paradigms, signifying an idiosyncratic orientation in this context.

The natural inquiry that arises pertains to the intentions and practical realization of these propositions, which encapsulate the intellectual underpinning of Chinese exceptionalism. Within this framework, it becomes evident that the role and strategic utilization of Chinese exceptionalism are of paramount significance alongside its intellectual substance. Put differently, an examination of the American precedent reveals that the interplay between structural conditions and historical and cultural elements has engendered assertions of congruence encompassing exceptionalism, historical ideology, regional doctrine, and both domestic and foreign policy. To expound further, in the American context, historical ideology assumes the guise of universal liberal ideology, regional doctrine aligns directly with the Monroe Doctrine, and the alignment of domestic and foreign policies manifests through a conciliatory approach and commitment to multilateralism. As we scrutinize the contemporary Chinese case, it becomes increasingly apparent that the process of formulating historical ideology is ongoing, concurrently accompanied by a burgeoning aspiration to formulate a regional and global doctrine.

Exceptionalism arises from the aspirations of rising powers to establish institutional models that other states will admire over time, as well as to construct a narrative. Within this context,

Chinese exceptionalism, akin to the American example, leads to a quest for a form of regional and international doctrine as an endeavor to reframe national identity. The regional and international geopolitical imagination, which is a manifestation of Chinese exceptionalism, seeks to make this achievable by extrapolating insights from diverse historical experiences and reinterpreting its historical heritage. Nevertheless, China's pursuit of this doctrine also encompasses a reevaluation of another model that originated from the European experience. In essence, China's regional approach is perceived to encompass both the amalgamation of two models and a concentration on the reinterpretation of its historical and cultural values. Chinese exceptionalism can be characterized as exhibiting a dual nature that is both hybrid and distinct.

To provide a concise summary, when undertaking a comparative analysis of the two exceptionalisms, it becomes apparent that there exists a close and increasingly intricate relationship between these two perspectives. On one hand, there is a distinct inclination to emulate, mirror, and replicate facets of the American experience, particularly in domains such as progress and economic advancement. Conversely, there is a robust determination to safeguard the distinctive political and cultural attributes that are deemed unique to China. Consequently, in the pursuit of understanding Chinese exceptionalism, a dynamic emerges involving a delicate interplay between the emulation, similarity, and imitation of the American model and the resistance to these influences, with the process arguably remaining inchoate. Taking Barry Buzan's perspective into consideration, one could posit that the fundamental reason for the relatively introverted and insular nature of Chinese exceptionalism, in contrast to American exceptionalism, lies precisely in its absence of a comprehensive international vision (Buzan, 2010).

While acknowledging the pivotal role of Chinese exceptionalism in navigating the dynamics between tradition and modernity, it becomes apparent that Beijing strategically deploys this concept in the formulation of both regional and international doctrines. Despite the challenges associated with fully developing an alternative ideology capable of universal appeal as part of its political exceptionalism-based strategy, China has, nonetheless, made substantial progress in amalgamating various strategic thinking traditions. These amalgamations have significantly influenced the construction of China's national ideology. Currently, Chinese exceptionalism represents an outcome of endeavors to reconcile the strategic duality between acquiescing to the existing international system and resisting U.S. hegemony and alliance structures. The ultimate shape of this political undertaking remains contingent on the trajectory of regional processes and China's ability to guide them in alignment with its objectives.

2.10. Chinese Exceptionalism

Feng Zhang's classification offers a comprehensive and valuable insight into the intellectual content and origins of Chinese exceptionalism. Through a historical and structural analysis, Zhang identifies three distinct periods where Chinese exceptionalism has manifested itself: imperial China, revolutionary China, and contemporary China. A crucial distinction emerges in this periodization, as the notion of universalism, rather than exceptionalism, was prevalent during the imperial China era. (Zhang,2011) In essence, Zhang's framework allows us to understand the evolution of Chinese exceptionalism over time, shedding light on how it has shaped China's perception of itself in relation to the international community. By examining these distinct historical periods, Zhang offers valuable perspectives on the ideological underpinnings that have influenced China's interactions with the global stage.

2.10.1. Civilization Exceptionalism in Chinese History

During the imperial era, Chinese exceptionalism was defined by the prevailing conviction of China's centrality and superiority in the known world. The rulers and elites of China asserted that their nation occupied a paramount position as the center of the world, possessing cultural, moral, and material superiority over other political entities.

Imperial Chinese universalism can be characterized by three significant attributes. Firstly, "Synocentrism" embodies the belief that China holds a central position in the world and possesses cultural and moral superiority over other societies and political systems. This exceptionalism was manifested through the "tribute system" where foreign rulers were required to pay tribute to China as the central state. The second defining feature is "magnanimous peace," which emphasizes China's pursuit of peaceful and protective relationships in its foreign affairs. This aspect highlights China's approach of offering benevolent and secure ties to neighboring states, promoting stability and harmony in the region.

The third aspect, "hierarchical inclusiveness," encapsulates the idea that China embraces various political structures and entities within its sphere of foreign policy influence. It seeks to support the growth and development of other nations while acknowledging the effectiveness and limitations of Chinese civilization as a reference point. These characteristics of imperial Chinese universalism have significantly shaped the country's historical interactions with the world and continue to exert an influence on its contemporary foreign policy outlook.

2.10.2. Exceptionalism During the Chinese Revolutionary Period

During the revolutionary period of the People's Republic of China (PRC), a distinct form of exceptionalism came to the forefront. Mao and his comrades endeavored to reclaim China's central role in global affairs, driven by a belief in historical destiny and moral superiority. This exceptionalism was deeply rooted in China's perceived historical entitlement to assume a position of great power status and moral authority.

Examining the characteristics of Mao's era Chinese exceptionalism between 1948 and 1978, one can first identify the prominent concept of revolutionary Sinocentrism. This ideology was shaped by Mao's efforts to regain a central position in world politics and aimed at propagating Chinese-style socialism on a global scale. It sought to position China as a revolutionary leader, advocating a distinct path of societal transformation and challenging established international norms.

A second crucial feature was the belief in China's historical competence to hold a great power status and possess moral authority. Mao and his supporters emphasized China's illustrious past as a powerful civilization, viewing it as the foundation for reclaiming a prominent role on the world stage. This historical consciousness bolstered their pursuit of an exceptionalist agenda. Additionally, a significant aspect of Chinese exceptionalism during this period was characterized by a form of moralism. This notion asserted that China bore moral imperatives to regain its former great power status, assert superiority in its international relations, and command respect from other nations.

2.10.3. Exceptionalism and the Openness of Chinese Reform Era

Following the reform era that began in 1978, particularly in the 2000s, Chinese exceptionalism acquired a distinct ideological content. As outlined in Feng Zhang's scholarly work, contemporary Chinese exceptionalism revolves around the image of China as a responsible global power that actively promotes the values of peaceful coexistence and inclusivity in its international interactions. This modern manifestation of exceptionalism is underpinned by a complex interplay of historical realities and myths, drawing upon China's profound traditions and historical experiences.

Zhang embodies the essence of Chinese exceptionalism during contemporary China through the assertion of great power reformism, benevolent pacifism, and harmonious inclusionism:

The first notable characteristic during this period is “great power reformism,” which is based on the belief that China’s historical destiny is to be a “great power.” According to Feng Zhang’s scholarly perspective, “great power reformism” denotes the belief and assertion that China, as an ascending power, is destined to regain its status as a great power on the global stage. This concept rests upon the notion that China’s historical achievements and promising future trajectory inevitably lead it to reestablish itself as a significant player in international affairs. The core motivation behind this reformism lies in challenging Western paradigms of power politics and instead, cultivating a distinctive Chinese diplomatic philosophy rooted in the country’s historical and cultural heritage. According to the view, China is expected to chart a distinct path, deviating from the typical historical trajectory of rising powers, redefining the meaning of being a great power, and reforming world politics in alignment with its own principles and ideals in international relations.

In Feng Zhang’s scholarly analysis, “benevolent pacifism” refers to China’s claim and commitment to a peaceful foreign policy, both historically and in the contemporary context. This stance emphasizes China’s longstanding tradition of promoting peace and adopting a defensive posture in its international interactions. It is presented as a contrasting alternative to Western models of aggressive and confrontational approaches to foreign affairs. China asserts that it has never posed a threat or challenged other nations and pledges to maintain global peace through its own development and cooperative endeavors.

According to Feng Zhang, “harmonious inclusionism” represents the concept of involving all nations in a collaborative effort to attain shared security, development, and prosperity. The concept embodies a conceptual framework that accentuates the imperative of fostering international collaboration, intercultural dialogue, and reciprocal knowledge exchange. It espouses the notion of peaceful coexistence among diverse political and cultural systems, while staunchly opposing the imposition of any singular nation or ideology. The primary objective is to cultivate a cohesive global milieu that embraces and accommodates disparate civilizations, thereby seeking collective security, development, and prosperity for all states through open multilateralism and mutually advantageous cooperation. Based on this thought, China, as an exceptionalist actor, aims to foster a harmonious world by accommodating a wide range of political and cultural traditions, while also promoting equitable sharing of the benefits derived from its own developmental achievements with other countries. Thus, it is perceived as a distinctive Chinese paradigm for shaping world order and constitutes a pivotal element of China’s burgeoning exceptionalism.

“Harmonious inclusionism” also conveys the idea that China rejects the dominance of any single country, ideology, or approach opting instead to embrace an open, tolerant, and inclusive attitude toward various political and cultural traditions, thereby promoting cooperation and harmony. This concept reflects China’s commitment, as articulated by its government, to eschew hegemonic ambitions and embrace a cooperative approach that accommodates various political and cultural heritages. The objective pursued is to promote collaboration and harmony and achieve common development among nations rather than pursuing a zero-sum game with a focus solely on the interests of one or a few major powers. The emphasis on international cooperation and mutual understanding underscores China’s vision of a more interconnected and interdependent global community. It is argued that, by embracing diverse political and cultural backgrounds, China seeks to construct a world order founded on cooperation and harmonious coexistence, moving beyond traditional notions of great power competition.

Zhang’s research highlights the salience of the exceptionalist concept in influencing China’s foreign policy and self-perception as an ascending global power. The accentuation of China’s historical eminence and the belief in its inherent capacity to reassert a prominent global position have propelled the pursuit of a distinctive trajectory in international relations. This reformist stance endeavors to contest established power dynamics and establish a more assertive and autonomous role for China, rooted in its own historical and cultural reservoirs.

Civilization Exceptionalism in Chinese History	Exceptionalism During the Chinese Revolutionary Period	Exceptionalism and the Openness of Chinese Reform Era
Imperial sinocentrism	Revolutionary sinocentrism	Great power reformism
Benevolent pacifism	Great power entitlement	Benevolent pacifism
Magnanimous inclusionism	Moralism	Harmonious inclusionism

Table 2: Civilization Exceptionalism in Chinese History

Source: Compiled by the Author

In the academic discourse on Chinese exceptionalism, Feng Zhang’s research offers invaluable contextualization. His scholarship facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the developmental trajectory of Chinese exceptionalism, encompassing pivotal epochs such as the reform era and the 2000s, wherein the concept of great power reformism assumed salience. Zhang’s elucidations shed illuminating insights into the intricate interconnection between China’s aspirations for great power status, its cultural identity, and its distinctive approach to international relations. The proposition of reshaping global politics in alignment with China’s

sui generis principles and ideals signifies a noteworthy departure from orthodox interpretations of great power ascendancy.

Collectively, a historical examination of Chinese exceptionalism, complemented by Feng Zhang's academic contributions, enriches our comprehension of China's evolving role and ambitions on the global stage. Zhang's emphasis on Chinese exceptionalism underscores the dynamic interplay between China's historical legacy, contemporary identity, and its vision for influencing world politics.

2.10.4. Exceptionalism in Recent Chinese Narratives

Over an extensive historical period, China has maintained exceptionalist ideals, evident from the imperial era to the revolutionary era of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and continuing into contemporary times. However, recent scholarship on this subject has been relatively overlooked, partly influenced by China's foreign policy focus on defense in the last three decades. Notably, the period between 2005 and 2010 has seen the emergence of three prominent scholarly currents that are expected to exert a growing influence on both academia and policymaking. These currents include Neo-Tianxianism, as epitomized by the philosophical work of Zhao Tingyang (2005; 2009); Yan Xuetong's pre-Qin international relations project (2011; Yan and Xu, 2008; Yan et al., 2009) at Tsinghua University; and Pan Wei's 'China model' literature (2009) at the University of Peking, along with contributions from other scholars.

Since 2005, the Chinese government has introduced novel concepts such as "peaceful development" and the "harmonious world," which have been prominently featured in official discourse. The official promotion of a "harmonious world," the unofficial advocacy of the "Tianxia system" thesis, and the academic endeavors on pre-Qin thoughts at Tsinghua University can collectively, or at least to a significant extent, be perceived as the inception of China's cultural and ideological ascent.

While a comprehensive vision of China's role in the international arena remains a work in progress, the ideals shaping its perspective on the international order and their implications for international politics hold undeniable significance. Exceptionalism in China has assumed a crucial role as a source of political ideas, as it has become integrated into the worldview of the Chinese government and numerous intellectuals. Although the claim that exceptionalism singularly dictates politics lacks empirical basis, it is irrefutable that it serves as substantive material for the formulation of Chinese international relations theories, a matter deemed indispensable by decision-makers, analysts, and scholars within China.

CHAPTER III

FROM HU JINTAO TO XI JINPING: CHINESE EXCEPTINALISM IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD POLITICS

In the aftermath of Mao's demise, China embarked upon a series of reformative endeavors, marked by a deliberate overture to foreign capital infusion, thereby engendering a process of global amalgamation across the spheres of commerce, economy, and industry. Through a protracted phase of heightened economic expansion, China effectuated a remarkable ascent, culminating in its attainment of the position of the world's second-largest economy—an evolutionary trajectory that China itself characterizes as emblematic of a tranquil ascendancy. However, contextualized within the prevailing framework of the extant global order, underpinned by American hegemony, China's trajectory of growth has predominantly been apprehended as a consequential peril, engendering apprehensions among Western statesmen and elites. Conversely, the echelons of Chinese political and scholarly circles posit that a nuanced and comprehensive comprehension of China's multifaceted contributions on the international stage remains elusive, underscoring the imperative for a more precise and discerning evaluation of China's policy choices and strategic determinations, thereby warranting a transformative realignment of the prevailing analytical paradigm.

China's burgeoning economic, military, and political capabilities have propelled it into the global spotlight as a more salient and influential actor within the international arena. Scholarly discourse posits that China's rise as an emergent power constitutes a pivotal juncture in its process of self-identification and role elucidation, signifying a notable inflection point (Suzuki, 2014), thereby instigating a rigorous inquiry into China's imperative to recalibrate its identity and role (Johnston, 2013). The ascendancy of China also evokes escalated apprehensions and contemplations regarding the progressively assertive trajectory of its foreign policy evolution.

Approached from an affirmative vantage point within the broader scope of China's ascending trajectory, the endeavors orchestrated by the Chinese and the invocation of universal principles like Confucianism hold the potential to augment the normative dimensions of soft power that underlie China's envisaged international order (Chou, 2015). Enacting its strategy of Peaceful Rise, China can strategically engender collaborative engagements with proximate nations, thereby nurturing cooperative synergies, engendering avenues for advancement, and

mitigating any latent perceptions of jeopardy. In this manner, China transcends its latent capacity for disruptive influence. Consequently, analogous to the construct of Chinese exceptionalism, the Peaceful Rise doctrine pivots upon the establishment of tranquility, advancement, and synergistic interaction across both regional and global contexts, firmly underpinned by affirmations of China's aversion to hegemonic ambitions and its unwavering dedication to a mutually beneficial paradigm (Liebman, 2005).

China, diverging from America's unilateral policies within the current international order, employs exceptional discourse and policies, asserting distinctiveness. Official documents and statements, alongside scholarly writings, frequently evoke narratives such as peaceful rise, mutual development, multilateralism in foreign policy, harmonious society, and harmonious world. Through these narrations, which it claims set it apart and differentiate it from others, China articulates its understanding of the envisaged international order. While elucidating its foreign policy imagination, China simultaneously draws upon its unique elements, including Confucianism, the Tribute system, Pax Sinica, Tianxia, and Neo-Tianxia, which constitute its modern and ancient reservoirs of thought.

3.1. Ancient Values Underpinning Chinese Exceptionalism

China's formulation of a novel international order, exemplified by Pax Sinica, transcends its utilization of antiquity as a primary source and expands into a broader conceptual arena. The critical reevaluation of the Tianxia concept and the revitalization of the Tribute System denote a substantive restructuring of China's overarching global architecture. This undertaking epitomizes a deliberate reengagement with historical substrata, thereby inaugurating a paradigm that transcends a mere historical epistemic function.

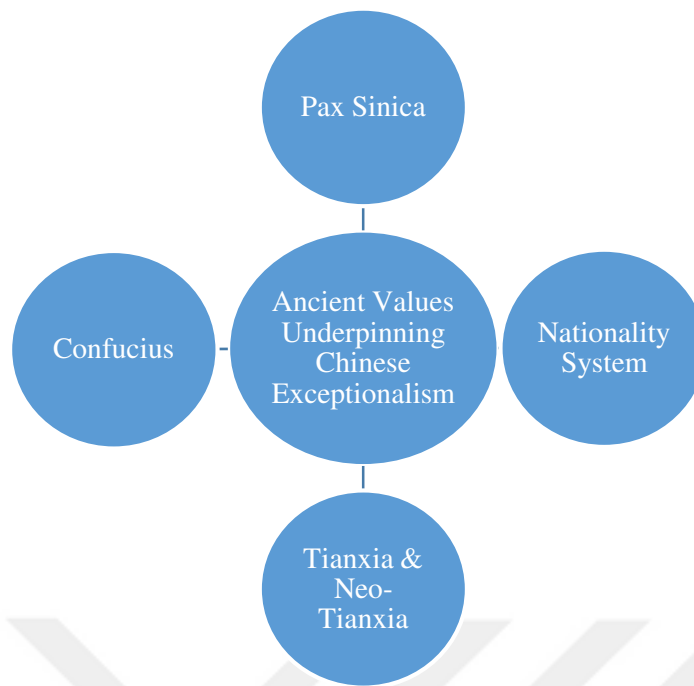


Figure 1: Ancient Values Underpinning Chinese Exceptionalism

Source: Compiled by the Author

Founded upon Confucian principles, the ancient Chinese intellectual tradition advances the proposition of an inherent concord between the celestial and terrestrial realms, culminating in a state of tranquil and balanced cosmic coexistence. Embodied within this construct of social and cosmic equilibrium, the concept of Pax Sinica elucidates a stratified order structured upon the foundational premise of China's paramount position, thereby situating China as the nucleus. This conventional Chinese global framework fundamentally hinges upon the centralization of China and the assertion of cultural ascendancy. (Yongjin, Buzan 2012)

Pax Sinica, historically utilized to connote epochs marked by regional or global political stability and harmonious conditions ascribed to China, notably encompasses periods wherein China exhibited a resilient central governance apparatus, cultivated amicable relations with proximate states, thus engendering a state of ecological equilibrium and serenity. Constituting a foundational cornerstone of China's exceptionalist identity, this narrative is invoked with the purpose of accentuating China's ascendancy as a regional or global pole of leadership and influence. Particularly evident during epochs akin to the Han Dynasty, Pax Sinica underscores China's historical adeptness in wielding a pacific influence and providing guidance to adjacent polities and domains—a capacity that is ostensibly contemporarily manifested through China's amplification of soft power attributes. This amplification is propelled by multifaceted elements encompassing economic expansion, the cultivation of peaceful partnership paradigms, intricate

trade networks, and the gravitational pull of its cultural sphere. As a corollary, this trajectory markedly bolsters China's persuasive prowess and exerts a heightened allure, positioning it as an even more compelling and authoritative protagonist within the complex realm of international relations.

China's strategic endeavors, exemplified by initiatives like the "Belt and Road," hold the potential to catalyze the formation of extensive global infrastructural and trade linkages, thereby engendering prospective avenues for fostering economic cooperation and mutual interdependence across adjacent and disparate nations. Correspondingly, the conceptual framework underpinning "Pax Sinica" assumes a pivotal role as a bedrock principle undergirding economic equilibrium and collaborative undertakings, thereby exerting a consequential imprint aligned with China's exceptionalist vantage point vis-à-vis the transformative molding of the international system.

Historically denoted as a pragmatic manifestation of the global order, the Tribute System embodies China's self-conception as a pivotal power, where proximate states manifest obeisance by positioning themselves as vassals to China. At its core, this system fundamentally revolves around an asymmetrical power allocation, with the imperial authority exerting dominative prerogatives over subordinate entities, eliciting reciprocal acts of deference and tributary compensation within this construct. Dynasties that have operationalized this system have effectively fortified their legitimacy by managing and redistributing prosperity and opulence (Bang, 2009). The system delineates an approach through which China amplifies its sway over geopolitical locales and sovereign entities, thereby establishing paramountcy over them while perpetuating a China-centered hierarchy. By harnessing this mechanism, China not only underscores its distinctive ideological inclination rooted in its cultural heritage but also actively seeks to demonstrate its preeminence within the realm of external interrelations.

In the present era, China is engaged in a deliberate strategic pursuit aimed at augmenting its global influence by leveraging mechanisms of "soft power," wherein cultural diplomacy and media channels are harnessed as conduits for this endeavor. Undertakings such as the Confucius Institutes and media enterprises tangibly manifest the operationalization of this cultural influence strategy. Concurrently, China is proactively seeking to reaffirm its role of regional leadership through initiatives like the "Belt and Road," thereby accentuating its commitment to fostering economic integration and making infrastructural investments in the Asian context.

The conceptualization of Tianxia, denoting "harmony under heaven," is "Closely related to the idea of harmony between the upper and the lower, this notion extends the status of harmony

to relations among different states and further to all under heaven. Harmony among all states or harmony under heaven was the most ideal social state in the eyes of the ancient Chinese.” (SCIO, 2023)

The historical perspective of ancient China was defined by a holistic and all-encompassing global outlook that transcended parochial nationalist confines. Constructs such as “bringing peace to all states” and “realizing the ideal of universal harmony” epitomize their aspiration for a world characterized by harmonious cohabitation, thereby manifesting their ideal conceptualization of the global arrangement and intrinsic proclivity towards harmonious interplay and reciprocal benefit. This notably underscores the enduring continuity of China’s adherence to the Hehe philosophy within the realm of international relations throughout historical epochs, emblematic of a comprehensive order encompassing the entirety of humanity and societal entities. This paradigm envisions China’s central axiomaticity and its envisioned authoritative role in guiding other societal formations.

Tianxia serves as a moral and ethical construct, encompassing an aspirational global configuration wherein individuals coalesce harmoniously. Anchored within the contours of Chinese philosophical tradition, Tianxia signifies a societal paradigm imbued with universal harmony, congruous interrelations, and reciprocal regard among constituents. Its multifaceted connotations contribute to a facet of China’s distinctiveness, encapsulating idiosyncratic attributes. As a conceptual entity, Tianxia embodies not only a political and social configuration but also a representation of moral and ethical ideals.

Neo Tianxia, situated within the realm of international relations and the broader global milieu, constitutes a conceptual framework accentuating China’s proactive and participatory engagement. This conceptual approach posits the enduring pertinence and functional applicability of China’s historical tianxia arrangement within the contours of the contemporary global architecture. Neo Tianxia accentuates the salience of China’s dissemination of its cultural and political tenets among diverse countries and regions, portraying such an endeavor as pivotal to the realization of global leadership and effectiveness. The concept posits that the dynamic evolution of China’s traditional tianxia understanding can assume a contemporaneous role within the overarching global order, facilitating collaborative interaction with co-members of the international community to engender a climate of serene and harmonious coexistence.

Neo Tianxia can be interpreted as a strategic paradigm situated within the framework of China Exceptionalism, strategically devised by China to enhance its influence across the global spheres of geopolitics, macroeconomics, and sociocultural dynamics. This conceptual construct

not only encapsulates China's envisaged trajectory and ambitions for assuming a preeminent global leadership role but also embodies an international relations outlook rooted in China's asserted historical and cultural heritage, thereby substantiating its distinct and unparalleled standing.

Yan Xuetong, a distinguished Chinese scholar in the realm of international relations, emerges as a noteworthy contributor to the ongoing discourse surrounding the concept of neo tianxia. In accordance with Yan Xuetong's perspective, for China to undertake a more resonant role within the realm of global interactions and fortify its vantage point of worldwide leadership, a contemporaneous adaptation of the tianxia tradition becomes imperative. (Tongdong, B., & Wang, B. (2016). Yan Xuetong perceives the tianxia framework as a conduit through which China can efficaciously navigate the international arena, accentuating the congruence of China's cultural and ethical principles in the pursuit of such objectives.

Distinguished scholars advocating the neo tianxia framework contend that China's enduring traditional tianxia paradigm retains salience within the present milieu, advancing the proposition that its embracement offers the prospect of China assuming a heightened and resilient leadership mantle within the global arena. In accordance with this vantage point, China's historical narrative and rich cultural heritage hold the potential to function as a propitious archetype conducive to cultivating tranquility and collaborative synergies within the realm of international affairs.

China's doctrine of Exceptionalism, as a strategic construct, embodies the principles of mutual advantage and reciprocal cooperation at both bilateral and continental echelons, encompassing facets of grand power reformism, magnanimous pacifism, and harmonious participation. Hence, China's Exceptionalism is proffered as a prospective remedy to the current quandaries besetting the global system. As per Ho's analysis, China's ascendancy has progressively fortified the tenets of China's Exceptionalism. Concurrent with its economic, military, and political empowerment, China evinces a proclivity to cultivate a perception of ascendancy vis-à-vis other states, thereby contributing to the burgeoning sentiment of China's Exceptionalism (Ho, 2014). China's Exceptionalism has metamorphosed into an ideological instrument wielded to more efficaciously propagate and champion China's cultural values on the international stage. Precisely at this juncture, concerns arise regarding China's prospective comportment in accordance with its asserted exceptionalism. As China's ascent endures, apprehensions endure regarding the potential for more assertive and revisionist conduct, or even latent hegemonic designs. While China employs diverse policies and discourses predicated

upon its exceptionalism to portray a non-confrontational rise, historical experiences underpin these apprehensions. Legro asserts China's aspiration for a more proactive role on the international stage and posits that China will endeavor to safeguard its interests with greater effectiveness (Legro, 2007). Avery Goldstein posits that China's ascendancy, concomitant with its augmented economic and military prowess, engenders novel power dynamics on the global stage, concurrent with its ambition for a more influential role in regional and global power politics. Goldstein further contends that this trajectory augments the potential for crises in U.S.-China relations, thereby amplifying volatility and ambiguity—a trend substantiated by China's initiatives since 2010. (Goldstein,2013)

3.2. Hu Jintao and the Philosophy of Harmonious Society

The conceptualization of the Harmonious World paradigm, as introduced by then-President Hu Jintao during the 60th Anniversary Summit of the United Nations in 2005, constitutes a strategic policy framework. In the context of the 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China (2007), Jintao identified peace and development as the prevailing zeitgeist, underscoring the imperative for universal participation in the construction of a harmonious global order, thus ensuring enduring tranquility and shared prosperity. Situated within the domain of foreign policy, the Harmonious World concept assumes a pivotal juncture, engendering a transformative shift in the cognitive apprehension of policy-makers vis-à-vis China's distinctive global positioning and, by extension, exerting a determinative influence on the trajectory of its international stratagem (Zheng, 2007).

The conceptual framework of the Harmonious World narrative assumes considerable significance for China as it serves to demarcate its exceptional and sui generis international policy paradigm, thereby distinguishing it from the foreign policy orientations of other states. Concurrently, it seeks to avert the conflation of pivotal notions like peaceful ascent and peaceful development with discourses pertaining to threats within the realm of the international arena.

The previously mentioned policy constitutes a conceptualization of a qualitatively distinctive prospective global order, deeply rooted in China's historical values. This discourse functions as a vehicle for the embodiment of China's notions and values of distinctiveness onto the tapestry of its foreign policy praxis and objectives. Situated within this discourse's purview, China endeavors to project itself as a harmonious participant within the international milieu, with the objective of delineating a trajectory of tranquil ascension while concurrently sidestepping conflicts. This narrative framework underscores China's yearning to be perceived as a harmonious global actor, steadfast in its pursuit of a course characterized by peaceful rise

and conflict mitigation, grounded in the profound reflection of its singular historical and cultural heritage.

The genesis of the Harmonious World concept derives from the foundational tenets of the ancient Chinese philosophical principle known as “He He.” The character “和” (He) encapsulates the acme of auditory concurrence, synonymous with the state of harmonious congruence. The alternate usage of “和” (He) accentuates the very essence of harmony itself. In bygone eras, this lexical entity was employed to illustrate the exquisite equilibrium manifest within the realms of both natural and societal dimensions, symbolizing an aspirational condition fervently pursued by antiquity’s thinkers. This philosophical bedrock of harmony resonates in contemporary discourse concerning global matters, notably in the ambit of international relations. Here, it assumes a foundational framework for dissecting interactions and nurturing a milieu of tranquil cohabitation.

Xi Jinping succinctly encapsulated the essence of Hehe Culture in his treatise titled “Zhejiang, China: A New Vision for Development.”: “Our ancestors created an incomparable culture, a quintessential part of which is the Hehe culture. The first ‘He’ of Hehe indicates harmony, peace, and balance. The second ‘He’ indicates convergence, unity, and cooperation. Such inclusiveness is reflected in the traditional thinking of ‘valuing harmony and esteeming balance,’ ‘being understanding and open-minded,’ ‘embracing the world through virtue,’ and ‘living in harmony without uniformity.’ This is a cultural ideal that our people seek. Harmony between nature and society and between the individual and the group is the ideal of our people and the basis of our cohesiveness and creativity.” (SCI0, 2023) Significantly, it underscores the broader concept of Harmony between nature and society, as well as between the individual and the collective, which not only defines the aspirations of the nation but also serves as a bedrock for its unity, cohesion, and innovative prowess. Within the context of international relations, this cultural paradigm can be seen as a soft power instrument, offering China a distinct identity and an avenue for constructive engagement on the global stage, further reinforcing the country’s pursuit of a harmonious world order and its exceptional role therein. (SCI0, 2023)

In the discourse presented within “The Discourses of the States,” Shi Bo’s dialogue on the vicissitudes of state ascendancy and decline with Duke Huan of Zheng serves as an exposition of his Hehe-oriented perspective. (SCI0, 2023) In the course of deliberating the potential collapse of the Zhou Dynasty, Shi Bo delves into the matters of existence and progression through the prism of harmony, advancing the proposition that “harmony creates everything.” In Shi Bo’s elucidation, the genesis of all phenomena is contingent upon harmony, which

orchestrates the integration and equilibrium of disparate constituents, thereby facilitating their development and coalescence into a unified whole. This conception of harmony, as articulated by Shi Bo, diverges from homogeneity, instead entailing a dynamic equilibrium among variegated elements, serving as an elemental and efficacious means to engage with diversity. Additionally, harmony, in Shi Bo's discourse, refrains from eradicating disparities; rather, it aspires to establish an equilibrium amidst divergences, thus furnishing the fertile ground for emergent novelties. Hence, the overarching intent of harmony resides in the cultivation of novel creations.

The strategic tenets of the "Harmonious Society" policy, buttressed by this philosophical allusion, demarcate inter-state harmony as a product of pluralism, emblematic of cohesion achieved absent uniformity. Within this milieu, the narrative of the Harmonious World draws upon China's extraordinary historical philosophy, asserting that China, while embracing its idiosyncratic distinctiveness, concurrently accords reverence to the diversities among nations. This interdependent correlation between the Harmonious World discourse and China's exceptionalist historical philosophy accentuates the mutual imperative of upholding China's distinctiveness while simultaneously acknowledging and appreciating the diversities intrinsic to other nations. (Callahan, 2012)

The conceptualization of a Harmonious World, with China occupying a central position vis-à-vis the West, embodies both an aspirational goal for China and a political vision that extends an invitation to other nations to contribute toward its realization (Nordin, 2012). However, the emphasis on Confucian principles of harmony over insularity underscores China's prioritization of a cohesive international existence characterized by reciprocal deference, aimed at ensuring stability within the global system as opposed to succumbing to competitive dynamics. The Harmonious World paradigm further implies China's proclivity for assuming heightened responsibilities, in contrast to a strategy of detachment from global affairs. Evidently, the policy propositions articulated by President Hu Jintao during his address to the United Nations corroborate the trajectory toward the construction of a harmonious world.

In his allocution to the United Nations, Jintao's pronouncement that "We must abandon the Cold War mentality, cultivate a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, and build a fair and effective collective security mechanism aimed at jointly preventing war and conflict and safeguarding world peace and security" serves as an illustration of China's proposition of multilateralism vis-à-vis the extant international order. (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China, 2005) This enunciation concurrently embodies China's foreign policy orientation across diverse spheres interwoven with its

exceptionalist narratives. It signifies a departure from conventional alliance structures towards strategic partnerships, pioneering modalities of major-power interrelations, and regional cooperation, irrespective of the dichotomy between developed and developing states.

“We should work actively to establish and improve a multilateral trading system that is open, fair and nondiscriminatory, and further improve the international financial regime (...) We should step up worldwide energy dialogue and cooperation, jointly maintain energy security and energy market stability, and ensure a well-supplied, secure, cost effective and clean energy environment conducive to global economic growth.” (Embassy of the People's Republic of China, 2005) In this declaration, Jintao is constructing a distinct framework of foreign policy for China that is founded upon the principles of mutual advantage and cooperative gains, diverging from the prevailing system under U.S. leadership. This framework accentuates an exceptional and unique orientation aimed at promoting collective prosperity. In consonance with this policy framework, the operationalization of the Belt and Road Initiative endeavors to carve out a distinct position for China, diverging notably from the United States, particularly within the spheres of economic and commercial interactions.

Within Jintao's discourse, a discernible accentuation is directed towards the harmonious coexistence of diverse civilizations. “Diversity of civilizations is a basic feature of humanity and an important driving force behind human progress. In the course of human history, all civilizations have, in their own way, made a positive contribution to the overall human progress. It is their differences that allow them to learn from one another and grow stronger together. Uniformity, if imposed on them, can only take away their vitality and cause them to become rigid and decline. The world's civilizations may differ in age, but none is better or more superior than others. Differences in history, culture, social system and mode of development should not become barriers to exchanges between countries, let alone excuses for confrontation” (Embassy of the People's Republic of China, 2005). The Harmonious World policy's attribution of import to the cohabitation of civilizations devoid of competitive dominance substantiates a counterposition to the notion of a clash of civilizations, an inherent facet within the discourse surrounding the China threat. Concurrently, the establishment of Confucius Institutes, oriented towards fostering mutual comprehension among civilizations and disseminating Chinese cultural tenets, emerges as an extension of the Harmonious World policy (Zheng, 2007).

In summation, the “Harmonious World” discourse, emanating from the framework of China Exceptionalism, endeavors to establish a robust and coherent international community, concomitantly projecting China's ascendancy and influence as characterized by tranquility. The Harmonious World concept, anchored in a civilizational substratum, accentuates inclusivity

over exclusivity, with its cardinal objective being the preclusion of connotations associated with a potentially disruptive emergent power challenging the prevailing system or an ultimate collision amongst ascendant forces, as delineated within the context of a pacific ascent. This policy formulation, aligned with the perspectives of eminent scholars in the field of international relations, aspires to alleviate exclusivist tendencies and instead accentuates the ethos of inclusiveness.

3.3. Xi Jinping's Era Discourse on Chinese Exceptionalism: A Study of SCIO Publications and Presidential Rhetoric

The understanding of Chinese exceptionalism during the Xi Jinping era necessitates a comprehensive analysis of the discourses prevalent during that period, as well as an examination of how these discourses were officially addressed in publications. This chapter embarks on a critical exploration of the publications of the State Council Information Office (SCIO), focusing on examples drawn from its official releases. It subsequently delves into an examination of Xi Jinping's statements and speeches as presented within these publications, aiming to dissect how his words have been interpreted and contextualized.

Xi Jinping's tenure as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China and the President of the People's Republic of China has witnessed a remarkable evolution in China's global engagement, diplomatic rhetoric, and foreign policy. As China has risen to become a major player in international relations, the role of Chinese exceptionalism in shaping the nation's identity and its relations with the rest of the world has garnered increased attention. By examining the official publications of the SCIO during this period, this chapter seeks to elucidate the extent to which Chinese exceptionalism has been instrumentalized in China's official discourse and how it has contributed to China's foreign policy and global positioning.

The SCIO, as a central government agency responsible for disseminating information to both domestic and international audiences, plays a pivotal role in shaping the narrative of China's exceptionalism. Its publications, speeches, and statements are key sources that reflect the official stance of the Chinese government on a wide array of issues, including but not limited to foreign policy, governance, and cultural representation. By analyzing the SCIO's publications, this chapter aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which Chinese exceptionalism has been articulated and employed to convey China's vision of itself and its role in the international arena.

Furthermore, this chapter seeks to shed light on how Xi Jinping, as the paramount leader of China during this era, has articulated and utilized the concept of Chinese exceptionalism in his

speeches and statements. By scrutinizing his words within the context of official publications, we endeavor to discern the strategic objectives and diplomatic implications associated with the invocation of Chinese exceptionalism in his discourse. Additionally, this analysis will help us understand the extent to which these pronouncements align with or depart from previous Chinese leadership's approaches to exceptionalism.

In sum, this chapter sets the stage for a detailed examination of the role of Chinese exceptionalism in the Xi Jinping era, with a particular focus on its portrayal in official publications and the articulation of this concept by Xi Jinping himself. Through this exploration, we aim to gain insights into how Chinese exceptionalism has been employed as a tool for shaping national identity and influencing China's foreign policy in the contemporary global landscape.

3.3.1. Chinese Exceptionalism Through Xi Jinping's 'The Governance of China'

The collaborative effort involving the State Council Information Office (SCIO), the Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, and the China International Publishing Group in the creation of "The Governance of China" signifies a strategic response to the escalating global interest in China. This collaborative book project is aimed at addressing the international community's growing curiosity about China and enhancing global comprehension of the Chinese government's philosophical foundations, domestic governance, and foreign policy orientations.

"The Governance of China," prominently spotlights and endorses chapters dedicated to Xi Jinping and his governance methodologies. Xi Jinping, who holds the positions of General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and paramount leader of China, has meticulously curated a compilation of his lectures and writings, aptly titled "The Governance of China." This comprehensive collection spans across four volumes and is recognized as a preeminent source for understanding Xi Jinping Thought. It can be seen as a literary successor to Chairman Mao Zedong's "Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung," a work of paramount importance in Chinese communist ideology. Importantly, "The Governance of China" serves as a significant repository for the official party policy that delineates China's developmental trajectory in the 21st century (Wasserstrom, 2018).

"The Governance of China" serves as a valuable instrument for China in articulating its distinctive governance model and its vision for global leadership. By providing international audiences with an extensive compilation of Xi Jinping's speeches and writings, China actively engages in shaping the global discourse on governance. The book reflects China's commitment

to bolstering its soft power and disseminating its so-called exceptional perspective on global affairs.

Published in four volumes in the years 2014, 2017, 2020, and 2022, this book is more than just a compilation of Xi's lectures and writings; it is a cornerstone in the articulation of China's "exceptionalist" path on the global stage.

In essence, this collaborative endeavor not only responds to global curiosity about China but also underscores China's assertion of its exceptionalism. It serves as a prominent example of how China actively participates in shaping international narratives on its terms, contributing to the ongoing discourse surrounding Chinese exceptionalism within the domain of international relations.

The first volume of "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China" comprises a compilation of significant works authored by Xi Jinping from November 15, 2012, to June 13, 2014. This volume is organized into 18 chapters, encompassing a diverse range of content, including speeches, talks, interviews, directives, and correspondences. To enhance the reader's understanding, contextual notes pertaining to China's political and economic structure, historical background, and cultural context are thoughtfully provided alongside each entry (China.org.cn, 2018).

In the second volume, "Xi Jinping: China Under His Rule," there is a pronounced emphasis on the efforts of the CPC Central Committee, led by Xi at its core, in uniting and guiding the Chinese populace towards the preservation and advancement of socialism with Chinese characteristics in a new era. This volume constitutes a compilation of 99 speeches, conversations, instructions, and letters delivered by the Chinese leader during the period spanning from August 18, 2014, to September 29, 2017. Additionally, it incorporates 29 photographs of Xi Jinping (Jinping, 2017).

Turning to the third volume of "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China," it assembles 92 distinct pieces, encompassing articles, speeches, conversations, instructions, and letters authored by Xi Jinping between October 18, 2017, and January 13, 2020. These contributions span a wide spectrum of subjects, ranging from national governance to China's global engagement within the framework of a shared future for humanity (Xinhua, 2020).

Lastly, the fourth edition of "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China" constitutes a compilation of 109 spoken and written pieces by Xi Jinping, spanning from February 3, 2020, to May 10, 2022. This compilation, accompanied by 45 photographs since January 2020, offers insights into China's development trajectory, governance philosophy, and approach, providing

the international community with a deeper understanding of the lives of the Chinese people under the leadership of the CPC (Jinping, 2022).

In the realm of Chinese exceptionalism and international relations, these volumes represent a concerted effort to disseminate China's political ideology and governance model globally. They serve as a vehicle for projecting Chinese exceptionalism and asserting the compatibility of China's unique system with the evolving dynamics of the international order. Furthermore, these volumes contribute significantly to the discourse on the global reception and influence of Chinese exceptionalism, particularly as articulated by Xi Jinping.

XI JINPING: THE GOVERNANCE OF CHINA				
Volume	Chapters/ Sections	Speeches/Articles/Written Works/ Conversations/Letters/Instructions/ Interviews/Correspondence	Photographs	Year
Volume I	18	79	-	2014
Volume II	17	99	29	2017
Volume III	19	92	41	2020
Volume IV	21	109	45	2022

Table 3: Xi Jinping: The Governance of China

Source: Compiled by the Author

One of the predominant areas of coverage by the State Council Information Office (SCIO) pertains to the dissemination of Xi Jinping's speeches, dialogues, correspondences, interviews, and diplomatic engagements. These categories of content frequently feature prominently on the SCIO-associated website. In the ensuing discourse, we will delve into news articles published on the SCIO website in March 2023, with a particular focus on the portrayal of Xi Jinping's leadership role.

PROMOTING XI JINPING VIA SCIO		
No	News Contents	Date
1.	Xi meets Singaporean PM	April 01, 2023
2.	Xi meets Malaysian PM	April 01, 2023
3.	Xi meets Spanish PM	April 01, 2023
4.	Xi stresses advancing study, implementation of Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era	March 31, 2023
5.	Xi's speech at central Party school to be published	March 31, 2023
6.	CPC to launch Party-wide education campaign on Xi Jinping thought	March 31, 2023
7.	Boao proposals' far-reaching impact on the world	March 29, 2023
8.	Xi says China ready to contribute more to Middle East peace, development	March 28, 2023
9.	Book on Xi's discourses on food security published	March 28, 2023
10.	Xi sends message of sympathy to Brazilian president over illness	March 27, 2023
11.	Xi's vision of community with shared future represents China's efforts for world development, expert says	March 27, 2023
12.	Xi sends congratulatory letter to China Development Forum 2023	March 27, 2023
13.	Building better world with a shared future	March 24, 2023
14.	Xi's Russia visit deepens bilateral cooperation, contributes to human progress	March 24, 2023
15.	Xi's speech at CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting published	March 24, 2023
16.	Highlights of Xi and Putin's talks in Russia	March 23, 2023
17.	Xi returns to Beijing after state visit to Russia	March 22, 2023
18.	Xi, Putin agree to deepen comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for new era	March 22, 2023
19.	Xi, Putin sign joint statement on pre-2030 development plan on priorities in China-Russia economic cooperation	March 22, 2023
20.	Xi says China to expand cooperation with Russia in trade, investment, supply chain, mega projects, energy, hi-tech	March 22, 2023
21.	Xi's visit expected to herald greater progress in China-Russia ties in new era	March 21, 2023

22.	Xi's Russia visit to navigate bilateral ties, boost global stability	March 19, 2023
23.	Full text of Xi Jinping's keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting	March 16, 2023
24.	With popular mandate, Xi Jinping spearheads new drive to modernize China	March 15, 2023
25.	Xi to attend CPC and World Political Parties Summit	March 13, 2023
26.	Xi signs presidential order to appoint Li Qiang as premier	March 11, 2023
27.	Xi pledges allegiance to Constitution	March 10, 2023
28.	Xi stresses enhancing integrated national strategies, strategic capabilities	March 09, 2023
29.	Xi stresses healthy, high-quality development of private sector	March 06, 2023
30.	Xi calls for fostering children's confidence in socialism with Chinese characteristics	March 05, 2023

Table 4: How SCIO Promoted Xi Jinping

Source: Compiled by the Author, SCIO (2023).

The focal point on Xi Jinping's engagements within SCIO's communication channels underscores the deliberate strategic deployment of his leadership and policy declarations as a means to articulate and project the tenets of Chinese exceptionalism to both domestic and international audiences. This accentuates China's systematic endeavors to enhance its global reputation and sway through the dissemination of Xi's leadership narrative and the foundational principles of Chinese governance.

3.3.2. Chinese Exceptionalism through the Lens of White Papers during Xi Jinping's Era

Chinese White Papers represent official government publications issued by the Chinese authorities to articulate the nation's policy positions, strategies, and initiatives across a wide array of subjects. Typically released through channels such as the State Council Information Office (SCIO) and various government agencies, these documents serve the paramount purpose of providing a comprehensive overview of China's policies while offering insights into the country's perspectives on diverse matters.

These comprehensive publications cover a broad spectrum of domains, including but not limited to economics, international trade, global affairs, defense, science and technology, culture, and education. They furnish in-depth insights into China's political, social, and

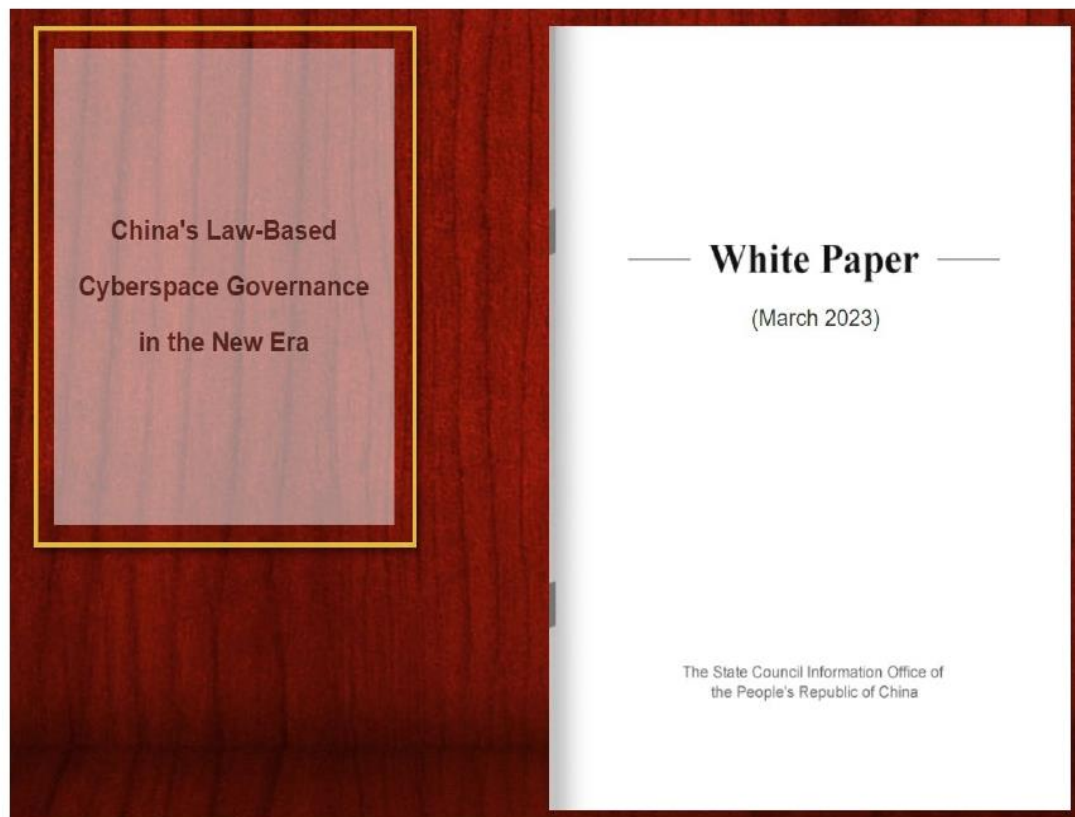
economic development, in addition to outlining the nation's stance on various international issues.

From an international relations standpoint, Chinese White Papers play a significant role in conveying China's exceptionalism. They emphasize China's unique historical and cultural heritage, highlighting its contributions to global civilization. Furthermore, these documents serve as tools for addressing misconceptions and promoting mutual understanding, especially with Western nations, by presenting China's perspective on global challenges and opportunities.

White Papers issued by the Chinese government are typically published in both Chinese and English editions, with extensive distribution within China and globally. They serve as invaluable sources of information for researchers, policymakers, journalists, and the general populace, offering insights into China's policies and perspectives. Titles such as "China's National Defense in the New Era," "China's Arctic Policy," "The Belt and Road Initiative: Progress, Contributions, and Prospects," and "Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution" are prominent examples of Chinese White Papers.

Within the realm of public diplomacy, the State Council Information Office (SCIO) employs a diverse array of tools to promote China's image and policies. These tools encompass brochures and pamphlets elucidating China's policies, public letters, enclosures accompanying monthly Presidential statements, annual reports directed at both domestic and international audiences, among others. Notably, White Papers assume a pivotal role in advancing Chinese public diplomacy efforts, allowing for the comprehensive communication of China's unique exceptionalism, policy achievements, and contributions to the global community.

Case 01: China's Law-Based Cyberspace Governance in the New Era| White Paper, March 2023 (SCIO, 2023).



China's Law-Based Cyberspace Governance in the New Era

Since China was fully connected to the internet in 1994, it has committed itself to law-based cyberspace governance, ensuring that the internet develops within the confines of the law. In the new era, guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, China has made law-based cyberspace governance an essential part of the overall strategy of the rule of law and the drive to build up its strength in cyberspace. Marked improvements have been made in ensuring law-based cyberspace governance. China has boosted cyberspace governance by developing a complete system of laws and regulations, a highly efficient enforcement system, a stringent supervision system, and an effective supporting system. With participation of the government, businesses, social organizations and netizens, cyber legislation, law enforcement, and judiciary work have advanced alongside programs to spread legal knowledge via the internet, publicize cyber laws and cultivate the public's awareness in laws. This is a pioneering approach to cyberspace governance in line with international best practices. With stronger domestic capacity in law-based internet governance, China has contributed ideas and solutions to global internet governance. The Chinese government is publishing this white paper to introduce China's progress and experience in law-based cyberspace governance. Here is main focused contents that explored in the White Paper, March 2023.

- I. Upholding the Rule of Law in Cyberspace
- II. Consolidating the Legal System for Cyberspace Governance
- III. Keeping Order in a Rule-Based Cyberspace
- IV. Defending Fairness and Justice in Cyberspace
- V. Promoting Public Awareness and Competence in Law-Based Cyberspace Governance
- VI. Increasing International Exchanges and Cooperation in Law-Based Cyberspace Governance

The State Council Information Office (SCIO) has employed a multifaceted approach to its governance and administration strategies, encompassing both internal and external communication channels. Internally, it maintains a house organ exclusively accessible to its employees, while externally, it disseminates publications to individuals connected with SCIO, including politicians, policymakers, bureaucrats, diplomats, journalists, academics, and researchers, as well as the general public.

Furthermore, SCIO's communication efforts extend to newsletters, newspapers, magazines, and periodicals, with a significant focus on China's five-year plan for economic and social development. Among these various communication tools, Chinese White Papers stand out as a cornerstone of SCIO's strategy. These White Papers play a central role in shaping public opinion, enhancing China's international broadcasting influence, and promoting its exceptionalism on the global stage. The accompanying table offers an overview of the themes and subjects explored in Chinese White Papers spanning the years 2017 to 2023, revealing the intersection of China's exceptionalism with its policy discourse.

WHITE PAPERS OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT			
No.	Year	Discourse Area	No. of White Papers in a Year
1.	2023	a. China's Law-Based Cyberspace Governance in the New Era (SCIO, 2023) b. China's Green Development in the New Era (SCIO, 2023)	02
2.	2022	a. Jointly Build a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace (SCIO, 2022) b. China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System in the New Era (SCIO, 2022) c. The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era (SCIO, 2022) d. Youth of China in the New Era (SCIO, 2022) e. China's Parasports: Progress and the Protection of Rights (SCIO, 2022) f. China's Space Program: A 2021 Perspective (SCIO, 2022)	06
3.	2021	a. China's Export Controls (SCIO, 2021) b. Hong Kong: Democratic Progress Under the Framework of One Country, Two Systems (SCIO, 2021) c. China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals (SCIO, 2021) d. Responding to Climate Change: China's Policies and Actions (SCIO, 2021) e. Biodiversity Conservation in China (SCIO, 2021) f. Xinjiang Population Dynamics and Data (September 2021) g. Moderate Prosperity in All Respects: Another Milestone Achieved in China's Human Rights (SCIO, 2021) h. Respecting and Protecting the Rights of All Ethnic Groups in Xinjiang (SCIO, 2021) i. China's Political Party System: Cooperation and Consultation (SCIO, 2021) j. The Communist Party of China and Human Rights Protection – A 100-Year Quest (SCIO, 2021)	13

		k. Tibet Since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity (SCIO, 2021) l. Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution (SCIO, 2021) m. China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era (SCIO, 2021)	
4.	2020	a. Sustainable Development of Transport in China (SCIO, 2020) b. Energy in China's New Era (SCIO, 2020) c. China's Armed Forces: 30 Years of UN Peacekeeping Operations (SCIO, 2020) d. Employment and Labor Rights in Xinjiang (SCIO, 2020) e. Fighting COVID-19: China in Action (SCIO, 2020)	05
5.	2019	a. The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang (SCIO, 2019) b. Democratic Reform in Tibet – Sixty Years On (SCIO, 2019) c. China's Position on the China-US Economic and Trade Consultations (SCIO, 2019) d. Historical Matters Concerning Xinjiang (SCIO, 2019) e. China's National Defense in the New Era (SCIO, 2019) f. Equality, Participation and Sharing: 70 Years of Protecting the Rights and Interests of Persons with Disabilities in the PRC (SCIO, 2019) g. Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang (August 2019) h. Nuclear Safety in China (September 2019) i. Equality, Development and Sharing: Progress of Women's Cause in 70 Years Since New China's Founding (September 2019) j. Seeking Happiness for People: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China (September 2019) k. China and the World in the New Era (September 2019) l. Food Security in China (October 2019)	12
6.	2018	a. China's Arctic Policy (January 2018) b. China's Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief (April 2018)	07

		c. China and the World Trade Organization (June 2018) d. Ecological Progress on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau (July 2018) e. The Facts and China's Position on China-US Trade Friction (September 2018) f. Cultural Protection and Development in Xinjiang (November 2018) g. Progress in Human Rights over the 40 Years of Reform and Opening Up in China (December 2018)	
7.	2017	a. Human Rights in Xinjiang - Development and Progress (June 2017) b. China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation (January 2017) c. Development of China's Public Health as an Essential Element of Human Rights (September 2017) d. New Progress in the Legal Protection of Human Rights in China (December 2017)	04

Table 5: White Papers of the Chinese Government (2017-2023)

Source: Compiled by the Author.

3.4. Xi Jinping's "Shared Future for humanity"

The theoretical framework of the "community of shared destiny for humanity" was introduced by President Xi Jinping in 2013. General Secretary Xi Jinping expounded his conceptualization of establishing a "community of shared destiny for humanity" during the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting.

While the emphasis on a harmonious society was articulated during the Hu Jintao era, it becomes evident that the concept of a harmonious society will also persist in the Xi Jinping era, albeit under the terminology of a harmonious global community. This is exemplified by Xi's assertion: "The community of shared future for humanity is meant to connect the prospects and destinies of every nation and country closely together, share weal and woe and turn Earth into a harmonious family." (SCIO, 2017)

This discourse signifies China's dedication to engaging in multilateral collaborative endeavors, accentuating the communal interests of humanity within the domain of global interactions. Simultaneously, Xi's articulation of a harmonious global paradigm and the notion of a collective destiny underscores an international framework that accords precedence to the

holistic welfare and safeguarding of the universal populace. This, in effect, underscores China's strategic stance in foreign policy and its overarching orientation towards the international milieu, which remains substantiated throughout the Xi Jinping era by invoking discursive narratives linked to China's distinctiveness.

In his discourse titled "Working Together Toward a Better Future for Asia and the World" delivered in 2013, Xi Jinping affirmed China's enduring commitment to the trajectory of reform and opening up, concurrently advocating for regional collaboration as a catalyst for augmenting shared developmental prospects. Within the same address, Xi invoked the notion of "a sense of community of common destiny," resonating with the conceptual framework of "a community of shared future" that he initially introduced in Moscow on March 23 of the same year. (SCIO, 2018) Xi expounded on the principle that the Earth constitutes a singular habitat for all nations, thereby underscoring that collective advancement, as the bedrock of sustainable progress, inherently serves the lasting and foundational interests of the global populace. In this context, Xi underscored the imperative of cultivating a collective sense of shared destiny among nations, adapting to prevailing trends, maintaining steadfast adherence to a progressive course, standing united during periods of challenge, and ensuring that the trajectory of development attains unprecedented zeniths both in Asia and the broader international arena.

Through his articulation that encompasses the fundamental tenets of China's exceptionalism, Xi signifies China's intention to assume a more substantial role on the international stage and shoulder enhanced global responsibilities. The declaration "Mankind has only one earth, and it is home to all countries" underscores China's emphasis on the collective obligation of all nations, thereby manifesting its aspiration to address global environmental and developmental challenges.

The affirmation "Common development (...) serves the enduring and foundational interests of the global populace" underscores China's dedication to inclusive cooperative endeavors and the pursuit of sustainable developmental trajectories. (SCIO, 2018) Within this paradigm, China's distinctiveness strives to amplify the well-being of all sovereign states and ensure an enduringly sustainable trajectory. Moreover, China's distinctiveness encompasses the deliberate cultivation of regional synergies and the propagation of developmental progress throughout both the Asian continent and the broader global context. Capitalizing on regional and sub-regional collaborative mechanisms, China endeavors to engender collective ventures with fellow nations, accentuating mutual interests. The phrase "ensuring the ascendancy of developmental trajectories in both the Asian domain and the broader international arena" encapsulates China's resolute determination and aspirational leadership in advancing growth

and development, with a particular emphasis on the Asian milieu and the encompassing global tapestry. (SCIO, 2018) Rooted within the framework of China's exceptionalism, the nation stands poised to undertake a leadership mantle within the international order, exemplified through concerted collaborative initiatives and the proactive advocacy of sustainable developmental imperatives.

Evident through allusions to regional exceptionalism, China consistently accentuates its engagements with Asian nations in numerous discourses. In his discourse in March 2015, Xi Jinping conveyed, "Over the past 70 years, Asian countries have gradually transcended their differences in ideology and social system. No longer cut off from each other, they are now open and inclusive, with suspicion and estrangement giving way to growing trust and appreciation. The interests of Asian countries have become intertwined, and a community of common destiny has increasingly taken shape." (SCIO, 2018) This emphasis on surmounting ideological and sociocultural divergences within inter-state relations distinctly mirrors China's strategic endeavor to fortify regional equanimity and cooperation. These articulated sentiments underscore China's steadfast commitment to galvanizing regional cooperation within the framework of a community bound by a common destiny, thereby engendering inclusivity, and chiefly, accentuating an enhanced regional leadership role. China, in this context, aspires to vigilantly safeguard national interests and amplify regional stability through concerted regional cooperative frameworks.

In his 2015 discourse entitled "Towards a Community of Common Destiny and A New Future for Asia," Xi Jinping provided a comprehensive exposition on the concept of "a community of common destiny," advocating for a paradigmatic shift away from the predominant "zero-sum game" approach towards the realization of cooperative outcomes. (SCIO, 2018) He asserted that the outdated zero-sum mentality ought to yield to an innovative paradigm of mutually beneficial and all-encompassing collaboration. He further posited that the interests of others should be accommodated concomitantly with the pursuit of one's own interests, and simultaneous progress should be facilitated while concurrently seeking individual development. The conspicuous accentuation of "common development" exemplifies China's adoption of a stance that underscores sustainable expansion and the prioritization of collective interests. Within this context, China concurrently strives to catalyze the advancement of other nations' development while maintaining its own trajectory of advancement. This context, when viewed through the lens of China's exceptionalist perspective, underscores China's ambitious dedication to harmonizing its self-interests with those of other sovereign entities, encapsulating its commitment to establishing equilibrium between its own pursuits and the interests of fellow

nations. Consequently, this underscores China's objective to cultivate a just equilibrium within the international order.

Xi Jinping's statement signifies China's intention, through its exceptionalist stance and policies, to play a consequential role in shaping the global order, predicated on respect for the interests of other nations and a cooperative ethos. This declaration further underscores China's exceptionalism as a counterpoint to prevailing Western-centric policy inclinations. In doing so, it reflects China's aspiration to exercise effective influence in the molding of the international order, premised upon an approach that embraces collaboration and acknowledges the interests of fellow states. Moreover, this statement is indicative of China's proclivity to diverge from the prevailing Western-oriented policy predilections.

Xi Jinping's pronouncement embodies China's strategic intent, as manifest in its exceptionalist orientation and policy articulations, to assume a consequential role in the configuration of the global order. This endeavor is underscored by a foundation grounded in deference to the interests of fellow nations and an ethos of collaborative engagement. Such a proclamation serves to accentuate China's exceptionalism as a discernible counterpoint to established Western-centric policy paradigms. In so doing, it mirrors China's ambition to exert substantive and efficacious influence over the structuring of the international order. This influence is predicated upon an approach characterized by collaborative synergy and an attentive recognition of the interests held by coexisting states. Furthermore, this enunciation illuminates China's propensity to deviate from prevailing Western-oriented policy orientations.

Viewed critically, the utilization of the term "common destiny of humanity" by China can be construed as a rhetorical device aimed at augmenting its impact within the international milieu and furthering its strategic objectives by reinforcing the legitimacy and authoritative standing of the Communist Party of China. This rhetoric, while serving as a tool of advancement, concurrently offers insights into China's distinct attributes that delineate its idiosyncratic positioning. In so doing, it elucidates China's ambitions for a defined role within the global domain and its active pursuit of a discernible leadership role on the global stage.

In the endeavor to forge the "common destiny of humanity," Xi Jinping references the following discourse and expressions:



Figure 2: President Xi’s Vision on Shared Future for Humanity

Source: SCIO, 2017

The notion of “building a safe world” embodies China’s international aspiration to cultivate peace, security, and cooperation. This discourse highlights the adverse implications of unilateral security-seeking endeavors on enduring stability, underscoring China’s distinctiveness in seeking to ensure its own security without jeopardizing the security and interests of others. The expression signifies China’s commitment to eliminating fundamental

triggers of conflict and its aspiration to contribute to the establishment of a harmonious global order.

The enunciation of “promoting common prosperity” signifies China’s concerted endeavor to channel its economic development not solely for its own interests, but also to contribute to the augmentation of global well-being. This forms a foundational attribute of China’s exceptionalism, as it asserts an orientation geared towards fostering a milieu wherein sustainable development and economic growth offer an arena benefitting all nations. Concurrently, the expression encapsulates China’s perspective on globalization, with its exceptionalist outlook advocating for the augmentation of economic globalization, imbued with openness, equity, and inclusivity. This paradigm seeks to disseminate economic opportunities across a wider spectrum and stimulate the participation of developing nations in this process. Additionally, China’s exceptionalism departs from conventional competitive and self-centric approaches, placing emphasis on the indispensability of a paradigm underpinned by mutual gain and collaborative ethos.

With these statements, Xi Jinping articulates China’s intent to ensure its own security in harmony with the security of other nations, to foster an equitable security equilibrium within the international order, and to alleviate human suffering by eliminating the root causes of conflict. Moreover, this enunciation delineates China’s vision of collaborating with other states to forge a more secure world. This discourse echoes the distinct perspective of China’s exceptionalism, exemplifying its commitment to cultivating global security through cooperative endeavors and diminishing the afflictions borne by humanity.

Through the enunciation of “building an open and inclusive world” Xi Jinping underscores China’s international dedication to an all-embracing paradigm and accentuates the import of cultural pluralism. Rooted within the discourse of a harmonious society, this articulation emblemizes China’s purpose to cultivate the cohabitation of heterogeneous cultures in harmonious concurrence. Within the ambit of China’s exceptionalism, this proclamation elucidates China’s standpoint on cultural diversity as a fount of enrichment, with the intention to dismantle demarcations amidst discrete cultures and facilitate their harmonious proliferation. China’s alignment toward the international order is characterized by its bedrock of cultural diversity, envisioning the contribution and augmentation of divergent civilizations as an intrinsic aspiration.

The enunciation of “building a clean and beautiful world” encapsulates Xi’s dedication to ecological sustainability and preservation within the confines of China. It emblemizes China’s unwavering determination to perpetuate its domestic advancement and expansion in a manner

congruent with sustainability imperatives. China's accentuation of global accountability and ecological cooperation further underscores its distinctiveness, exemplifying an ambitious aspiration for leadership in addressing environmental predicaments within the framework of the international order. In this context, China's orientation accentuates the enhancement of human life quality while concurrently ensuring the safeguarding of natural resources and ecological integrity.

The sustained recourse to this discourse that was initiated in 2013, enduring across Xi Jinping's subsequent re-elections as president, underscores China's strategic endeavor to convey a semblance of a nation exhibiting unwavering resolve within the realm of international relations, channeling this representation through the lens of espoused exceptionalist narratives.

In 2010, serving in his capacity as the vice president, Xi Jinping delivered an oration at the Boao Forum for Asia titled "Collective Cooperation for the Ecological and Enduring Progress of Asia." Within this discourse, he issued a summons to Asian nations, entreating them to undertake a recalibration of their developmental paradigms. This recalibration, guided by a proactive alignment with the exigencies of climate change, is envisioned to propel ecological advancement and sustainable growth. Xi underscored that the perpetuation of robust economic dynamism in the region and the amplification of global economic expansion hinge upon the refinement of the developmental framework. This necessitates the charting of a trajectory characterized by green and sustainable evolution, one that is distinctly attuned to Asia's idiosyncrasies and concordant with the prevailing spirit of the age. Concurrently, Xi's appeal implored Asian states to further engender market liberalization and resolutely repudiate protectionist currents. The accentuation of Asia's developmental trajectory in harmony with its intrinsic character resonates with the import of regional exceptionalism, while the emphasis on regional economic development underscores Xi's strategic leadership aspirations.

During a New Year assembly convened by the CPPCC on December 29, 2017, Xi Jinping expounded, "We will stick to peaceful development as always and build an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity." (Xinhua, 2917) This conceptualization aspires to lay the groundwork for a global architecture characterized by persistent serenity, all-encompassing security, and collective opulence, thereby distinctively encapsulating an elaborate embodiment of China's foreign policy stratagem and its conceptualization of the international order, which it posits as distinct and exceptional."

During his keynote address at the inaugural China International Import Expo in Shanghai on November 5, 2018, Xi Jinping pronounced with unwavering resolve, "China will not stop

its effort to pursue a community with a shared future for mankind!” (SCIO, 2018) The recurrent iteration and accentuation of this proclamation not only attest to China’s assiduous pursuit of attaining the status of a consistent and prognosticable actor within the international arena but also underscore the uninterrupted perpetuation of its aspiration to assume an engaged and positively impactful role within the realm of the international order.

Xi Jinping’s pronouncement that the “CPC will neither import foreign models of development nor export the Chinese model” effectively addresses questions pertaining to the delineation of a collective future. This articulation underscores China’s autonomous stance toward economic advancement and developmental paradigms, its willingness to partake in international collaboration, and its resolve to avoid the imposition of its distinct framework upon external actors. Remarkably emblematic of the foundational tenets of China’s exceptionalism, this declaration illuminates China’s explicit consonance with both its domestic imperatives and its foreign policy objectives and stratagems.

Endeavoring to accentuate China’s intrinsic self-determination in shaping its idiosyncratic trajectory of development, Xi Jinping highlights the phenomenon of China’s exceptionalism by enunciating a predilection for an indigenous approach harmonizing with its internal dynamics and contextual circumstances, in lieu of the emulation of externally imported economic paradigms or developmental stratagems.

Subsumed within the ambit of the “Community of shared future for humanity,” Xi has methodically constructed the Party’s commitments upon a trilateral edifice:

3.4.1. Safeguarding peace



Figure 3: President Xi’s Vision on Shared Future for Humanity: Safeguarding Peace

Source: SCIO, 2017

Xi Jinping’s enunciation of “safeguarding peace” serves to underscore China’s resolute dedication to the preservation of international tranquility and the preemptive mitigation of conflicts. In adherence to the doctrine of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, China pursues the safeguarding of its own security and stability, thus evincing a manifestation of its distinctive exceptionalist stance.

Concomitantly, this statement corresponds to China’s doctrine of peaceful emergence. China avows its aim to concurrently augment its power while sustaining harmonious relations with other nations and averting conflicts. Thus, within the contours of its distinct exceptionalist framework, China underscores its dedicated endeavor to collaborate with the global community in conflict resolution, stability assurance, and the advancement of sustainable development.

Certain scholars analyze China’s ascendance through the prism of Western historiographical reasoning, positing that the trajectory toward becoming a superpower inexorably prompts the quest for hegemony. Nonetheless, Xi Jinping’s enunciation of “Safeguarding peace” unambiguously repudiates hegemonic aspirations.

During a momentous convocation commemorating the 40th anniversary of China’s transformative reform and opening-up on December 18, 2018, President Xi Jinping of China emphatically conveyed, “China’s development does not pose a threat to any country, no matter how far China develops, it will never seek hegemony.” (SCIO, 2018) This assertion serves to

underscore Xi's proclamation of China's non-belligerent intentions, as he underscored that China's ascent onto the global stage does not equate to adversarial competition or intimidation vis-à-vis other nations.

While delineating China's trajectory toward an increasingly central role in world affairs, Xi concurrently elucidated the nation's commitment to a policy of defensive national defense. These pronouncements thus underscore China's pursuit of harmonious elevation aligned with the existing international order. Nonetheless, the accentuation of distinctive attributes and a departure from established paradigms, particularly concerning the foundational power, the United States, accentuates the import of China's exceptionalism within its narrative of peaceful ascent. Moreover, China's distinct and peaceful ascent, predicated upon the tenets of its exceptionalist orientation, is manifest in these proclamations.

In response to media inquiries during a press conference following the culmination of the inaugural session of the 13th National People's Congress in March 2018, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang articulated, "China will not seek expansion. China remains a developing country with no intention to pursue expansion. Even if it grows stronger in the future, it will continue to defy the logic which predestines a rising country to hegemony." (SCIO, 2018) This articulation of commitment to upholding the sovereignty of other nations emerges as an additional distinct facet that distinguishes China's peaceful ascent as exceptional. Beyond prevailing norms, China, guided by its exceptionalist approach, endeavors to cultivate an environment characterized by mutual trust and peaceful coexistence in the realm of international relations. In doing so, China projects its conception of the international order by referencing exceptional elements that set it apart from other countries, particularly the United States. Moreover, the development of Chinese exceptionalism is notably set in contrast to the concept of American exceptionalism.

3.4.2. Promoting Development

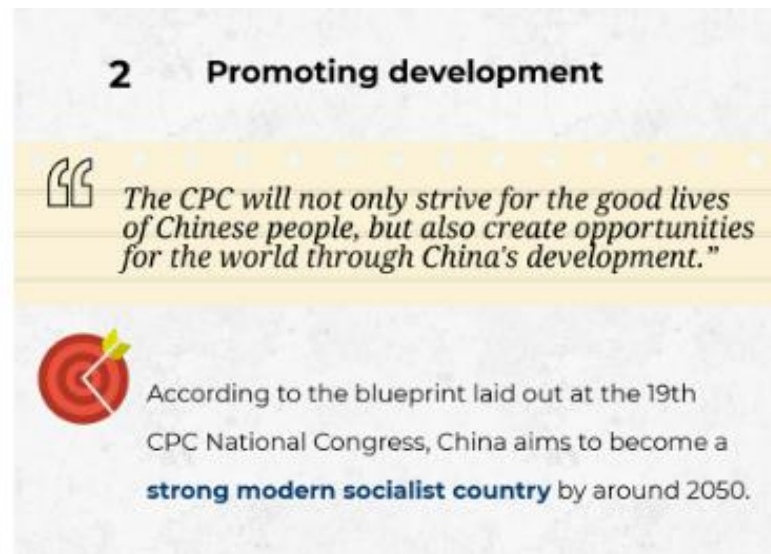


Figure 4: President Xi's Vision on Shared Future for Humanity: Promoting Development

Source: SCIO, 2017

This statement delineates China's distinct paradigm and trajectory of development. China posits that other nations could leverage its experiential knowledge to tailor their developmental trajectories in consonance with their respective imperatives. This perspective attests to China's unique national character and exceptionalism.

China expounds on its potential to facilitate the realization of other countries' development objectives without imposing its distinctive model. It does so by catalyzing cooperation across spheres such as trade, investment, and technology transfer. Within this framework, Xi Jinping recurrently emphasizes the paramountcy of the Belt and Road Initiative, emblematic of China's privileging of comprehensive economic collaboration within the global order.

As China garners enhanced economic and political influence, it underscores its ascendancy as a premier and paradigmatic actor in the arena of global development. Concurrently, this enunciation conveys China's aspiration to assume a more commanding and consequential role within the international order, epitomized by its sui generis models and strategies. The tenets of Chinese exceptionalism, emblematic of its distinct Asian character, underscore the advocacy of its idiosyncratic developmental paradigm and economic trajectory, all the while pledging heightened integration into international markets and the systematic dismantling of trade impediments. In so doing, China accentuates its intent to safeguard its vested interests while concurrently evincing openness to robust global economic collaboration.

In his discourse delivered at the Boao Forum for Asia, Xi expounded a perspective that underscores the pivotal importance of regional collaboration and inclusivity. His pronounced emphasis on “further opening markets and opposing protectionism” underscores China’s steadfast dedication to cultivating an atmosphere conducive to collaborative engagement. By affirming that “the development of Asian countries and the development of the world are simply inseparable,” Xi accentuates the mutually dependent correlation between the advancement of Asian nations and the broader global progress, thereby accentuating the criticality of fostering regional cooperation (SCIO, 2018). This substantiates China’s alignment with regional cooperative platforms and its aspiration to catalyze developmental dynamism and stability within the Asian context. Concurrently, it reaffirms the notion of regional exceptionalism, thus advancing the proposition that Asia possesses intrinsic agency to proactively mold its own prospective trajectory.

During a collective learning convocation convened by the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee in 2014, Xi Jinping enunciated China’s strategic resolve to undertake a more dynamic and influential role in the configuration of the international order, propelled by its distinct compositional attributes. Xi accentuated China’s proactive determination to engage in substantive participation and leadership, contrasting such agency with the passivity of bystandership or the mere emulation of external policy paradigms. He accentuated, “We should not be a bystander or a follower, but an active participant and leader. We need to amplify the resonance of China’s multifarious voices and augment the salience of Chinese elements within the process of shaping international norms, thereby fortifying and extending China’s vested interests in the pursuit of multifaceted development.” (SCIO, 2018)

From an alternative prism, China’s economic exceptionalism can be theoretically posited as a calculated endeavor to buttress its indigenous economic imperatives. Certain scholars opine that China’s vociferous calls for laissez-faire markets and untrammelled trade ostensibly harbor an implicit calculus to adroitly influence the dynamics of international competition and accrue asymmetrical advantages.

In summation, the enunciations of Xi Jinping pertaining to economic development and advancement encapsulate not solely China’s idiosyncratic paradigm in this realm, but also reverberate with its concerted ambitions for an all-encompassing fabric of regional and global cooperative frameworks, undergirded by the resolute promotion of unfettered trade. Notwithstanding, in the meticulous exegesis of these proclamations, it remains an exigency of paramount import to judiciously consider the prism of China’s indigenous economic and

politico-strategic interests, interwoven with its assertive proclivity for stewarding leadership within the international domain.

3.4.3. Boosting Global Change



Figure 5: President Xi’s Vision on Shared Future for Humanity: Boosting Global Change

Source: SCIO, 2017

The phrase “boosting global change” conveys China’s ambitious endeavor, as it forges ahead in its economic, political, and technological prowess, to assume a more potent and commanding role in steering and configuring the trajectory of global metamorphosis. In this vein, China elucidates its sui generis blueprint, with the aim of furnishing an idiosyncratic and unparalleled standpoint and methodology within the overarching realm of international affairs. This stance evinces China’s deliberate deviation from prevailing Western-centric cognitive frameworks, thereby propounding an alternative, novel paradigm for the course of global transformation and the architecture of governance. Concomitantly, this ambition serves as a pivotal cornerstone underpinning China’s assertion of a mantle of global leadership, coalescing harmoniously with its overarching construct of Chinese Exceptionalism.

Xi Jinping underscores the Communist Party of China’s (CPC) aspiration to shape global dynamics, committing to achieve this goal through a commitment to engage in dialogues, exchanges, and collaborative endeavors with leaders, statesmen, and populace of other countries. In this endeavor, China safeguards its indigenous principles while concurrently accentuating its openness to comprehending divergent viewpoints and nurturing cooperative frameworks. This underscores China’s foundational premise of inclusive international collaboration and diplomacy.

In his inaugural address at the 2018 Boao Forum, Xi Jinping enunciated, “We shall unwaveringly adhere to the strategy of reciprocal and advantageous openness. We shall accord

commensurate consideration to the imperatives of ‘importing’ and ‘going global’, thereby pioneering uncharted trajectories in the realm of openness.” (SCIO, 2018) Xi’s forward-looking enunciation concerning China’s future concerns and objectives epitomizes the nation’s intention to perpetuate international economic cooperation and achieve mutually advantageous outcomes. China’s economic openness and cooperative stratagems are underpinned by its endeavor to meticulously balance its own interests with those of other states. This is evinced by China’s assiduous evaluation of both internal and external economic dynamics and its concerted efforts to invigorate economic growth through an emphasis on innovation and nascent arenas of cooperation.

Xi Jinping’s formulation of a diplomacy imbued with socialist attributes distinctive to China for a new era has been codified as the cardinal guiding precept underpinning China’s external pursuits in this emergent epoch.



Figure 6: Major aspects of Xi’s thought on Chinese way of diplomacy

Source: SCIO, 2018

The enunciations underscore China’s conscientious adherence to the principle of party centralism and the role of party leadership in the arena of foreign policy, coupled with its embrace of a robust grand diplomacy oriented towards realizing the nation’s imperatives for

national revitalization. China's overarching objective entails the preservation of global peace and the cultivation of joint progress within the international order, substantiating its commitment to a trajectory of peaceful development founded on principles of reciprocal esteem and synergistic collaboration. Through instrumental initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, China endeavors to amplify economic concordance, with a pronounced ambition for coalescent growth and an amplified purview of influence. The nation's strategic compass also encompasses the augmentation of international alliances and systemic overhauls within the architecture of global governance. Grounded in the safeguarding of sovereign interests and territorial inviolability, China is resolute in harmonizing its traditional diplomatic modality with the exigencies of the modern era, giving rise to a sui generis paradigm of diplomatic engagement.

Xi Jinping constructs a distinctive narrative of Chinese exceptionalism, substantiated tangibly by the manifestation of the Belt and Road Initiative. China recurrently underscores the principles of cooperation and inclusiveness, seeking to galvanize not only Asian states but also an array of global counterparts towards an alignment with its paradigm, most prominently exemplified in the Belt and Road Initiative.

In addition, Xi elaborates upon China's comprehensive ambit, notably encompassing the Belt and Road Initiative and the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, explicating the imperative of operationalizing these undertakings in consonance with the tenets of extensive consultative processes, collaborative contributions, and reciprocal advantage. He extends a cordial entreaty to nations spanning the expanse of the international arena, urging their proactive engagement in these enterprises.



Figure 7: Basic Principles and Spirit of BRI

Source: SCIO, 2019

In explicating the divergence amongst the goals, strategies, and prioritizations of the Belt and Road Initiative, Xi Jinping draws a parallel akin to the manifest differentiation within China's narrative of exceptionalism: "In promoting this initiative, China will follow the principle of wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. The programs of development will be open and inclusive, not exclusive. They will be a real chorus comprising all countries along the routes, not a solo for China itself. To develop the Belt and Road is not to replace existing mechanisms or initiatives for regional cooperation. Much to the contrary, we will build on the existing basis to help countries align their development strategies and form complementarity." (SCIO, 2018) Within the paradigm of China's exceptionalism, as expounded by Xi, paramount importance is attributed to cooperative endeavor and inclusiveness, thereby foregrounding concerted involvement and mutually shared benefits with fellow nations, thus eclipsing the singular pursuit of self-interest. This doctrinal stance underscores an international relations construct that privileges overarching stability and affluence. Of salient note is the avowed objective not to supplant regional cooperative mechanisms and initiatives with the Belt and Road Initiative; rather, it underscores the ambition to edify upon extant underpinnings while aiding states in the synchronization of their developmental strategies.

China's articulation of the underlying ambitions propelling the advancement of the "Belt and Road Initiative" contributes significantly to a nuanced comprehension of the strategic

orientation and doctrinal underpinnings that China asserts to be distinctive in essence. In his address at the inaugural Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in 2017, President Xi Jinping expounded, “In pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative, we will not resort to outdated geopolitical maneuvering. What we hope to achieve is a new model of win-win cooperation. We have no intention to form a small group detrimental to stability, what we hope to create is a big family of harmonious co-existence.” (SCIO, 2018) Within the trajectory of promoting the “Belt and Road Initiative,” President Xi’s declarations serve to underscore China’s exceptionalism as predicated upon the facilitation of global synergies through the BRI framework. This exceptionalism is demonstrative of China’s embrace of a multilateral modality within the sphere of international relations, wherein unilateral or constrictive configurations are consciously eschewed. In this specific milieu, China aspires, via the BRI, not to effectuate a mere insular cohort but rather to institute an intricate lattice of serene advancement, expansive and harmonious collaboration.

In his inaugural address at the Boao Forum in 2018, President Xi Jinping expounded, “We are resolutely committed to upholding the principles of an open-door strategy that yields mutually beneficial outcomes. Our resolve encompasses a simultaneous and equitable consideration of ‘inward engagement’ and ‘global outreach,’ thereby instigating pioneering dimensions within the sphere of openness.” This discourse articulated by Xi encapsulates the anticipated trajectory and ambitions of China’s future, wherein the nation’s dedication to international economic collaboration is underscored. The underlying aspiration resides in achieving outcomes marked by mutual gains, whereby China’s strategies pertaining to economic openness and cooperation are meticulously calibrated to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between its own interests and those of its global counterparts. Evidently discernible is the concerted effort to reconcile China’s economic openness and outward-oriented approach, with a scrupulous evaluation of both intrinsic and extrinsic economic variables. Furthermore, this discourse attests to China’s unwavering commitment to fostering innovation and nurturing emerging domains of cooperation as pivotal catalysts for driving economic growth.

China’s exceptionalism, as manifest through the conduit of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), accentuates its cognizance of China’s invaluable cultural diversity as a strategic asset, catalyzing the facilitation of interactions amid heterogeneous nations and civilizations to cultivate reciprocal engagement and comprehension: “The Belt and Road Initiative calls for exchanges between nations and civilizations for mutual understanding, rather than mutual resentment. It is important to remove, rather than erect, walls between each other, take dialogue as the golden rule and be good neighbors with each other.” These articulated sentiments,

enunciated during President Xi Jinping's discourse at the Arab League headquarters in 2018, emblemize China's aspirational commitment to nurturing cultural dialogues and mutual cognizance amidst variegated nations and civilizations. These pronouncements epitomize China's distinctive exceptionalism, deeply entrenched in an all-encompassing and synergistic *modus operandi* within the domain of international relations, with the deliberate objective of nurturing cultural cross-fertilization, efficacious communication, and the propagation of harmonious accord. As underscored in Xi's articulation, the BRI espouses the transcendence of cultural barriers, espousing dialogue as a cardinal doctrinal precept, while concurrently fostering harmonious vicinal affiliations, thus mirroring China's singular perspective in propelling global affairs.

"The Belt and Road Initiative may be China's idea, but its opportunities and outcomes are going to benefit the world. China has no geopolitical calculations, seeks no exclusionary blocs and imposes no business deals on others," said Xi in his keynote speech at Boao Forum for Asia in 2018. (SCIO, 2018) Viewed through the prism of China's exceptionalism, this affirmation converges with the narrative wherein China perceives itself as an accountable global actor dedicated to the mutual advancement and cooperation. The accentuation by China on the global advantages stemming from the Belt and Road Initiative denotes a departure from conventional power-centric politics and accentuates its predisposition toward active participation within a more comprehensive and cooperative international framework. This inclination resonates harmoniously with China's exceptionalist outlook, which underscores the primacy of collective well-being and the propagation of shared prosperity, transcending a unilateral pursuit of self-interest.

Moreover, within the domain of foreign policy and the global order, Xi's declarations epitomize China's adherence to a non-hegemonic orientation. By repudiating the pursuit of geopolitical machinations and the formation of exclusionary alliances, China situates itself as an advocate for the multipolar paradigm, accentuating the primacy of diplomacy and collaborative endeavors vis-à-vis the projection of power. The underscored aversion to the imposition of commercial arrangements upon others underscores China's reverence for the principles of sovereignty and non-interference, aligning seamlessly with its foreign policy doctrine of refraining from involvement in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

These declarations can be construed as an enunciation of China's endeavor towards a novel paradigm of global interactions marked by collaborative engagement, deference to heterogeneity, and the repudiation of hegemony. It harmonizes with dialogues concerning

multipolarity, worldwide governance, and all-encompassing progress, accentuating China's ambition to make a constructive contribution to the global framework.

In summation, Xi Jinping's pronouncement accentuates China's exceptionalist strategy of pursuing reciprocal advantages and cooperative endeavors, which consonantly corresponds with China's foreign policy tenets of non-hegemony, multipolarity, and non-interference. Viewed through the prism of international relations scholarship, this declaration manifests China's dedication to fashioning a more encompassing and cooperative global structure, diverging from conventional power-centric frameworks.



CONCLUSION

Whether we agree with it or not, we inhabit a realm influenced by the concept of exceptionalism. Consequently, when U.S. conduct or expressions contradict the localized interpretations of exceptionalism, we should anticipate negative responses akin to the strong reactions many Americans display when a foreign leader or critic questions our deeply held convictions. When articulating our desires and goals without recognizing the perspectives of others, we should be prepared for misunderstandings, missteps, skepticism, and a host of unnecessary challenges.

In line with this, gaining a profound comprehension of the various realms of exceptionalism presents significant prospects, especially during the frequently overlooked stages of diplomatic engagement termed as the ‘gardening phases’. Instead of debating whose exceptionalism narrative holds validity, the crucial inquiry pertains to understanding: How might the predominant exceptionalism narratives abroad influence the responses of both leaders and citizens?

It is postulated that several factors have contributed to the shifts observed in the international system. These include the ascendancy of China in the post-Cold War era, the growing influence of Asia on the global stage, and the discernible fragmentation and waning influence within the Western system. Notably, for the first time in many centuries, the epicenter of global political dynamics is tilting towards Asia, notably China, diverging from its historical concentration in the Western world.

An assessment of the prevailing dynamics offers insights into the trajectory of this significant transformation. The current shift is characterized by the move from a unipolar world order to a multipolar one, a surge in interventionist approaches leading to legitimacy challenges, an augmentation in international organizations albeit with debatable effectiveness, and the clamor for a development model that aligns economic progress with social equity, signifying the necessity for a novel paradigm in development.

In accordingly, the concept of exceptionalism, guiding China’s aspirations for regional leadership, propels a gradual progression that holds the potential to induce normative shifts within the international system by activating processes of consolidation in East Asia. Although Chinese exceptionalism, positioned at the core of China’s grand strategy, has not yet

crystallized into a fully articulated ideology through the ongoing endeavor to strategize national identity, it significantly shapes the amalgamation and harmonization of existing strategic thought paradigms in China. Concurrently, China's geopolitical vision steering its quest for a new international order seeks to derive from alternative ideologies and worldviews, underpinned by the burgeoning notion of exceptionalism.

Conversely, both internal and external factors influencing China's national power exert a pivotal influence on its conduct in the international arena, compelling a gradual realization of the envisioned transformation in the international system. While exceptionalism's political and diplomatic influence prominently delineates China's positioning in the global system, its role in constructing an order and the endorsement it garners from other nations for this foundational role progressively enhance its legitimacy.

Chinese officials and numerous scholars, as we argued earlier in the study, assert that China's ascendancy will not escalate into a major conflict. Their primary argument revolves around the concept of Chinese exceptionalism, which comprises four key components. Firstly, China do not have a historical precedent of expansive endeavors beyond its borders. Secondly, the nature of Chinese power is viewed as inherently peaceful. Thirdly, the principal focus of Chinese endeavors is defensive in nature, symbolized by the historic Great Wall of China. Lastly, China envisions its world order as benign and constructive. Chinese exceptionalism serves as a vital discourse in the political arena, notably encapsulated in the theory of China's peaceful rise. Additionally, China envisions the 21st century not merely as an era to rival the USA in terms of economic and political influence but to surpass it. China places its faith in the transformative potential of the existing market economy and a stable authoritarian communist governance to realize these objectives (Doğan, 2016: 212).

In this case, Chinese exceptionalism, as a policy framework, embodies attributes of mutual advantage and positive outcomes both in bilateral relationships and on a continental scale. It encompasses elements of reformism within the realm of major powers, a benevolent approach to peacekeeping, and cooperative involvement. Consequently, Chinese exceptionalism is advocated as a remedy to the deficiencies observed in the existing international system. The central concern revolves around whether China will align its future conduct with its current assertions. There exists apprehension that as China's influence continues to ascend, it might adopt a more assertive and revisionist stance, potentially harboring concealed hegemonic ambitions. While Chinese elites emphasize and have faith in principles such as fostering great

harmony and advocating for China's peaceful rise, the international community harbors reservations based on historical experiences.

In the optimistic perspective regarding the rise of China, particularly the initiatives and narratives originating from China, drawing upon universal values such as Confucian principles, can serve as normative soft power shaping the envisioned order proposed by China. Through a strategy of peaceful ascendance, China can conduct itself in a manner fostering collaboration, prospects, and mutual benefits with neighboring nations, thereby alleviating any perceived threat. The concept of peaceful ascent, akin to the essence of Chinese exceptionalism, is fundamentally centered on principles of peace and progress. It firmly asserts that China will abstain from seeking hegemony and instead aims for a symbiotic relationship beneficial to all involved. By embracing a peaceful trajectory, China can engage in cooperative efforts, opening up opportunities and advantages for its neighboring nations, thus dispelling concerns of antagonism. Hence, the doctrine of China's peaceful ascent, akin to Chinese exceptionalism, underscores principles of peace, development, and a mutually beneficial relationship, firmly renouncing any aspirations for hegemonic dominance.

This thesis, overall, undertakes an analytical endeavor aimed at comprehending China's ascendancy within the framework of Chinese exceptionalism. With a focal point on the conceptual underpinnings of Chinese exceptionalism vis-à-vis China's burgeoning prominence, it delves into the articulation of China's ascent, the deployment of specific conceptual paradigms and discourses, and their consequential impact on the configuration of its foreign policy orientation. The dissertation rigorously explores an array of salient themes encompassing international relations theories, the construction of national identity, the semantic nuances of exceptionalism, and the dynamics of China's diplomatic rhetoric. Concurrently, it probes the pervasive influence of Chinese exceptionalism on the evolutionary trajectory of its burgeoning global role.

By strategically engaging with pivotal facets encompassing international relations paradigm, the ontological constitution of national identity, and the dialogic nuances inherent in exceptionalism, this scholarly investigation offers an exhaustive appraisal of the intricate and multifaceted dialectics characterizing the reciprocal interplay between Chinese exceptionalism and the trajectory of China's ascendancy as a burgeoning global power.

The conspicuous rise of China within the global political and economic sphere is marked by an escalating influence. The pivotal question regarding the pacific or competitive nature of this rise engenders considerable contention within a milieu of diverse theoretical frameworks

and perspectives. The comprehensive literature review undertaken within the scope of this thesis adeptly captures the intricate and multifaceted essence of this perplexity. Certain theoretical paradigms posit a pacific trajectory for China's ascent, characterized by the augmentation of its influence through collaborative economic efforts and diplomatic channels, while alternative perspectives posit a more competitive trajectory underpinned by the projection and utilization of power.

Within the pertinent section, a diverse array of methodological approaches grounded in distinct international relations paradigms is critically examined to unveil the nuanced treatment of China's rise and its avowed pursuit of a pacific trajectory. Concurrently, an in-depth exploration is conducted to elucidate the conceptualization of China's global presence.

Moreover, the discourse delves into the intricate interplay between China's national identity, its foreign policy orientations, and its articulation of exceptionalism. The comprehensive scrutiny and analytical reflections encapsulated within this thesis underscore the profound interconnectivity between the concept of Chinese exceptionalism and China's historical lineage, and cultural heritage.

The comparative analysis between Chinese exceptionalism and American exceptionalism illuminates their shared objective of safeguarding national sovereignty. However, these two concepts exhibit significant distinctions in terms of historical development, cultural heritage, and national experiences. This analysis aids in enhancing our comprehension of the origins of Chinese exceptionalism and its divergences from the tenets of American exceptionalism, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding.

In this study, examining the discourse and narratives of Chinese leaders regarding China's peaceful rise in the contemporary era, prominent concepts such as "harmonious society" and "Community of Common Destiny," among others, are expounded upon, highlighting China's assertion of exceptionalism. Through these constructs, China aims to project a more cooperative, stable, and sustainable role in international relations, while simultaneously offering explanations for critiques and concerns from the international community.

By followingly, this thesis scrutinizes the extent to which Chinese leaders employ the concepts and discourses constituting Chinese exceptionalism, how they instrumentally employ exceptional elements in their foreign policies to narrate China's unique identity, and how China explicates its ascent through these exceptional dimensions. Furthermore, the study underscores the intricate interplay between these narratives and concrete policy actions.

In summation, the comprehensive interpretation of how Chinese exceptionalism elucidates the trajectory of China's rise necessitates a sophisticated and multidimensional approach. This dissertation aspires to make a substantive contribution to the explication of China's ascendancy, its national identity construction, its strategic orientations in foreign policy, and its positioning within the complex matrix of international relations. Prospecting forward, it becomes manifestly apparent that further scholarly inquiry and methodical examination are imperative to attain a nuanced understanding of the dynamic evolution of China's global role and the formative impact exerted by the tenets of Chinese exceptionalism. Consequently, this scholarly endeavor is fundamentally oriented toward augmenting the academic dialogue surrounding the facets of China's exceptionalist underpinnings, its ascent, and the contours of its foreign policy strategies. Its overarching objective is to furnish perspicacious insights that can contribute substantively to the ongoing dialectics and deliberations permeating the landscape of international relations, as encapsulated within the paramount scholarly discourse of the discipline.

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