

Lecture November 18
Comparative Grand Strategy and China's Taiwan Policy

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The study of grand strategy usually focuses on the strategic goal of a major power. This goal should consider the capacity and the ideology of the nation and guide its foreign policy. Few studies, however, examine the sources of the goal. The sources of the goal that arise from the nation's own historical and ideological conditions are different from those derived from interactions with other nations. The source of grand strategy is, therefore, a subject that is independent from the assessment of capacity and actual policy, and attends particularly to how sensitive national leaders are toward other nations in determining their strategic goals. Accordingly, explaining grand strategy cannot be adequate without analyzing how national leaders come up with the appropriate role of a nation in the world, in its neighborhood, and in its domestic politics. In the following discussion, the grand strategy refers to a set of strategies that are informed by the decided self-role assumed by that state. This article introduces the notion of national role style as the source of strategic goal in order to examine the grand strategy of China as a rising power and compared with its American counterpart.

International relations require super-powers to adopt grand strategies, which are always important topics for the study of international relations (IR). The grand strategy of China has become a crucial issue for IR researchers worldwide since the rise of the People's Republic of China at the end of the Cold War era.¹ However, according to Goldstein, the grand strategy of China is difficult to identify. Only when a broader time frame is applied can the goal and logic of the Chinese grand strategy be comprehended.² Swaine and Tellis believe that this is because it combines the characteristics of both strong and weak states,³ thus assuming it will become clearer. The alleged vagueness of the Chinese grand strategy can provide two contrasting implications of China rising for global governance. First, China has not developed a consistent conception of its own role in the world to cope with the national interests of a power on the rise. Alternatively as we will argue, China may possess a grand strategy whose style is precisely to evade any consistent self-role conception.

A grand strategy that enforces a self-centric, and often universally applied, order and its role expectations for nations upon others cannot be categorized as mutual role

¹ Jisi Wang 2011.

² Goldstein 2005, p. 19.

³ This leads to the formation of what Michael Swaine and Tellis call "calculative grand strategy." See Michael Swaine and Ashley Tellis 2000.

playing, given that the primary reference for strategic thinkers is their own ideals rather than the ideals of other nations targeted. This is not the foreign policy style of China. Chinese role playing is deeply embedded in ritual styles, face culture, and group orientation.⁴ The style of role conception and the resultant Chinese grand strategy consciously make the role of China and the role of the interacting party mutually constituted. In fact, China's self-role emerging in the 21st century was steeped with the dictum of a “responsible major power” and the joint “life community” that promotes a “harmonious world” via mutual respect for each other’s “core national interest.”

Given that strategy conceptualization requires a nation to be unequivocal in its perceived role in the world, a self-centric reference is necessary to consistently and unilaterally prescribe norms and assign responsibilities for other nations. Can a consciously mutual role-playing state possess a grand strategy? Using role theory, which breaks down the style of role into identity-based and relationship-based formulations, we will compare and discuss American and Chinese grand strategy styles. The approach of China to negotiate constantly with specific parties to accept the country's relational role divides its grand strategy among various simultaneous sets of bilateral role relationships. The usual disinterest of the bilateral style in any multilateral order or general rules of international relations could even undermine the formation of stable national interest conceptions. We will use China’s wavering on the issue of US arms sales to Taiwan to illustrate how volatile Chinese core national interests are in practice. We believe that undecidability of Chinese foreign policy between relationship and national interests better explains the obscuring of Chinese grand strategy than does the fact that China is caught in the transition to a greater power.

Identity-Based Role Versus Relationship-Based Role

Like all human beings who must attend to both the need for self-care and social belonging, all nations have to resort to self-help supported by independence, power, and prosperity, qua national interests, and to reciprocity embedded in convention, trust, and understanding. A nation moves a step forward once it develops a long-term strategy to pursue national interests or acquires recognition from more countries in the world. To enforce the long-term strategy, a nation shall convey to the rest of the world a functional message about its self-concept so as to attract the cooperation of other countries. The core of the message is the country’s self-role conception and the concomitant role expectation of others. Hence, national role conception is the

⁴ Paul Evans 2010, pp. 42-57; John Wills 2009, 23-39; Tu 1994.

mechanism of establishing a nation's place in the world as it asserts its own interests and its social value in relation to those of other nations or states.

By conveying and imposing one's role on the rest of the world, a nation automatically generates pressure of expectation on other states. Altercasting is enacting one's role conception to either assert one's national interests or stress one's social value with the expectation that other nations will understand and interact positively.⁵ Apparently, a major power tends to engage in stronger altercasting than a weaker power. Similarly, a major power is relatively more prepared to undertake grand strategy designs because of its high capacity to act unilaterally. Therefore, one plausible proposition is that a grand strategy design usually involves a substantial degree of altercasting. Creating a grand strategy is intrinsically a kind of social behavior.

Based on the tradition of symbolic interactionism, we begin with the distinction between the two sources of social behavior, namely between I and Me, role-making and role taking, interaction within individuals and interaction between individuals, and so on.⁶ Accordingly, role sources in role theory can either be psychological or sociological. This division of role sources is particularly useful in comparing American and Chinese grand strategy styles because historically, the US' grand strategy conceptualizes national roles based on an isolationist tradition, whereas China's grand strategy derives roles from the reciprocal convention of the tribute system. Nevertheless, the US' grand strategy can accommodate sociological sources. For example, the US has been suggested to be holding a tributary system that has committed the hegemonic power to benevolence and civilizational diffusion.⁷ On the contrary, China's grand strategy can contain psychological sources. This observation was apparent during the Cultural Revolution as China endorsed national liberation elsewhere "to win adherents to the Chinese program for radical change in the international system" that China had desired.⁸

The psychological sources of role refer to the cognitive construction of role, whereas sociological sources primarily comprise interactions. Psychological role conceptions emerge from the indigenous environment of the actor and his or her self-identity that provides universally applicable self-references, and is therefore to a large extent context-free. It can aid the actor in evaluating others. This includes whether or not other actors are capable, cooperative or equal and how to deal with other actors consistently. Such a self-identity-based role exists in the perceived

⁵ Weinstein and Deutschberger, 1963.

⁶ George Herbert Mead 1934; Joel M. Charon 2004.

⁷ Yuen, 2013, pp. 27–28.

⁸ Peter Van Ness, 1973, 1970, p. 189.

differences between a self-conception and an Other-conception and is therefore sensitive to the relative power to defend self-difference.

Sociological role conceptions adapt to the context, and remain negotiable to acquire the recognition of the other.

The rationality behind allowing the other side, presumably the weak side, to determine the outcome of an interaction rests upon the longer-term concerns regarding the nation's reputation as role player. Such reputation is essential in conveying sincerity toward the ideal world favored by that nation. Tied to the specific conditions of interaction, the nation subscribing to the sociological role conception always has to flexibly adapt to such conditions. Whereas conversion in accordance with the role expectation of others is the goal of psychological role conception, adaptation is the goal of sociological conception. The former seeks to transform the rest of the world from a potentially threatening one to an accepting one, while the latter seeks to convince the rest of the world that the nation is not a threat to anyone else.

Sociological role conceptions that avoid rigidity in mutable conditions can be consciously compromising and contingent at one time and yet punitive and confrontational at another. The credibility of the role player, without which no grand strategy can be deemed convincing, is of paramount importance. Compromise out of a strong position is a deliberate performance of benevolence, whereas confrontation out of a weak position destroys the reputation of the other side as a credible role player. For psychological role conceptions, however, compromise is only sensible out of a weak position.

These sociological conceptions comprise relationship-based roles borne out of interactions.⁹ This context-oriented formulation of role is more likely bilateral than multilateral because a general rule, a universal principle or a strong common interest is almost indispensable in a multilateral order.¹⁰ Thus, multilateralism is a challenge to countries that are used to the sociological conceptualization of roles. By contrast, bilateralism embedded in relationship tolerates deviance from universal rules, encourages patience, and appeals to idiosyncratic symbols. Under the bilateral condition, judgment on relative strength is not the dominant factor in designing the strategy.

Relational bilateralism and realist bilateralism have entirely different natures despite sharing the same motive of controlling uncertainty. Realist bilateralism of the strong side to take advantage of the immediate asymmetry of power is expressly exploitative. By contrast, relational bilateralism enables the weak power to act

⁹ This indicates the autonomy of an individual in adapting to context and adjusting behavior accordingly. See Lewis Coser 1995.

¹⁰ John Gerard Ruggie 1993, p.11.

confrontationally because the threat to the reputation of the strong side as a role player is much greater than the immediate harm posed by the threat. A strong power that subscribes to relational bilateralism does not aim for the immediate subjugation of the other side. Rather, relational bilateralism encourages the strong power to show benevolence in the short run to achieve stability in the long run and, accordingly, transcend potentially dangerous alliances of the weak side with a third party. Implicit in relational bilateralism is the multilateralism proposition, which predicts that a sociological role conception would refrain from asserting any rule of international relations in a multilateral frame. Instead, such role conception would explain how and why a general rule should always be qualified in a specific condition. This characteristic explains the Chinese trait of always boycotting or abstaining from supporting a general rule of global governance—be it about carbon intensity, humanitarian intervention, development aid, or public health.

Hence, China would have to test the other side whenever signs that relational reciprocity is under threat. To ascertain whether such a threat is being formed, China consistently looks at how national differences are respected in dealing with the US or international organizations. In facing a weaker power along the borders, China resorts to testing and warning. In reality, China's relational role-playing often fails to fully convey its message, thus defying the purpose of sociological role-playing. Miscommunication of this sort could even lead to war, as was the case during the Sino-Indian border clashes in 1962 and the Sino-Soviet clashes in 1969.¹¹

An identity-based role requires the assessment of the relative power of the actor with respect to the rest of the world to design a sensible grand strategy to convert the world to the right order or to protect moral principles under threat. A relationship-based role also depends on judgment, but the judgment pertains to the specific conditions of the interacting parties instead of the entire world. Relational judgment should be sensitive to the characteristics of the other party, because the characteristics of the latter indicate how the former can better entice or coerce it into a reciprocal pattern of interaction. Recent reflections on altercasting in foreign policy analysis can use the division between the identity-based and the relationship-based roles.¹² Altercasting of the identity-based role would impose same norms to all alters, as "others," to comply with them, in contrast with specific and different duties the relationship-based role would demand from specific alters, as members of "a greater self," to restrain self-interests.

¹¹ Tien-sze Fang 2014; ; Richard Wich 1980.

¹² For classic discussions on altercasting, see Eugene A. Weinstein and Paul Deutschberger 1963, pp. 454-466; Erving Goffman 1959. For application in foreign policy analysis, see Sebastian Harnisch 2012, pp. 47- 71.

Practically, as a result of human evolution, some nations rely more on psychological conception, while others rely on sociological conception. However, no nation can rely on only one type of role conception without the supplemental contribution of the other. While it would be certainly exaggeration to contrast the two societies or their foreign policymaking strictly according to the dichotomy of psychological and sociological roles, we nonetheless detect the contrast between the United States and China in the formulation of their grand strategy. We argue that the American grand strategy is more used to promoting a specific set of norms or rules. The presentation of different norms is a threat or a potential threat that should be ultimately converted. Liberalism in the United States is at the core of these norms. However, the Chinese grand strategy does not promote a substantive norm but rather is preoccupied with achieving a positive image of China. Thus, the ultimate goal of the American grand strategy would hold even without a consenting or dissenting second player. This means that the designation of America as solely a liberal nation gives rise to Americanness. Thus, the grand strategy of the United States tends to measure friends and foes largely through the same scales borne out of its own practices, which include anti-proliferation, competitive elections, and market openness. To a great degree, the grand strategy of the United States involves altercasting via intervention, converting different “others” into the specific type of regime that is friendly and beneficial to Americanness.

By contrast, we will argue that Chineseness depends on social recognition. Thus, the Chinese grand strategy is ideologically apathetic to outsiders or the others. This does not mean that Americanness pays no attention to relationship or social recognition.¹³ Rather, the US foreign policy concerns for relationship are assessed and maneuvered to suit the purpose of certain general principles embedded either in liberalism or hegemonic stability. It does not mean, either, that Chineseness contains no universal inspiration. However, from a sociological role conception, China’s universal inspiration is in a more abstract nostalgia for the status of Middle Kingdom than a concrete world order.¹⁴ For example, the approach of Chinese strategists in handling border disputes with India, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Vietnam, Myanmar, and North Korea without subscribing to any particular standard is notable. Even the seemingly universal conformist roles expected of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and/or Tibet present dissimilar unification models.

¹³ See, for example, Cameron Thies 2013; Anne-Marie Slaughter 2009, pp. 94-113; David A. Lake, pp. 331-353.

¹⁴ This is about the image of China as exceptional and superior, and yet such pursuit of a recognition of difference could lead to uncertainties among realist defenders of the hegemonic order. See, for example, Hugh White, 2012; June Dreyer, 2004; Henry Kissinger, 2011, p.10.

The difference in role sources further divides the purpose of the grand strategy with regard to altercasting associated with role conceptions. The power to impose sanctions according to psychological role conception is essential to American strategists, whereas the power to symbolize togetherness according to sociological role conception is the key to understanding the Chinese grand strategic behavior. Our stress on relational orientation in Chinese grand strategy does not contradict most other studies of Chinese grand strategy which believes that a more assertive China will emerge,¹⁵ or is already emerging, as its national capacity continues to grow. Rather, our prediction is that such an assertive China will continue to seek bilateral relationships each in its peculiar way to recognize the return of the superior Middle Kingdom and yet bypass any serious quest for general rules of international relations. To the extent that China is ready to jettison the specific national interests for the sake of relational security in the specific contexts, the relational style of Chinese grand strategy is independent from the rise of its power.

Finally, given that a grand strategy relies on self- and other-role conceptions that incur altercasting, a major power's grand strategy could appear arbitrary regardless of whether the source of role conceptions is psychological or sociological. Altercasting based on sociological role conceptions do not necessarily guarantee smoother reception compared with psychological role conceptions because intended mutuality under the sociological circumstance could be biased and, therefore, unwelcome. Compromise that is motivated by relational concerns may not be easily understandable or even appreciable. Aborted compromise backfires because it enhances the sense of being betrayed. This tendency suggests that a relational role conception of China does not easily attract other nations to fulfill China's role expectation of them.

THE AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY

The American grand strategy stems from an identity-based role conception although practically the instrumental use of relationship is likewise common. An identity-based role involves a "self-concept" and an "other-concept."¹⁶ Washington adopted a style of grand strategy conception based on the judgment of the relative power of the US. When power is considered limited, isolationism or retrenchment must be thoroughly considered. Isolationism, containment, and engagement all rest upon the cause of liberalism for justification, depending on whether the US has the power to spread

¹⁵ In addition to Goldstein, the same view is held in Martin Jacques 2012; Michael Swaine and Ashley Tellis 2000.

¹⁶ Cameron Thies 2010, pp. 6335–6356.

liberalism to the rest of the world.¹⁷ Since the end of the Cold War, crafting a liberal world has consistently been the principle of the US' grand strategy, which conceives of the liberal world order as the foundation of security in the long run. Only the rise of China in the 21st century has brought retrenchment back as a viable option.¹⁸ Yet, even under retrenchment, the justification remains that retrenchment is a relatively pragmatic means to safeguard liberalism. In this framework, the US expects an ally to assimilate or support liberalization and an enemy to resist or even sabotage liberalization, domestically and internationally. This style of altercasting was developed from the idea that the conversion of the rest of the world into liberal capitalism fulfills the national interests of the US.

Liberalism does not automatically lead to a specific grand strategy. However, liberalism has been an internally determined value and, therefore, fits well with the identity-based role source. The following discussion shows how an identity-based role conception establishes its logic of grand strategy. This effect does not, however, preclude the US from sociological thinking. For example, relational stability was clearly used as a means to manage bloc politics during the Cold War, such that the US perceived illiberal regimes of the Western Bloc as lesser evils or threats to liberalism than communism.

We use Apeldoorn and Graaff's application of W. A. Williams' simplified argument to illustrate.¹⁹ William contended that American grand strategy followed a specific worldview called "the imperialism of the open door." Imperialism is the description of style while open door regards substance. America's efforts to extend the American system and capital into the domains of other nations were consistently aggressive. "Open door" was derived from the policy applied by the United States to China in 1899,²⁰ which remained coercive and incursive throughout the 20th century. This policy consists of five elements, including economic expansionism, promotion of free markets and the liberal world order, promotion of democracy, "externalization of evil," and U.S. exceptionalism. The last component pertains particularly to the national role style because it is about the "divine mission" that Washington believes it possesses, which sets the United States apart from other major powers.

The Open-Door worldview presupposed the existence of a natural liberal land, such as the United States and other similar nations that oppose closed-door nations. Invariably, America aimed to civilize such nations.²¹ This role conception of a civilizer state conforms to the evolving self-image of the United States from being an

¹⁷ Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth, 2012, 2013, pp. 7–51; Nye, 1995, pp. 90–102.

¹⁸ MacDonald and Parent, 2011, pp. 7–44; Posen, 2007, pp. 7–17; Sapolsky, 1997, 5–48.

¹⁹ For a more sophisticated trajectories, see Cameron G. Thies 2013; David Campbell 1992.

²⁰ Bastiaan van Apeldoorn and Naná de Graaff June 22, 2012, p. 7.

²¹ Peter Van Ness 1985.

isolationist before World War I to a world police force after World War II and finally to a globalizer after the Cold War. The transformation of its national role is based on its own judgment of having a high capacity and a high degree of civilization. These combined dimensions allowed the US to reduce the rest of the world into contrasting national roles according to their convertibility and their capacity relative to the US.²² The determination to spread the value system and build a world order that befits such a value system is a consistent and powerful driver in U.S. foreign policy. There has been much variance across different Presidents, but the style embedded in the identity-based role conception remains throughout.

The NSC-68 documented the beginning of the Cold War and aggressively aimed at checking and preventing the perceived Soviet Union's plan for world domination.²³ The US assumed the role of a world police. Kremlin was regarded by Washington as the external evil/enemy (i.e., communism vs. anti-communism).²⁴ Washington's competition with the Kremlin was described as a "clash of two world systems, each out to build a world order of its own."²⁵ In the late 1960s, President Nixon decided that the losses that the US suffered during the Vietnam War required pulling the American army from the mire of Vietnam War. Rapprochement with communist China became the key elements of the grand strategy of the Nixon administration.²⁶ Unilaterally, the US adopted a different route map to contrive and enforce realignment strategy to substitute peaceful transformation for arms race, but the grand strategy was based upon the same liberal identity.

The end of the Cold War brought another round of power reassessment and prompted Washington to redesign its grand strategy. In light of the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Washington redefined its role as the globalizer. The Clinton administration pursued this role more aggressively than its predecessors by establishing a liberal capitalist world order and by spreading US-led globalization.²⁷ The self-centric nature of this American role as globalizer resulted in its habitual use of sanctions, the dichotomization of the world into liberal states and others, and the lack of patience. The Clinton administration adopted the National Security Strategy (NSS), which was supported by strong military might and the implementation of liberal interventionism. Intervention with coercive means was the tool adopted by Washington to punish states that reject the American world order. Such states were also defined as "externalization of evils," and the US assumed the responsibility of

²² For a detailed analysis, see Martha L. Cottam 1986.

²³ Trachtenberg 1999, p. 33.

²⁴ Dan Caldwell 2009, pp. 634-635.

²⁵ Quoted by Trachtenberg 1999, p. 36.

²⁶ Caldwell 2009, pp. 634-635.

²⁷ Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2012, p. 9.

transforming these rogue states through enforced changes in regime.²⁸ The NSS is a multilateral frame to enhance the legitimacy of intervention intended to create a safer international environment that can protect and pursue American national interests.²⁹ Such a multilateral frame does not change the reliance on the US' own liberal identity to decide the ideal world order.

The 9/11 broke the design of the NSS but, not the dichotomizing style, which underlined the Manichean role conception wherein other states are either with the US or against the US.³⁰ This event impelled President Bush Jr. to reinforce altercasting and highlight the American identity by contrasting the role of the United States with the evil Fundamentalist terrorists. The war on terror was the main theme of the grand strategy of the Bush administration; coercion over consent was the major means to attain the goal of such a grand strategy.³¹ Barack Obama followed the same style of determining the role of the US, which is based exclusively on its own judgment. He developed a grand strategy based on moderate internationalism by focusing on cooperation and engagement. Nevertheless, no attempt was made to negotiate with allies or non-allies regarding their roles. The counterattack caused by the expansion of US power compelled Washington to reconsider its means of implementing its grand strategy.³² Obama even rehashed the ancient arguments for a just war, the criterion of which is not subject to negotiation. Thus, his Rebalancing Policy toward Asia emerged to form the pillar of the new round of grand strategy along with an attempt to form a circle of universal values,³³ strengthening the self-role of US in the construction of a liberal order in East Asia.³⁴

The conceptualization of the American grand strategy is consistent with Christian doctrine, which emphasizes certain standards of truth and universal morality and focuses on the binary values of good and evil. Based on the judgment of its relative power, Washington designed its grand strategy and manipulated with initiative and assertion. When designing the grand strategy, America has a precise definition of who its enemies or rivals are. This identity-based role conception ensures that the American grand strategy always focuses on picking an enemy outside the ring of democratic states and the market system.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

²⁹ John G. Ikenberry 2000, pp. 103-126.

³⁰ George Bush Jr. September 20, 2001

<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

³¹ Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2012, p. 11.

³² G. John Ikenberry January/February, 2010,

<http://www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=760>.

³³ Alliance of democracy, for example, shall include India from the south, through Taiwan, to Japan at the northeast, and Mongolia perhaps.

³⁴ Mark E. Manyin, Stephen Daggett, Ben Dolven, Susan V. Lawrence, Michael Martin, Ronald O'Rourke, and Bruce Vaughn, March 28, 2012, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42448.pdf>.

THE CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY STYLE

Based on the literature on Chinese social relationship and roles,³⁵ we suggest that the conceptualization of the Chinese grand strategy emerges from a relationship-based role conception. Relationality is an ontological component of international relations and is, therefore, a systemic necessity according to the advocates of the Chinese school of international relations.³⁶ We adopt a minimal approach in the following discussion by treating relationality as an ideal role consciously applied by the Chinese leaders in their strategic calculus. A relationship-based role primarily involves bilateral relationships, which involve negotiations between China and a specific partner. It constrains China's performance in the multilateral setting because the rules that enforce multilateral rules risk violating the spirit of reciprocity and mutuality, which are essential to relational security. Under the multilateral setting, China often brings forth arguments of how and why a certain rule is not appropriate for specific national or regional conditions. Therefore, China should adapt to each context to reiterate the principle that differences in national conditions should never lead to any problems in its existing relationships with other nations. Particular bilateral relationships should evolve into a distinct pattern over time. Moreover, bilateral relationships in different sites require different arrangements. As a result, the Chinese grand strategy has no consistent values or universal order other than stabilizing a relationship with each specific other. This indicates that China does not expect another nation to promote any universal form of morality. Confrontation usually arises from Chinese foreign policy upon the pretext of being betrayed rather than a just order or universal value being violated.

No comprehensive values complement Chinese rhetoric on a harmonious world. Chinese scholars who are acquainted with the logic of the grand strategy are perplexed at China's reluctance to develop a grand strategy, which scholars believe should involve an effort to modify the environment rather than just adapting to it.³⁷ In practice, however, China has rarely adopted a self-identity with respect to the rest of the world unless its goal is to achieve the lofty image in a multilateral setting. The American grand strategy would compel China to examine other states abiding by a certain fixed principle that would be tantamount to ruining the reciprocity between China and those who possess opposing values. Singh pointed out this focus on

³⁵ Thomas Gold, Douglas Guthrie, and David Wank 2002; Kwang Kuo Hwang 2011.

³⁶ Qin, 2009.

³⁷ Hao Yufan September 17, 2010, <http://world.people.com.cn/BIG5/12757519.html>; Xin Lijian April 2, 2013, <http://www.my1510.cn/article.php?id=95604>.

bilateral relationship in Chinese foreign policy,³⁸ a style that made the Chinese grand strategy appear inconsistent and obscure.³⁹

Avery Goldstein believes that China understands grand strategy. However, Goldstein suggested that the trends and themes in China's grand strategies could only be understood through a long-term observation of the Chinese leaders' policy making process. In particular, how policy makers make decisions about foreign policy, and how these decisions reflect China's logic in terms of the distribution of military, political, and economic resources should be considered.⁴⁰ Goldstein further maintained that China does not follow the pattern of these revisionist rising powers such as Nazi Germany or pre-war militarist Japan. He found, after the Cold War, China's grand strategy design shifted toward building national power and "cultivating international partners."⁴¹ Goldstein's observation revealed the responsive and defensive nature of China's grand strategy style. David Lampton indirectly echoed Goldstein by cautioning against any expedient analysis based purely on China's capacity, which ignores the intentions of Chinese foreign policy.⁴²

Critical Chinese scholars often consider China's grand strategy problematic, if not awkward. The current debate about China's grand strategy stems from the frustration and difficulties China has encountered in its development process. The debate was further exacerbated when China became involved in several territorial disputes with its neighboring countries. Some Chinese scholars criticized Beijing's lack of efficient approach and resolute attitude in confronting other states. Consequently, China could become a super power without substantial influence and voice in important global issues. For example, Lin argued that the lack of efficient and effective methods to solve the disputes in sovereignty over some islets has been a chronic problem for China. Moreover, China has never developed a productive way of governance over the ocean because of the long-term negligence of the Chinese government. Furthermore, Lin opined that China could only assume an actual grand strategy by strengthening marine power and by constructing a sound method of governing the oceans.⁴³

Several Chinese scholars have appealed for a more assertive grand strategy. They maintained that the relatively weak and inefficient reaction of China toward the crises in both the South China Sea and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island was due to the lack of

³⁸ Swaran Singh interviewed by Tang Lu, <http://mil.eastday.com/eastday/mil/node3510/userobject1ai757527.html> .

³⁹ China thus has a "strategy of transition," which means such grand strategy is something still in process. Goldstein 2005, pp. 19-20; 30; also see Tang and Zhang 2005.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴² David Lampton 1997, pp. 120-140. Also see Michael Swaine 1995; Kenneth Liberthal 2007.

⁴³ Lin Hongyu 2012.

grand strategy.⁴⁴ Most scholars believe that China should learn from the Western great powers and develop a defensive-oriented grand strategy to strengthen its marine force. They emphasized that strengthening China's marine force does not aim to dominate over the ocean, but rather establishes a grand strategy by focusing on marine force. This emphasis intends to protect China's national interests by defending the sovereign rights over the disputable seas and by exploiting the marine resources that can significantly support further economic development of China.⁴⁵

The complaint of the Chinese scholars essentially focuses on the fact that the rise of China does not conceptually change the defensive tone of Chinese foreign policy as they have initially hoped. Recent literature on status recognition describes the range of bilateral relationships with the US, which can be sought by China. Based on the literature, China has three options, namely, improving performance on US-guided values, competing with the US, and raising substituting values for liberalism.⁴⁶ China has virtually attempted all three options by joining the WTO, confronting the US in East Asia, and stressing national differences. However, the national difference to which China consistently and adamantly adheres is, at best, a peculiar value that does not provide any substantive rule of international society other than an attitude base toward defiant nations. This attitude has been referred to as the value of a harmonious world, which is embedded in a Middle Kingdom complex.

In fact, the notion of the Middle Kingdom has emerged along with the rise of China. Despite the rhetoric denial that China is pursuing the Middle Kingdom status, both government propaganda and policy statements consistently suggest the re-emergence of such an identity.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the defensive nature of Chinese foreign policy may also change. President Xi Jinping raises the ideal of the China Dream and declares that "We are closer than any other period of history to the goal of great revival of the Chinese nation."⁴⁸ The idea of China being in the middle of the world is apparent in his statement that "Not only should we understand China's history and culture, but also open our eyes to watch the world. We want to understand different nations' history and culture, remove the unwanted elements in them, and take the top of their cream."⁴⁹ The President then announces, "Those who know us are within the seas, and the brink of heaven feels like next-door neighborhood."⁵⁰ This statement also enables the President to hope that "We turn the opportunities of

⁴⁴ Yan Xuetong, in a lecture he gave in National Chengchi University in March 2013.

⁴⁵ Cao Ruichen 2011; Lin Limin 2012.

⁴⁶ Larson and Shevchenko, 2010, pp. 70–76.

⁴⁷ Yoon, 2014.

⁴⁸ Xi, 2013.

⁴⁹ Xi, 2013.

⁵⁰ Xi, 2013.

the world into China's opportunities and China's opportunities to those of the world." The Central Party School explains:

The distinctive substance and characteristics of the China Dream is known to the world... In the evolution of history, the breadth and depth of the Chinese traditional culture are formed. The Chinese traditional culture praises perpetual self-strengthening and deep virtue to accommodate varieties. It simultaneously advocates everyone owning all under-heaven in order for all under-heaven to reach great harmony... The practice and achievement of the China Dream will lead different civilizations in the world to appreciate their own beauty as well as the beauty of others, actively contributing to Great Harmony, where all civilizations come together to appreciate all differing beauties.⁵¹

Despite the implicit Middle Kingdom and the explicit Harmonious World speak of Xi's national identity as well as China's relational role in the world, the policy implications are consistently relational and devoid of universal rules; hence, the continuation of the defensive stance. First of all, no development of institutional value or policy program has been initiated for the rest of the world to follow. On the contrary, there exists self-consciousness to not attempt any universal guidance. When expounding the foreign policy implications of the China Dream, Foreign Minister Wang Yi reminds that "China has never been as close to the center of the world stage as it is today" and that China's relationships with surrounding nations rely on "tens of thousands of differing connections in humanity and a spontaneous feeling of affinity,"⁵² in which he specifically mentions Confucianism in East Asia and Buddhism in South Asia. Wang Yi mindfully refers to the special privileges that China has willingly arranged for ASEAN countries. National Minister and former Foreign Minister and Chinese Ambassador to the US Yang Jiechi further explains the China Dream by specifically referring to equal and mutually respectful bilateralism as the vehicle with which to undertake conflict resolution,⁵³ be it the territorial dispute (with a weaker party) or the discussion on human rights (with the stronger US).

Once in a multilateral context, relational role playing requires China to exclusively stress the contribution of the so-called "China Dream," as former Foreign Minister Wu Jianmin maintains. According to Wu, only by sharing China's economic development with the world would the rest of the world willingly cooperate with China.⁵⁴ The aim of alternative relational role-playing under the multilateral frame would be to protect national differences while considering global rules. Relational

⁵¹ Central Party School Research Center for Socialist Theory with Chinese Characteristics, 2014.

⁵² Wang, 2013, p.16.

⁵³ Yang, 2013.

⁵⁴ Wu, 2013.

role-playing values national differences; hence, China must not commit to any policy that intends to convert a locally held national interest conception into a global value. Presumably, such relational role-playing justifies China's own defensive attitude toward the intervention of global rules in Chinese affairs.

One example is China's boycott of the major power consensus on the distribution of responsibility to control and reduce carbon emission in the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change 2009. At that time, the Chinese delegates were generally absent during the plenary sessions, but were intensively involved in bilateral talks. China particularly stressed that the leeway allowed the developing countries to voluntarily decide the level of cut, and yet emphasized the historical damage done by the same developed countries.⁵⁵ In another example, China has been consistently reserved about the UN intervention in failing states on the basis of humanitarianism, as long as the consent of the local regime is not acquired in advance.

The defensive characteristics of Chinese grand strategy could be traced to the era of imperial China. For example, a historical approach assumes that the classic Chinese grand strategy prefers a "low violence" style. Although China conquered other nations through force,⁵⁶ the ancient Chinese grand strategy of developing and maintaining military power might be restrained from overusing force.⁵⁷ The construction of an amicable international environment beneficial to China's progress has always been the main theme of Beijing's grand strategy discourse.⁵⁸ Hence, modern China follows a grand strategy culture which is responsive and defense-oriented but not always peaceful. This responsive characteristic is supported by the emergent refocusing of Chinese foreign policy on the protection of core national interests.⁵⁹ However, aforementioned critics have argued that these adjustments are insufficient.⁶⁰

A defensive grand strategy focused on the core national interests is a step ahead of the relationship-based role, which implies that relationship becomes merely a functional concern. The popularity of the discussion on core national interests in the current century enhances the instrumentality of the ideal of the harmonious world. The appeal to core national interest could reflect a new style of role conception, namely, identity-based. China is intrinsically a distinctive national entity in this interest, with a quality that is not shareable with others. By contrast, as Qin has argued, relationship-based identity involves an ontological statement.⁶¹ According to this ontological sensibility, China's self-fulfillment is complete only when all-round

⁵⁵ John Watts 2009.

⁵⁶ For a detailed account of China's realist calculus, see Alastair Iain Johnston 1998.

⁵⁷ Zhu Zhongbo 2011, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Goldstein 2005, pp. 20-26, 177-180; Wang, Jisi 2011.

⁵⁹ Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell 2012; Wang, Jisi 2011.

⁶⁰ Lian Ma 2013.

⁶¹ Qin Yaqing 2009.

reciprocal mutuality is achieved with all different others. Emphasizing the core national interests estranges China from mutuality. However, we will show later how the core national interests are pretentious and the purpose of listing core national interests remain part of grand strategy embedded in relational thinking.

Core National Interests That Are Not Core

We have been arguing that the establishment and implementation of grand strategy, instead of the contents of the core national interests, are factors that influence peace and conflict in international relations. However, the notion of core national interests seems to have occupied China's diplomatic discourse in the 21st century. In light that core national interests should transcend any bilateral context, the question to ask is therefore whether or not China is switching to an identity-based role style? In the following, we will explain why for China the notion of core national interests is still a means to govern bilateral relationship.

China's determination to grasp the "period of strategic opportunities" (*zhanlue jiyu qi*) has been the official party line since the 16th Party Congress in 2002.⁶² These opportunities, which were provided by the decline of the US, include globalization, return of Hong Kong, and smooth power transition to the fourth generation leadership. The new rhetoric wishes China to grow peacefully into a great, or the greatest, power in the world.⁶³ This pursuit of strength and wealth was included a decade later in the Chinese Dream in terms of "national wealth and strength" announced by Xi Jinping in 2012.⁶⁴ Given that the dream is not an idea of global order, China still has no prepared plan to convert the world into any ideal type. Rather, the country is compelled to cope with each nation, given the imperative to create an environment that will be greatly affected by China's rise. Hoping to form "life communities" (*mingyun gongtongti*) with each of its neighbors, China could either lure other nations into its grand development via China's contribution to them or persuade them not to hinder such development.⁶⁵

Thus, bilateral diplomacy is the proper focus for China in its attempt to become allies with the world divided by national interests because of the exemption of bilateralism from linear historiography or duties of global governance. China's official white papers on peace and development do not adopt the term "all countries" when referring to the world at large. Instead, it always uses "each country" (*ge guo*)

⁶² Ye Zicheng 2011, p. 69.

⁶³ Wang Guangya 2006, 16-17.

⁶⁴ Xinhua Net 2012. http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2012-11/30/c_124026690.htm

⁶⁵ To connect China dream to the dream of each country in the world is the message conveyed by the Chinese official channels. For example, see Wang Yiwei January 14, 2014, http://theory.gmw.cn/2014-01/14/content_10107474.htm

when explaining them in China's foreign policy,⁶⁶ because each country is different in various ways. This emphasis pertains specifically to China's undeclared preference for bilateralism. While the notion of strategic opportunities in China is similar to the American grand strategy thinking, the purpose of China is to demonstrate a self-restraining role in exchange for other countries' acceptance of its progress. No country is required to adapt to China's rise. The Chinese terminology of its national role is specifically "a responsible major power" (*yige fuzeren de da guo*)⁶⁷ The official Chinese interpretation of being responsible is "handling our own affairs well" (*ba ziji shiqing zuo hao*). This perspective is expected to be imbibed by other countries in regard to handling well their own affairs.⁶⁸

Two strategic options are available to other nations. Other nations could change their value or institution to improve their suitability in compliance with China's national role conceptions. This kind of altercasting is called "change perspective." By contrast, other nations should be flexible in determining their own values or institutions when coping with China's rise, as long as a presumably reciprocal and stable relationship with China obtains confidence from both sides. This option is called the "leeway perspective." The former reflects an interventionary self-identity that requests others to comply,⁶⁹ whereas the latter originates in a restrained self-identity that highlights how China should adapt to the conditions of the interacting party.⁷⁰ The leeway perspective adopts a kind of soft altercasting in comparison with the change perspective. In the leeway perspective, China continues to have high expectations for the other side to transcend differences in value, institution, ethnicity, ideology, alliance and other national traits, which allow China to feel secure and certain in stable reciprocity. In allowing leeway to accommodate their otherwise estranging differences, peculiarity usually exists in the bilateral arrangements required for the establishment of confidence between two sides. However, China is ready to resort to confrontation if such differences threaten to deny their role playing. Whereas the change perspective typically targets political, ideological and institutional reforms, the leeway perspective finds satisfaction in ritual and cultural exchange as well as in symbolic concession or sanction.

Adopting the "change perspective" involves the power to enforce adaptations and the direction the adaptation should take. Even a hegemonic power that guards the status quo may request a change in the other's value or institution in order to reinforce its reign or contain potential challenges. China is alerted for any such interventionary

⁶⁶ Xinhua Net 2011. http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2011-09/06/c_121982103.htm

⁶⁷ Rosemary Foot 2001; Xia Liping 2003, pp. 70-77.

⁶⁸ Chih-yu Shih and Chiung-chiu Huang 2013.

⁶⁹ For example, the perception that the rise of China will force the United States out of Asia is a typical practice of altercasting (see Freiberg, 2012a).

⁷⁰ One representative view is that of Zhao, 2009, pp. 5-18.

hegemony to prevent the spontaneity of other nations from appealing to their own identity-based role or promoting their differences.

Hence, China would have to test the other side whenever signs that relational reciprocity is under threat. To ascertain whether such a threat is being formed, China consistently looks at how national differences are respected in dealing with the US or international organizations. In facing a weaker power along the borders, China resorts to testing and warning. In reality, China's relational role-playing often fails to fully convey its message, thus defying the purpose of sociological role-playing. Miscommunication of this sort could even lead to war, as was the case during the Sino-Indian border clashes in 1962 and the Sino-Soviet clashes in 1969.⁷¹

China's bilateralism is rife with distrust toward its neighbors from its altercasting policy. The process of escalation develops in several sequences according to critical watchers.⁷²

1. Beijing unilaterally compromises on a certain point involving national interests (sometimes core interests) to demonstrate its willingness to create a harmonious bilateral relationship. This move implicitly imposes a duty on the other party not to push further on the issue.

2. In response to the short-term compromise, the other party neither refuses nor accepts (and possibly does not even comprehend) its responsibility to reciprocate.

3. Beijing unilaterally perceives that the two sides have achieved a harmonious greater self, adapts accordingly, and occasionally seeks reconfirmation from the other side.

4. The other party's external and internal politics compel it to publicly express its non-compliance with China's unilateral role expectations.

5. Beijing loses face, reacts strongly and negatively, and presents its self-perceived restraint as justification for imposing sanctions, which are often symbolic at first.

6. The other party views Beijing's symbolic sanctions as a confirmation of its malicious intentions, thus fulfilling the prophecy that the latter would eventually be betrayed.

In any case, the relational role concept should not stress the contents of China's differing core national interest. Given that all nations are different to some extent in their ideologies, China's long-held pledge of peaceful coexistence evolves primarily upon how nations deal with differences rather than how different they are from one another. Chinese grand strategy proceeds from the choice between the use and nonuse of coercion instead of the value that the coercion should enforce. For example, these

⁷¹ Tien-sze Fang 2014; ; Richard Wich 1980.

⁷² Chih-yu Shih and Jiwu Yin, 2013, pp. 59–84.

white papers include territorial security, sovereignty, economic development, political stability, and socialist values as core national interests. They are not unusual, despite other nations may dislike socialism. However, China and the US are faulted at being civilizing nations, which inadvertently look down upon other nations and seek to rectify them in accordance with their own identity-based role. The civilizing intents and actions, a matter of style, seriously affect international relations much more than whether or not they represent socialism or liberalism.

China's style of self-role conception on how to interact with others is intrinsic to China's expectation of the latter to adopt the change or the leeway approach. This makes it less relevant to consider the level of power, which is the judgment on a country's relative power that affects how the two options function in the target country. Given that the self-role of China is relational, silence or neutrality between local factions could be observed toward remote conflicts regardless of their apparent risks to humanity. Non-intervention can be expected even though China may possess the power leverage. This observation is shown in Beijing's response to various noticeable instances in Africa and Middle East. However, symbolic infringements on reciprocal respect may ironically cause its disproportionate retaliation. This phenomenon echoes China's approach to the maritime dispute over the South China Sea, where China intermittently demands a change in policy by the Philippines or Vietnam, but not their value or institution. China's retaliation is often resolute and yet symbolic in order for the bilateral talk to resume and the sovereignty issue to be deferred.⁷³ In fact, unilateral withdrawal has been a noticeable trait in the Chinese style of conflict and conflict resolution.⁷⁴

On the other hands, China's relational sensibility allows its weaker opponent to resort to resistance. North Korea and Taiwan used to act tenaciously in the anticipation of making-up from China.⁷⁵ Thus, whether or not China achieves a reciprocal relationship over time depends on the judgment of Chinese leaders of the country's manipulation of the other side. In the same vein, China could resort to resistance to its stronger opponent but never really demand a change in the latter's value or institution. That is to say, evaluation of power difference or value difference is not the cause of the Chinese leaders' adoption of confrontation and counter-confrontation. Only after they decide to confront, these policy makers design the means according to the disparity of power between China and its opponent.

The leeway approach does not consider any serious threat from a target rising in power, but still practices opposite values. The threat could be greater than another

⁷³ Michael D. Swaine and M. Taylor Fravel 2011, pp.1-29.

⁷⁴ Steve Chan 1978.

⁷⁵ For case studies embedded in historical sensibilities, see Jae Ho Chung and Myung-hae Choi 2013, 243-264; Richard C. Bush 2013.

nation even if both comply with the same value system and defies reciprocal responsibility. Vietnam and China have disputed over many an issue, for example, from two thousand years ago through today regardless of the asymmetric power or similar political economic conditions between them.⁷⁶ The adoption by the other party of the leeway approach that disregards the differences in values and ideologies indicates China's adherence to relational role playing. China wishes other nations do not need to determine China's assertion of core interest as a threat to their values. This disregard for the formation of global value could cause discomfort on identity-based thinkers who convert the wrong into the right in the name of global value. These identity-based thinkers likewise ambiguously perceive China as a hidden realist's intent to establish alliance with the wrongdoers. However, Chinese foreign policy is consistent in its negligence of ideological difference, which shows lukewarm interests in strategic alliance to protect socialist values.⁷⁷ On the contrary, Chinese national leaders are constantly on the road to secure each bilateral relationship especially in Africa and Southeast Asia where no other nations visit as frequently and systematically. For example, Chinese Foreign Ministers have visited Africa virtually every years. All Chinese Foreign Ministers have been to Sri Lanka, for another example.

Despite the list of core interests in familiar realist terms and implicitly with a nationalist tone, the white papers have strong non-identity-based context that breeds China's unfailing preference for the leeway perspective.⁷⁸ China has rarely taken sides in the global politics beyond the skin-deep denouncement of the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, including the era of Maoism. The 9th Party Congress in April 1969 actually praised China for its non-alliance, while simultaneously confronting both superpowers. Mao's characterization of the world on the eve of the establishment of the PRC, as divided by the two camps and the intermediate zone, was more characteristic of the Chinese grand strategy style. China's active participation in the non-alignment movement in the 1950s, which later extended through the three-world policy in the 1970s and to its equidistant diplomacy in the 1980s, demonstrates a conscious preference for contextualized, though inconsistent, reciprocal relationship.

Unconventional China has no route map if all the rising powers have a grand strategy to rectify world order. Deng Xiaoping's witty "cover light and nurture in the dark" (*tao guang yang hui*) advice in the 1990s reflects similar wisdom that China should not trap itself in trouble areas. Deng's legacy has repeatedly inspired

⁷⁶ Brantly Womack 2006.

⁷⁷ Representatives of such value alliance include Freedom Alliance, WARSAW Pact, the NATO, and so on.

⁷⁸ See N.A. 1969, 187–189.

contemporary leaders. The climax was Hu Jintao's establishment of the "harmonious world" as China's ideal world that wishfully recombines Confucianism and Socialism in one slogan. In this concept of the world, values, institutions, and ideologies are secondary to reciprocal relationships among nations. On the eve of the turnover to the fifth generation leaders in 2012, China denounced the rise of new interventionism in the world.⁷⁹ Intervention is anathema to the adherent of the leeway approach. China always believes that such incidents are vehicles of other major powers' abusing their advantage. In the same vein, Xi Jinping, upon succeeding Hu's leadership, further raises the idea of "life community" to cope with neighboring relationship.⁸⁰

The image of compliance is important to the protection of China's self-perceived difference in value and institution. The foremost challenge to China's relational-based role playing is the image of the country's threat and the competition for hegemonic leadership against the United States. China's grand strategy does not include converting the United States to accept the Communist party rule. The Chinese grand strategy focuses on demonstrating China and United States not confronting each other, hence a modest goal by any grand strategy goal. Indeed, the whole idea of listing the core national interests is to help the United States maintain a reciprocal relationship with China. Nevertheless, these interests are negotiable to the extent that the image of reciprocal role playing can be secured as perceived by the world. To forge a reciprocal relationship with the United States, China's core national interests are composed in Chinese terms, "the new type of major power relationship."⁸¹ A bilateral relationship with the United States has thus become one of the major themes of the current Chinese grand strategy.

China's concession on core national interests has numerous examples. They suggest that the purpose of expanding the list of core national interests is to make subsequent concession dramatic to compel others to stabilize reciprocal relationship for at least a period, hence the Chinese style of altercasting. However, even in those cases where China is on the powerful side and unilaterally imposes concessions, relational security still relies on the weaker side to reciprocate. China has accordingly tolerated ambiguities along its disputed borders or even granted land to smaller neighbors, such as North Korea, Burma, and others. The white papers speak triumphantly on resolving territorial disputes with 12 neighboring countries separately, which China alleges is a clear indicator of a harmonious world where no one's core interests are under threat. Therefore, ironically, promoting the image of the harmonious world could reversely override the core interests of territorial integrity.

⁷⁹ Hu, Jintao 2012, http://www.china.org.cn/china/18th_cpc_congress/2012-11/16/content_27137540_11.htm

⁸⁰ Xi Jinping 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-10/25/c_117878944.htm

⁸¹ Xi Jinping July 2013.

No other case is likely more peculiar and apparent than the issue of US arm sales to Taiwan--the identity-based role, that undergird the core national interest discourse, is no more than a vehicle to achieving the wish for relationship-based role in which China would never be treated as a threat.

Case of U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan

The improvement, preservation, and restoration of bilateral relationship comprise the official theme of the Chinese grand strategy. This theme is a product of the enactment of China's role as partner. To prove this partnership, China would save its core national interests to confirm China's concern about bilateral relationship in certain circumstances. For example, China-U.S. relations show that "core national interests" has been a term with many controversies and ironies. China would peculiarly highlight its core national interests to inform Washington of its bottom line and save the bilateral relationship from damage. China could acquiesce on core national interests and put aside the contradiction between words and deed to compromise and show sincerity. These measures could maintain or improve this bilateral relationship.

We argue that the importance of maintaining a stable relationship with the US has trumped China's core national interest of unification, pertaining to the US' arms sales to Taiwan. Arms sales not only threaten China's security, but more importantly, infringe upon its claimed sovereignty. Note that sovereignty has been the sole principle invoked by China to defend national differences everywhere in the world. In fact, the Taiwan issue is unambiguously on the list of China's core national interests. With the rise of China, status recognition is increasingly becoming a salient issue. Arms sales infringing upon its sovereignty compounds China's poor bilateral relationship with the US. This is the main reason why China's cyclical loosening-up on the issue of arms sale is a case worthy of further attention.

In practice, China treats arms sales as a bilateral issue. China could have simply raised the universal rule that arms sales to citizens of other countries should, by all means, be a violation of sovereign rights. However, it has never taken such action. Instead, China has painstakingly and repeatedly pressured each US president on the same issue, while also compromising its position each time. In other words, China would rather appeal to sociological role expectation through a bilateral convention than through any general value. On the contrary, despite the willingness of the US to cope with China in an exclusively bilateral format, the former has always tried to push China to accept universal rules at the expense of the alleged national differences between the two countries, thereby defeating the sociological role expectation.

Although Xi has successfully imposed the sociological notion of a “new model of major power relationship” on the US, the US undermines the model by treating it as the mechanism of conditioning the newcomer into being a responsible follower of existing rules of international relations, which are led principally by the US.

The US arm sales to Taiwan, which China claims part of its territory, which is one of the most crucial national interests of China, is a major irony in the China-US relations indeed. US partially consent to China’s position. Taiwan used to be a US partner in the latter’s containment of China. In this context, the US arm sales to Taiwan have been an issue since the beginning of the Sino-US normalization in 1979. To normalize this bilateral relationship, China insisted on the one-China principle. Note that normalization did not take place in the heyday of Sino-Soviet rift, but on the eve of reform, which called for rectification of relationship with the capitalist world. However, China tolerated the continuation of arm sales upon the termination of the mutual defense treaty between the US and Taiwan in 1980. By contrast, the country immediately ended the symbolic bombardment, which had been a problem throughout the past two decades over the offshore islands. China undertook such decision to honor its pledge for peaceful unification, the policy that has prevailed since normalization. The continued sales might indicate China’s seemingly compromising attitude toward the issue. Later in 1982, the country engaged in a joint communiqué, in which the US promised to reduce gradually its arm sales to Taiwan. The US was not ready to implement the communiqué considering that the Taiwan Relations Act requests supply of arms to Taiwan to meet its security needs, which have intensified in quantity or quality over time.

China’s progress in the 21st century has faced the unwanted image of China threat, which China’s claim of Taiwan ironically reinforces. The first major attempt of China was to formulate bilateral relationship as one of the measures for “strategic partnership,” whereas the emerging conceptualization is to develop a “new model of major power relationship.” During Xi Jinping’s first visit to the US as president, he encountered and was introduced to different issues concerning global governance. Such issues were presented by his counterpart President Obama. The US prepared answers to all the global issues, such as anti-proliferation, human rights, and internet security among others. By contrast, the long standing issue of arm sales to Taiwan, and the problems concerning Tibet and Xinjiang, was on Xi’s list, requiring mutual attention. No bilateral discussion is available in the discursive repertoire of the US. The understanding on the arm sales in the US has been either self-centric, which means that it abides by the domestic Taiwan Relations Act, or multilateral, which means that it is balanced between China and Taiwan. The perception in the US is that

China deliberately uses the issue for symbolic and harassment purposes.⁸² This perception explains why the US offers no more than lip services to the arms sale issue for China to get off hook.

Did the US underestimate the arms sales issue? China's protest halted scheduled military exchanges. However, this type of impediment rarely lasts for more than a few months. The first postponement was in October 2008 in response to the arm sales to Taiwan scheduled on the eve of the first visit of the highest official of the Taiwan Affairs from China to Taiwan. However, military exchanges were resumed on February 2009. The message regarding the resumption first emerged on December 2008. The second suspension was in response to another arm sales to Taiwan on January 2010, but the message of resumption was already reported by the media on September. The actual exchange heightened on the visit of the Secretary of Defense to China in January 2011. However, the third suspension was a relatively quiet cancellation of few scheduled exchanges on September 2011 as the sales arrived at the onset of the transition in China's leadership. At present, no one has seemed to take Chinese protests seriously over the arm sales in the US. Neither China nor the US can afford continuing exacerbation.

However, the angle taken by China is unambiguously bilateral and relational. Thus, evaluating it from an identity-based grand strategic perspective is impossible. No reference exists concerning the universalistic value of peace in China's criticism of arm sales. Global governance, justice, or even the notion of balance does not exist in this perception of the world. Instead, the available reference discusses about the damage done by the US when it aborted its alleged role obligations to the PRC. In 2008, the Chinese military was quoted as accusing the US of causing "four serious harms" (*sige yanzhong*) which predominantly refers to bilateral role expectations:

...seriously violate the solemn promise on the Taiwan issue; seriously betray the consensus reached between the national leaders of the two sides on China-U.S. relations; seriously contradict the expressed support of the US to the peaceful development of the cross-Straits relations; seriously disturb the military relationship between China and the United States.⁸³

In 2010, the concrete version of *sige yanzhong*, typically from the bilateral rather than multilateral perspective, was given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which stated:

⁸² Douglas H. Paal, "China: Reaction to Taiwan Arms Sales," January 31, 2010, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/01/31/china-reaction-to-taiwan-arms-sales/3zc7>

⁸³ Cited in Ni Eryan October 9, 2008, <http://paper.wenweipo.com/2008/10/09/WW0810090003.htm>.

...seriously harm China's core national interests; seriously harm China-US relations; seriously violate the three communiqués between China and the United States; seriously endanger China's national security.⁸⁴

The timing of Chinese resumption was equally revealing. The message regarding resumption was delivered after Obama was elected in 2008. However, the actual resumption happened after Obama's inauguration, which signaled a hope for a fresh relationship that could transcend the problematic record of the previous administration. In September 2009, the resumption coincided with the initiation of negotiations that later paved Hu Jintao's state visit to the United States. In January 2010, Secretary of Defense Gates's call to China was right before Hu's actual visit. These timings reflected China's exact obedience to the bilateral frame. China consistently expressed its disappointment and accused the United States of harming the country. The notion of hurting should distinguish and purportedly highlight China's wish to restore the correct relationship at the point of resumption. The coming to power of the Obama Administration was one obvious occasion, with the state visit by Hu Jintao as another.

Noticeably, Hu's symbolic state visit proceeded at the expense of China's core national interest, but Hu's visit in itself can never be an item on the list of core national interests. The theoretical implication is that those core national interests of China are neither universal, nor core. Rather, the cyclical suspension mainly intends to retain the seriousness of the relationship that is harmed, but the temporary compromise, together with its timing, is intended for a show of China's sacrifice and wish for restoration. Both arms sales and Hu's visit are relational issues and the latter was considered more salient than the former in 2011. This is the leeway approach that China wishes that the US can take and to reciprocate so that no side needs to face interference with its own value or institution by the other. The core national interests, if based on China's own identity, should rely more on the practice of change perspective by the US, but are never taken consistently as reflected in the practices concerning arms sales issue.

Conclusion

The differences between the types of role conception, namely, identity versus relationship based, have led the United States and China to diverse logic in designing grand strategies. The identity-based role perspective corresponds to the U.S. worldview, one important version used as an example in this paper is the "Open Door." This role has a profound influence on Washington's management of foreign relations

⁸⁴ N.A. September 22, 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2011-09/22/c_122069644.htm.

that seek to extend the American value system. Changing the international environment toward the U.S. model has always been the main goal of the U.S. grand strategy. Such strategy represents the change approach, which is contrary that of leeway. The leeway approach is usually adopted by actors who hold a relationship-based role perception.

Therefore, with regards the issue of the arms sales from the US to Taiwan, the preservation of Taipei's vital position involves altercasting, in which Taiwan is a liberalism base to be protected against China, which acts a threat to liberalism. On the one hand, maintaining such difference between China and Taiwan is of greater importance to the U.S. than improving the bilateral relationship with China. On the other hand, a similar Open Door theme was adopted in the design of U.S. grand strategy to manage the relations with other great powers. Moreover, the U.S. policy toward small states follows a similar line. Such Altercasting synchronizes the situation to benefit Washington's national interests and encourage the other side to accept and adopt the U.S. value system.

Instead of denying China's seeming lack of a grand strategy, we argue that The Chinese grand strategy uses a different style of altercasting, which always expects the other side to stick with a bilateral role to reciprocate respect for national differences on China's terms. The analysis of role style can explain why a rising power deliberately avoids focusing so much on employing an interventionary grand strategy. To rectify the world according to one's own identity is incompatible with the concerns for relational security that seek to stabilize international relations. The self-role expectation of being a responsible state rejects a scheme of grand strategy that would require China to challenge other rising powers, failing states, or transnational fundamentalists in accordance with any general rule. All general rules are believed to be self-centric products of the hegemonic power. A self-role expectation in the ideal state for China would be reflected if China neither causes problems nor increases the burden of other states. Positioning on behalf of a principle that emerged as one's identity is against relational security.

Accordingly, China has a grand strategy. China's goal is to restore its greatness, and the resulting grand strategy is to preserve national differences in international relations in the short run and keep the identity-based grand strategy of the United States from intervening in the value and institution of China and other countries. This requires the sacrifice of these core national interests at times. Chinese scholars who are experts in international relations theory are anxious that China does not seem to have an identity-based style of role conception. However, the typical schemes that interest them are more responsive than assertive. Even those who assert a stronger position on the maritime disputes with smaller neighbors do not have plans to change

their internal arrangements. Therefore, the relational-based role conception will continue to prevail in shaping the thinking of the Chinese grand strategy for an extended period regardless of China rising. In the long run, this would mean that only China could be the greatest nation, and yet the Chinese grand strategy should ensure that all other nations must benefit from China's greatness, each in their own different ways.

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