Unready Great Power in a Changing Global Order: China’s Strategy of Establishing A “New Type of Great Power Relationships” and Its Impact to Other Merging Powers*

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Abstract

Far from realists’ expectations about rising powers’ incentives to reshape international institutions, China has cautiously pursued global leadership on her way to becoming a great power. Since the 1980s, China has followed the low-profile strategy, which implies that hegemony is too costly for her to bear, and that it is much wiser for China not to procure global leadership.

Nevertheless, the United States’ rebalancing strategy has pushed China to adjust the traditional low-profile strategy into calls of establishing a new type of great power relationships with the United States and other great powers like Brazil in the Latin America.

This paper will first describe China’s self-evaluation concerning her power positing in the changing global power redistribution. Then, the goal and the content of China’s strategy of establishing a new type of great power relationships will be explored in the second part. How China manages to keep a relative peaceful environment for her power rising will constitute part three. The paper concludes that China is an unprepared world power with neither the intention to trigger the hegemonic transformation nor the capabilities to bear the costly task of global governance.

Keywords: Chinese Foreign Policy, Hegemony, Low-Profile Strategy, new type of great power relationships

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I. China and the Global Power Shifting

China’s rapid rise has triggered the process of global power redistribution, in which China, the United States, and regional states have suffered collectively from the uncertainty and anxiety triggered largely from China’s power build-up. Furthermore, intensifying conflicts of national core interests, regional leadership and regional institutional arrangements have driven Asia Pacific states and the rising China into a security dilemma haunted by mutual-distrust.

1.1 Hegemonic Confrontation in the Asia-Pacific?

China is now the global second largest economic entity and also a second largest military power according to her military expenditure. Assuming that China’s influence over the Asia-Pacific is a great danger to American leadership, the latter has taken ‘Rebalcining Policy’ to engage more actively and comprehensively with China. The new strategic guidance of the United States revealed in January 2012 regarded that China’s emergence as a regional power will have the potential to affect the United States economy and security in a variety of ways (Department of Defense, 2012a)

In the eyes of the United States, China is the main challenger who posed great military threat to her interests in the Asia Pacific. In 2012, the former Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta insisted that the United States will increase its institutional weight and focus on enhanced presence, power projection, and deterrence in Asia-Pacific (Department of Defense, 2012b) Since then, there is news that the United States will sign an agreement with Australia to rotate 2500 American troops in Australia and American will deploy littoral warships in Singapore. The United States’ strategic relationships with the Philippines and Vietnam are strengthening while the South China Sea dispute between the two latter and China has remerged again. In 2013, the United States defense department evaluated that as China’s military modernization has also become increasingly focused on investments in military capabilities to conduct a wider range of missions beyond its immediate territorial concerns, some of these missions and capabilities can address international security challenges, while others could serve more narrowly-defined PRC interests and objectives, including advancing territorial claims and building influence abroad (Department of Defense, 2013: i).
For the sake to maintain a peaceful environment for China’s national power build-up, China argued repeatedly that she has neither the intentions nor the capabilities to challenge the United States. For the purpose of easing international doubts about China’s national intentions, China has demonstrated that its national intentions are purely peaceful and defensive in nature. China has claimed that it will never seek hegemony, nor will it adopt the approach of military expansion in the present or in the future, no matter how its economy develops; on the other hand, China opposes resorting to the use or threat of force, acts of aggression, expansion, hegemony and power politics in any form (Information Office of the State Council, 2011). China claimed that the fundamental purpose Chinese armed forces modernization is to safeguard China's sovereignty, territorial integrity of vast land territory and sea area, and interests of national development (Information Office of the State Council, 2011). Chinese president Xi Jinping has announced in 2014 that China loves peace and will not pursue hegemony at his address for the conference marking the 60th anniversary of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (Xinhua, 2014).

Not surprising, the United States military forces have military supremacy over the People’s Liberation Army, however, it is doubtful that China’s peaceful signals can ease the tension as well as the strategic uncertainty between the United Stated and China. The United States, along with the majority of global society members, does not appreciate China’s peaceful development assurance.

1.2 Intensifying Regional Tensions

China’s strategic environment did not improve much with her claim of following the peaceful development strategy recent years. Insisting the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and the South China Sea composed of China’s core interests, China’s presence in these conflicting zones have raised tensions with her neighboring states.

Sino-Japanese tension over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands has risen since 2010. In September 2010, Japanese government reluctantly released a Chinese fishing boat captain who had been captured by Japanese Coast Gourds in the disputed waters of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, under the pressure that China had stopped her exportation of rare earth metals, which are essential to industrial manufacture, to Japan. In September of 2012, Japanese government’s decision to nationalize the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands provoked further tension among China, Taiwan, and Japan. While US-Japan Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty of 1960 claims that armed
attack against either Party in the territories under the Japanese administration would be dangerous to its own peace and safety, The Sino-Japanese military conflict over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands which is now under Japanese effective control might be a prelude of a hegemonic war between the United States and China.

China and Japan are in a vicious spiral of action-reaction over the East China Sea dispute. In response to Japan’s reaffirm to her claim over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and Japan’s sovereign rights over the disputed sea, China progressively demonstrated her military presence over the East China Sea. On November 23, 2013, China's Ministry of National Defense issued an announcement of the aircraft identification rules for the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) (Chinese Ministry of National Defense, 2013). Chinese authorities demand that aircraft flying in the East China Sea ADIA should report the flight plans to Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Civil Aviation Administration of China, maintain the two-way radio communications, and respond in a timely and accurate manner to the identification inquiries from the Chinese authorities. For aircrafts which do not cooperate in the identification or refuse to follow Chinese authorities’ instructions, China's armed forces will adopt defensive emergency measures (Chinese Ministry of National Defense, 2013).

Japanese government expressed immediately her deep concern about China’s establishment of such ADIZ, arguing that China’s ADIZ announcement has unilaterally change the status quo in the East China Sea, escalating the situation, and that may cause unintended consequences in the East China Sea (Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). Besides, Japan rejected China’s ADIZ delimitation over the airspace of Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands arguing that Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands are an inherent part of Japan’s territory (Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). Both the Chinese and Japanese Air Forces are on high alert to intercept the alien aircraft which are spotted of their own defined ADIZ. According to Japanese ministry of Defense, 287 Chinese aircrafts had been identified in Japanese ADIZ near the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Japan Joint Staff, 2014).

The United State urged China to ease the tension but she did not fully support Japan’s demand asking Chinese authorities to cancel the ADIZ over the East China Sea. Taking the opportunities of his visit to China, the United States vice-president Biden had express the United State’s attitude to China’s president Xi Jinping. Biden said that China's recent and sudden announcement of the establishment of a new Air Defense Identification Zone has caused significant apprehension in the region. He
said that he was very direct about the United States firm position and expectations in his conversations with President Xi. Biden urged Chinese president Xi took steps to reduce the risk of accidental conflict and miscalculation, and pursuing crisis management mechanisms and effective channels for communications with its neighbors (The White House, 2013). The United States Department of State said that the United States did not recognize China’s East China Sea ADIZ and did not accept it (U.S. Department of State, 2013), the spokesman of the U.S. Department of State vowed that China’s announcement of East China Sea ADIZ would not change how the U.S. conducts military operations in the region (U.S. Department of State, 2013).

The United States identified that China’s announcement of the East China Sea ADIZ was a provocative unilateral action that raises tensions in one of the world's most geopolitically sensitive areas, including territory administered by another state (U.S. Department of State, 2013). Furthermore, it clearly increases the risk of a dangerous miscalculation or accident that could escalate quickly and dangerously (U.S. Department of State, 2013). The United States Vice President Biden had expressed face to face to Chinese President Xi three points; firstly that the zone should not be implemented, secondly China should refrain from taking similar actions elsewhere in the region, and thirdly China should work with other countries, including Japan and South Korea, to establish confidence-building measures, including emergency communications channels, to address the dangers its recent announcement has created, and to immediately lower tensions (U.S. Department of State, 2013).

China disregards the United States quests of taking confidence building measures on the East China Sea dispute. The three demands that Biden urged in front of President Xi on December 4, 2013 were echoed with silence from the Chinese side. The Chinese ADIZ over the East China Sea is under way and there is nothing to deter China from changing her firm attitude over her rights in the East China Sea.

Apart from the East China Sea maritime dispute, tension over the Spratly islands on the South China Sea has never been decreased. ASEAN has failed to persuade China to conclude a legally binding agreement to constraint territorial claimer’s activities in the disputed zone of the Spratly islands in the South China Sea. On January first, 2014, China’s Hainan provincial restrictions asking foreign commercial fishermen must receive permission from the Chinese Government to fish. And again, the United States defined that China’s passing of these provincial government restrictions on other countries’ fishing activities in disputed portions of
the South China Sea is a provocative and potentially dangerous act (U.S. Department of State, 2014). The United States express her concerns over China’s unilateral action that raises tensions and undermines the prospects for a diplomatic or other peaceful resolution of differences (U.S. Department of State, 2014). But again, verbal condemn did not change China’s firm attitude toward her core interests over the disputed seas.

China has noticed that China’s strategic environment might be worsening while China is already ranked the second largest economic entity of the world. Along with the major diplomatic task to maintain good relationship with the United States, Chinese President Xi stressed the necessity of good diplomatic work in neighboring countries to realize the "centenary goals" set by the 18th CPC National Congress in November 2012 (Xinhua, 2013a). Xi instructed that Chinese foreign policy must strive to make her neighbors more friendly in politics, economically more closely tied to China, and China must have deeper security cooperation and closer people-to-people ties (Xinhua, 2013a). Xi emphasized that the basic tenet of diplomacy with neighbors is to treat them as friends and partners, to make them feel safe and to help them develop (Xinhua, 2013a).

Material incentives are major tools for Beijing to improve her relationships with her neighboring states. Xi urged that great efforts must be made towards win-win reciprocity, accurately identifying convergence points for cooperation; making use of China's advantages in economy, trade, technology, and finance; and actively taking part in regional economic cooperation (Xinhua, 2013a). Xi believed that China should work with its neighbors to hasten interconnectivity and establish a Silk Road economic belt and a maritime silk road for the 21st century and China should accelerate establishment of free trade zones, with neighbors as the foundation stone, expand trade and investment and create a new pattern of regional economic integration (Xinhua, 2013a). It seems that Xi convinced that material interests might change her neighbor’s original attitude towards the maritime dispute over the East China Sea and South China Sea. But the Philippines demand for an international arbitration to settle the South China Sea maritime dispute did not stopped. Furthermore, Vietnam claimed China’s oil platform in the Paracel Islands had violated her sovereign rights over the disputed water. Tension over the South China Sea continues and there is no sign that China will take appeasement measures to calm down the situation.
1.3 China’s Defiance to Western Norms

Domestically and ideologically, China is more emotionally isolated in the global society than ever. Although China’s material capabilities have greatly improved in the past decades, China is haunted by the China threat theory, which argues that the rise of an undemocratic China will pose a great threat, not only to the western world but also to global stability.

Somehow, China’s contemporary political systems are defined an integrate part of her core interests which could never be negotiated. The Chinese government has argued that state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity and national reunification, China’s political system established by the Constitution, overall social stability, and the basic safeguards for ensuring sustainable economic and social development are the core interests which China firmly upholds (Information Office of the State Council, 2011). Under the considerations to safeguard China’s core interests, it is doubtful that at what scope that China will accept foreign demands based on the universal values of liberalism.

China’s defiance to western liberal norms is the byproduct of China’s fear to American counterattack in term of soft power. In contrasting with the realist approach to balance Chinese uprising, liberal-institutionalism suggests the world could integrate China into the existing rule-based, institutionalized, and normative international system (Shambaugh, 1996: 181), whose main characters are based on the liberalism foundation. American rebalance strategy assumes that the United States leadership over the Asia-Pacific is on the affirmative attitude to defend the international rules and norms (Donilon, 2013). The United States also vowed to lead the rebalance in a way that constitutes a strong rule-based global order, grounded in respect for human rights, which enables durable economic prosperity and peace (Baer, 2013). For the Chinese government insisting to defend the core interests of communist party ruling, the United States demands to promote a rule-based global order with liberalist norms is absolutely contrary to her interests.

At the beginning of Xi Jinping’s presidency since 2013, Chinese Communist Party has launched a great campaign to denounce the western liberalism and its correlative political ideas like the constitutionalism and democracy. Officially and publically, Chinese authorities denounce the western political system. Yu Zhengsheng (俞正聲), newly elected chairman of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), argued at the closing meeting that
China “needs to more strictly follow the socialist path of political development with Chinese characteristics, not imitates Western political systems under any circumstances, always adheres to the correct political orientation” (Xinhua, 2013b). The horn of propaganda against the democratic political system is launched in the early spring of 2013.

Three steps were taken by the Chinese Communist Party on the ideological war against western soft power. Total block of discussing western political ideas is the first step. There is unofficial confirmed news saying that Mainland Chinese government has issued an order forbidding discussion of seven subjects—freedom of speech, judicial independence, universal values, civil society, civil rights and past mistakes of the party— in China’s universities (Li and Wan, 2013). Furthermore, Chinese Communist Party launched an ideological campaign to highly appreciate the party state system by denouncing the Constitutionalism and the so-called universal values. Qiushi, a policy-making and theoretical journal published by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, revealed since the June of 2013 signals that the realization of Chinese Dream shall fellow an exceptional Chinese way and not the western approach. First, the Chinese Communist Party argued that the ideological westernization will bring the Chinese Communist Party and the State of PRC into a vicious road, which shall ruin their future and career (Xia, 2013). Second, with assumption that hegemony promotes its values, Chinese communists criticized that some western countries are not satisfied with their leading position in the economical globalization, but also try to dominate the political globalization with their values (Yu, 2013).

Persisting that corruption is generated from the rotten western culture, Chinese communists argued that total westernization will bring China into the status of prisoner of war of the rotten western culture in terms of values and institutions (Yu, 2013), because total westernization is about to paralyze Chinese values with the excuse of universal values, to change China’s institutions, to shaken Chinese Communist Party’s theoretical guidance, and to twist the road that China has already chosen (Yu, 2013). Generally speaking, Beijing concludes westernization is a vicious way to destroy the Communist Party as well as China. Finally, Chinese Communists argued that Chinese culture is much more suitable to China than the western perspectives of democracy and constitutionalism. Chinese scholars argued that democracy is not universal values but regional perspectives which cannot compete with China’s profound culture of state governance (Su, 2013). A Chinese professor of Law indentified the constitutionalism is a product of capitalism and
bourgeois dictatorship (Yang, 2013). Therefore, for Chinese Communist Party that dedicates herself to protect the rights and interests for the whole Chinese people, the constitutionalism which guards only a small branch of people is not suitable for China at all (Yang, 2013). Chinese Communist Party identifies universal norms are vicious, rotten and harmful to the constitution of the Chinese Dream.

For external parties, any intervention in the name of respecting the normative principles which are not coherent with the “Chinese characteristics” might have limited effects. China is stronger, in terms of material power resources, than before. It means that the China possess more power resources to resist and/or bear foreign interventions.

II. China’s New Type of Great Power Relationships

With the guidance to forge a peaceful environment for China’s development, China has endeavored to establish a “New Type of Great Power Relationships” (NTGPR) with the United States, but other great powers like the BRICS states, Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa, are also the major targeting states of the NMGPR strategy though much of Chinese energies are put on Russia for geopolitical considerations.

2.1 Avoiding Hegemonic War with the United States

From a pessimistic view as well as the academic perspectives of power transition theory, conflict between China and the United States seems inevitable, which is the worse destiny that China wishes to evade from. Western power transition perspectives argue that the reshaping of the distribution of territory, the pattern of economic relations and the hierarchy of prestige are the products of hegemonic war through which the merging great power defeats the status quo hegemonic power (Gilpin, 1981: 209-210). Former Chinese president Hu Jintao said in 2007 that China should adopt the strategic option of following the path of “peaceful development”. A leading Chinese scholar, Shi Yinghong, suggests three aspects of the “peaceful development” approach. First, China will develop to become a great world power; second, China will do so without engaging in comprehensive war and persistent confrontation with other great powers in a cold war style; and lastly, China should avoid paying indirect and direct, long term and short term costs, in order to become an enduring great power rather than embracing rapid advancement and the danger of a sudden decline (Shi, 2009). China’s strategy of low profile could be a smart way to postpone the
hegemonic conflict before she accumulates strength and enjoys power superiority relative to her competitors. Generally speaking, China wants to become a lasting great power without paying the costs of hegemonic war and hostile confrontation.

However, the merging geopolitical conflicts in East Asia have put China’s low-profile strategy in a critical situation. China wants to avoid strategic conflict and confrontation with the United States, or at least before she could surpass the comprehensive power of the declining hegemon. With the call to establish the “New type of Great Power Relationships between China and the United States, China vowed to respect the United States’ traditional influence and immediate interests in the Asia-Pacific but avoiding hegemonic war with the United States is the main concerns (Yu, 2013: 18). Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi declared publicly that China has never thought about pushing the US out of the Asia Pacific region. Rather, he declared that China hoped the United States would play a positive and constructive role in safeguarding peace, stability and development in the Asia-Pacific (Wang, 2013).

With the acknowledgement of American supremacy over the Asia-Pacific, China instead shows intentions to accommodate with the United States in the Asia Pacific region rather than fight a fierce and bloody hegemonic war with the latter. At his meeting with U.S President Barack Obama at the Annenberg Retreat in California on June 7, 2013, Chinese president Xi Jinping argued that the vast Pacific Ocean has enough room to accommodate the development of the two great powers in the world, namely China and the United States (Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). Xi urged that China and the United States should work together to build a new type of relationship between great powers in an innovative and active way to serve the fundamental interests of the two peoples and promote the development and progress of human society (Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). Xi’s remarks revealed China’s steady low-profile strategy with tactic adjustments of building the “New type of Great Power Relationships” (NMGPR) with the United States.

Chinese minister of foreign affairs, Mr. Wang Yi, extended that the essential features of NTGPR are "no conflict or confrontation", "mutual respect" and "win-win cooperation" (Wang, 2013). Admitting that historical records saw the constant conflict between the status quo power and the rising power, Wang argued that China and the United States and all countries in the world are part of a community of shared interests and neither state will benefit from confrontation (Wang, 2013). Therefore, China demanded that both China and the United States
need to follow the trend of globalization, reverse negative projections of China-US relations, address strategic distrust and build confidence in the China-US relationships (Wang, 2013).

Acknowledging that there is a serious strategic distrust between China and the United States, China’s proclaim on the establishment of a new type of relationships between China and the United States involves many aspects and the most important of which is to increase strategic mutual trust. Chinese scholar Yang Jiemian who provided constantly consultant remarks to Chinese diplomatic decision-makers, demanded that China and the United States should increase the positive energy in the relations between the rising power and the established one, furthermore he urged that the two countries should make good use of strategic dialogue mechanisms; and finally the interaction of strategic thinking should be intensified (Yang, 2013: 29-30). China and the West could “live in harmony and value differences” in terms of values by “co-existing at the present and co-shaping the future (Yang, 2013: 27).

Apart from the strategic competition between China and the United States in terms of global power distribution, their differences over the normative values and political institutions undermine the PRC-US relationships as well. China demands that the United States respect China’s political system, the path chosen by her people, core interests and concerns before the two great powers develop common ground and live together in harmony (Wang, 2013). And China believed that benefits generated from cooperation in all fields, on issues ranging from counterterrorism to cyber security, from nuclear non-proliferation to climate change, and from peace in the Middle East to Africa's development (Wang, 2013), all could allure the United States to tolerate the rise of China. In return, by accepting the existence of capitalist United States, China argued that United States should acknowledge and recognize the multipolarization of the world, diversity of development modes and cultural plurality (Yu, 2013:21).

Till now, the positive effect of China’s NTGPR strategy has not yet generated positive results. Chinese authorities looked forward to establish a peaceful road of her rise with ways to enhance bilateral strategic trust, to promote practical cooperation, to enhance people-to-people and cultural exchange, to strengthen cooperation in international and regional hotspots and global issues so as to put this new type of relationships on more shared interests (Wang, 2013). However, it is not easy to shift the PRC-US strategic competition into a new pattern of peaceful power transition. The tension between the United States and China is increasing rather than demising.
2.2 Construction of a Closer Partnership with BRICS

China argued that the NTGPR initially referred to but now is not limited to China-US relations. It can be used for relations with traditional powers such as the United States, Europe and Japan as well as emerging powers such as the BRICS countries (Yang, 2013: 21-22). Collectively speaking for the developing states in the international occasions, the five merging powers, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, known as the BRICS group, form naturally a team of partnership in terms of global economic and financial reforms. BRICS is a kind of reformist forum which composed of five great rapidly emerging economies which are based more or less on the North-South divide, and aims to bring reforms to the global financial institutions in favor of the developing world (Panda, 2013: 299). Logically, the merging states are the main points of China’s promotion of New type of Great Power Relationships.

There is internal divergence among the BRICS, but their common features construct important values that Chinese diplomacy could not ignore. Less shining economic performance has make the BRICS less brightening in recent years, and persisting troubles like real estate and inflation cause worry that the epicenter of the next global economic shock will come from the BRICS themselves (Pant, 2013: 97). However, BRICS has geopolitical importance in terms of global power redistribution. First, BRICS members are populous countries that dominate demographically at least their respective regions. Second, they are the largest economies outside the OECD (except for South Africa). Third, they have impressive growth rates. Fourth, they are and regard themselves as developing countries with substantial numbers of poor people. Fifth, they do not belong to NATO-type political and military alliances and do not have special, Japan-US style relations with other major powers. Sixth, they are or try to be recognized as regional powers. Seventh, they have a long history of contesting or at least questioning Western supremacy as communist, non-aligned, or almost non-aligned countries. Eighth, they have an explicit or implicit interest in pushing towards a multipolar international system that would enhance their role in world affairs. Ninth, they ‘retain a large measure of respect for American power and resiliency’ and do not reject openly the present structure of the international system. Tenth and finally, BRICS share the conviction that the first step of their joint strategy should be the demand for more influence and decision power in international economic and financial institutions (Tudoroiu, 2012: 34).
Furthermore, the nature of BRICS’s common attitude in international institutions reform has raised China’s confidence that China could use the BRICS to counter the Western states. Though BRICS has been less institutionalized and some doubted its global economic and political merits because of its internal divergences among the five merging powers (Pant, 2013), China saw the BRICS has the ability to reduce the differences between themselves and to seek more in common (Yang, 2013: 32).

BRICAS’s call to reform the unjustified arrangements of global economic and financial institutions provides China the moral ground to justify her demands to adjust the unipolar structure that the United States has dominated since the end of the WW II. When China is isolated in a unfriendly environment in the Asia-Pacific area, she found that BRICS is a place where its members have shared similar concerns about the international dominance of the United States, the threat of terrorism from religious fundamentalist and ethnic movements, and the need to prioritize economic development (Pant, 2013: 94). Furthermore, the BRICS states favor a multipolar world order instead of a Americans dominating unipolarity and they guard their national sovereignty with fear that the United States and the developed states temptations to interfere in what they see as the domestic affairs of other states (Pant, 2013: 94).

The BRICS possesses collective identity to change the global status quo in terms of economic, financial and trade regimes, which provide China valuable diplomatic resources in a less friendly world to China’s rise. Though China and India have troubled over their border delimitation in the Himalaya mountain areas, both of them share similar ideas about the global structure. China and India have identified themselves as developing countries fighting for a just order in a world passing through a transition from bipolarity to multipolarity. Both emphasized the need to expand the Security Council, and both criticized the unilateral policies of other countries, and they also emphasized the need to transform the existing structures of economic governance (Mielniczuk, 2013: 1086). With the back of BRICS instead of the sole demand of the rising China, BRICS highlighted the importance of non-intervention; technology transfer to promote development; poverty alleviation; reform of the security council; restructuring of the institutions of economic global governance, like the IMF and World Bank; respect for international law; warnings against the perils of a unipolar world; and so on (Mielniczuk, 2013: 1087). In the end, the BRICS’S’s common demand of building a multipolar world is in China’s favor. At present, BRICS’s main domain of action is the cooperation in view of acquiring increased influence in financial and economic international fora. In the long term this
already successful process are supposed to contribute to the progressive evolution towards a multipolar world (Tudoroiu, 2012: 41). While China’s move to launch the construction of the new type relationships with great powers, the merging like Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa are logically also the main actor with which that China seeks to accommodate in a changing world.

2.3 Attentions on Russia than other Emerging States

Among the rank of merging BRICS group, Russia possesses much strategic and geopolitical values which deserve China to establish a much closer strategic partnership. As a member of the BRIC group, Russia is now more often categorized as in the rank of emerging countries. But the status of a permanent member of the United Union’s Security Council crowned Russia to be a decisive actor in global affairs. From China’s perspectives, Russia is a vital player in the global geopolitical game that even the United States could not underestimate Russia’s strategic leverage. Russia has both certain characteristics of an emerging power and certain features of a traditional or established power (Yu, 2013: 27). Military power and geopolitical weight pushes Russia to be the first candidate of China’s political ally in the global power redistribution process.

China does not conceal her strategic preference to Russia. Russia is the first leg of Xi’s first overseas trip since Xi Jingpin has attended China’s national presidency in 2013. For China, China-Russian strategic partnership has balanced the unipolar world that the United States holds the power supremacy. Xi Jingpin saw that a strong and high performance relationship between China and Russia has served the interests of both countries but also provided an important safeguard for maintaining international strategic balance as well as peace and stability in the world (Xi, 2013). Contrary with constant territorial tensions with her neighboring states, China and Russia have resolved their historical boundary differences and signed the Treaty of Good-neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, thus laying a solid foundation for the long-term growth of China-Russia relations.

There are mutual interests for China and Russia to build close strategic partnerships. First, both states needs friend in an unwelcomed world. Echoed with Russian president Putin’s argument that “Russia needs a prosperous and stable China, and China needs a strong and successful Russia as well,” Xi wished that China and Russia will forever be good neighbors, good friends and good partners, taking concrete
actions to firmly support each other on respective core interests, on respective development and renewal, on following the development paths suited to respective national conditions and on doing a good job with respective affairs and endeavors (Xi, 2013). China values that the PRC-Russian relationships is a good example that states with differences could accommodate together peacefully and corporately. Secondly, China belied that China and Russia are strategically complementary under the pressure of the United State’s comprehensive power supremacy. Xi argued that PRC-Russia strategic partnership has presented to the world that one plus one can be greater than two by drawing on each other's strengths to make up for respective shortcomings (Xi, 2013). Based on the military and strategic cooperation, China has extended her cooperation with Russian to field of infrastructure, hi-tech, finance and other areas and from commodity trade to joint R&D and joint production so as to elevate the result-oriented cooperation between the two countries (Xi, 2013). Combination of China’s economical power and Russian military technology give both states more strategic and diplomatic leverages to counter with the United States’ hegemony.

Both China and Russian do not hesitate to contribute support to their counterpart when one of them has faced with western critics. Blames pointing Russian violation against human rights has shadowed over the opening ceremony of the 2014 winter Olympic Game held in Sochi, Russia, but Chinese president Xi Jinping gave China’s strong support to Russia at that occasion. In return, Russian supported China’s position relative to China’s maritime claims over the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and China’s opposition against Japan’s military enhancement with the United States and Australia. Russian president Putin said that besides of the bilateral cooperation relative to the exploration of oil and gas, nuclear energy, aerospace, communications, cultural and person-to-person exchanges and other fields, Russia were positive to China’s proposal of the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road, and Russia were willing to connect Russia’s Trans-Eurasia railway with the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road to create much more benefits. Furthermore, Putin argued that the heinous crimes of the Nazi forces invading the Soviet Union and other European countries and of the Japanese militarism against the Chinese people and other victims in Asian countries cannot be forgotten; for this reason that Russia would join the efforts with China for the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and China’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). The highlight of the China-Russia collective front in the Second World War hints that Russia stands with China when the East China Sea...
maritime disputes between China and Japan have disturbed the regional security stability.

Global power shifting drives China and Russia together but not the case between China, Brazil and India. The China-Russia relationship is an axis of insecurity, both countries are driven by a range of shared fears: separatism (Tibet, Chechnya), Islamism (Xinjiang, the Caucasus), subversion (‘Colour Revolutions’, Falun Gong) and they saw the Western states are actively implicated in a lot of this, most notably through its human rights agenda (Brenton, 2013: 246). Instead, there are less similar strategic considerations between China, Brazil and India at this regards. It is doubt that BRICS possesses capabilities to create institutions that would help them to consolidate and leverage their clout on the global stage, and they might have troubles to transform their economic strength into a unified strategic power (Pant, 2013: 102). Furthermore, a power shift from American hegemony into a Chinese domination might not in other merging states interests. While Brazil, India and South Africa keep prudent position to the global geopolitical shifting, China’s strategies of building a new type of great power relationships with merging powers are less salient than her interactions with the United States and Russia.

III. China’s Attempt to Keep a Peaceful Strategic Environment

China’s strategic environment does not greatly improve despite China has already the second largest economic entity of the world. First, China is diplomatically isolated in the global society than ever. Though China’s material capabilities have been greatly improved in the past decades, however, China is haunted by the China Threat Theory which argues that the rise of an undemocratic China would pose great threat not only to the western world by also to the global stability. Secondly, China has been demanded constantly to comply with the universal norms, such as the rule of law, human rights and democracy, which constitute the ideological grounds to deny China’s contribution to the world peace. The merging of China’s material capabilities did not remove the excuses that the western states have used to challenge the legitimate grounds of China’s global power status. China is labeled with a rising power of shame.

3.1 China’s Confusing Global Identity

The economic achievements that China has obtained over the last three decades are notable; however, China evaluated that the title of global power second to the United States raises more risks than advantages. From the perspective of keeping a low
profile, the promotion of China’s international position, especially praised by the hegemonic United States, is not in China’s interests, but rather a challenge which might jeopardize China’s steady march towards great global power. The incomplete journey of China’s material power rise constitutes a confusion of identity about what role China should play in the international community. The conflict of identity among the great powers and the role of developing state are confusing to China and the world (Li, 2012).

China has noticed the subtle redistribution of global power, which favors the rise of China. For the first time since 1840, China has become a core member of the international society, and China has genuinely been a regional power with global influence (Qin, 2010b: 11). The financial and economic turmoil underscored China’s position as the engine of the Asian regional economy and even the global economy (Wu, 2010: 160). In 2010, the global financial institution was forced to formulize a voting power reform whereby China’s quota shares in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank was raised from 2.98 to 6.39, ranking only behind the United States and Japan (IMF, 2010). The international institution has legally recognized China’s financial influence. In general, China regards that she and the group of developing countries, or the non-western world, are going to occupy a more preeminent position in the new leadership in global governance (Wu, 2010: 161). China identifies herself as a great global power.

However, a self-conscious identity as a poor and weak developing state simultaneously dominates the rising China. The sudden rise of the international status of great power inadvertently produces more confusion than confidence to the Chinese government. China is uncertain about the probability of the end of American hegemony. In 2007, China optimistically predicted that the power shift from the United States to China is inevitable in the mid and long term (Shi, 2007: 30). Chinese scholars estimated that global distribution of power had been under the processes of multi-polarization; since the American hegemony might already be gone forever, the United States could no longer dominate global issues and the American government had to take into account the reactions of other great powers (Shi, 2007: 30). Nevertheless, China’s optimistic evaluation of the American decline has disappeared dramatically since the United States launched the Asia Pivot policy around 2010. Since then, Chinese scholars have taken a more cautious attitude towards the decline of the United States, arguing that China and the United States possess respectable advantages and that the United States has not lost supremacy in terms of comprehensive power (Chen and Chu, 2010; Wang, 2012: 14; Yuan, 2012: 8). They
saw that, although Americans might suffer a great deal after the 2008 financial crisis, the relative power supremacy that the United States enjoys would not change dramatically. The American GDP has continued to be double that of the second entity, the US dollar has not lost her leading position in the world financial system and the United States’ military preponderance is sustained (Chen and Chu, 2010; Yuan, 2012: 8). Joseph Nye (2010) echoes the idea that China still lags far behind the United States economically and militarily. Weakness in terms of comprehensive power continues to haunt China.

Ironically, apart from pride in her economic achievements (Information Office of the State Council, 2011), China views praise from foreign states, especially the United States, as a trap to cause her final failure in the competition for international power. China regards forecasts of surpassing the United States in the near future as a tactic to hinder her awareness of her shortcomings in terms of global comprehensive power. In 2012, the United States National Intelligence Council’s Global Trends Report 2030 argued that past Global Trends underestimated the rate of China’s rise (National Intelligence Council, 2012). This report foresaw that China’s economic power would surpass the United States no later than 2030 (National Intelligence Council, 2012: 17). Since 2008, China saw the title of G-2 and the highlight of Chinese economic expansion as a plot to demand that China share America’s heavy burden (Xu, 2009: 7). The term peng-sha (捧殺) was frequently used by Chinese officials and scholars to alert its people to firmly follow the low-profile strategy. Wang Hong Gong suggested that due to instability in recent years, China should avoid committing the errors of rashness in her competition with the United States (Wang, 2012: 14). Yuan Peng argued that the essential element of the Sino-American relationship is the continuation of the low-profile strategy and persistence in the national power build-up through internal hard work (Yuan, 2012: 8). China deeply suspects that she might be asked to sacrifice in a game of burden sharing under American manipulation. Anxiety over other great powers deters China from appreciating any kind of cooperative proposal coming from her counterparts.

As China’s power continues to grow, she is reluctant to comply with international rules that might constrain her freedom of action, a result which great powers and/or fragile developing states seek. The Chinese government vowed that China will promote friendly and cooperative relations with all the other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Information Office of the State Council, 2011), but she is afraid that the universal values, such as human rights and the rule of law might endanger her interests. The Chinese government declared that China would
never allow any external forces to interfere in her internal affairs (Information Office of the State Council, 2011). Nevertheless, in a globalized world, it is very unlikely that internal affairs would be exempt from foreign concerns and interests. Therefore, the protection of China’s internal affairs against foreign interventions has prevented China from constructing a sincere and comprehensive cooperation with foreign states.

Uncertainty and fear account for China’s passivity in taking global responsibilities, which are viewed as numerous traps to hinder the growth of China’s power. The Chinese government argued that China is actively living up to international responsibility, but in accordance with her own capability (Information Office of the State Council, 2011). China has said that she will assume responsibility that is more international as her comprehensive strength increases (Information Office of the State Council, 2011). The status of developing countries produces exceptionalism, which permits China to waive global normative responsibilities. The Chinese government has repeatedly emphasized in the global arena that China is a developing country facing a series of grim challenges in spite of the great progress that she has achieved (Li, 2012). It is difficult for the global society to accept a multi-identity China which denies taking international responsibility with such excuses as China is a poor and weak country that enjoys the status of global second largest economic entity. Chinese scholars have noticed that China’s insistence on a developing status in the global society is contradictory to global expectations (Qin, 2010a: 4).

In contrast with the fast ascension of her material capabilities, China’s institutional performance is still far behind those of the United States and the European Union. China understands that she could not escape the role of international leader forever and that she has to reform the status quo international institutions arrangements (Li, 2012:15). However, China has little idea about how to balance the identity conflict which limits her acting like a great power and safeguarding the interests of the developing states, which simultaneously defy her interest in becoming a great power. Wandering among the camps of great powers and developing states, China is globally isolated in terms of normative perspectives; and China is the minority of minorities in the global society (Chu, 2008: 16). Unfortunately, a powerful and isolated China is confused about what rules she needs to comply with and what norms are necessary to maintain her interests.
3.2 China’s Pledge of New Regional Order

China’s diplomatic strategy of building a “New Type of Great Power Relationships” demonstrates first that China identifies herself a great power and secondly that she has great intention to build a peaceful strategic environment while Beijing authorities have no hesitation to exclude the external influence, the United States and western states, from the Asian region.

With the affirmation that China seeks no hegemony in terms of global power distribution, she takes an exclusive attitude to the Asian security structure. China president Xi Jinping said in 2014 that it was necessary to advocate common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in Asia and to establish a new regional security cooperation architecture (Xi, 2014a). Under the new security structure of the Asian region, exclusion of the American influence is quite clear. Xi called that in the new Asian security arrangement, it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia because the Asian people has the capability and wisdom to achieve regional peace and stability(Xi, 2014a). He added that equality is the essential part of the new regional security institution. Therefore, he pledged that no country should attempt to dominate regional security affairs or infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of other countries (Xi, 2014a). Furthermore, Xi rejected the idea to keep regional stability with the military, political and cultural intervention. He claimed that regional states should abide by the basic norms governing international relations such as respecting sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs, respect the social systems and development paths chosen by countries on their own, and fully respect and accommodate the legitimate security concerns of all parties (Xi, 2014a). He claimed finally that China's peaceful development begins here in Asia, finds its support in Asia, and delivers tangible benefits to Asia (Xi, 2014a). Xi Jinping addressed the new Asian security concept at the event of Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, a conference that the majority of its attendances are China’s Middle Asia neighbor states. Curiously, the slogan of building a new type of Great Power relationships has disappeared at that occasion.

At another occasion of celebrating the 60th Anniversary Of the initiation of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Xi, adherence to the group of developing states, argued that injustice and inequality are still pronounced problems in international society (Xi, 2014b). China criticized that that flexing military muscles only
reveals the lack of moral ground or vision rather than reflecting one's strength, and China urged that the world should work for a new architecture of Asia-Pacific security cooperation that is open, transparent and equality-based, and bring all countries together in a common endeavor to maintain peace and security in both our region and the world (Xi, 2014b). Ironically instead, China rejected that idea of great power domination by arguing that the world should jointly promote greater democracy in international relations. Xi said that the destiny of the world must be determined by people of all countries, and world affairs should be managed through consultation by governments and peoples of all countries. He pleaded that the notion of dominating international affairs belongs to a different age, and such an attempt is doomed to failure (Xi, 2014b). In China’s perspectives, the new regional order should be constructed and only to be constructed by the Asian states rather than foreign outsiders. Of course, an exclusive regional security order is in China’s interests since no Asian states could counterbalance China’s influence without the foreign assistance.

IV. Conclusion

China is an unprepared world power with neither the intention to trigger the hegemonic transformation nor the capabilities to bear the costly task of global governance. Though China pledged to construct a new regional order which puts the foreigner aside, do her neighboring states adhere such idea is still under great question.

The strategy of building a new type of great power relationship has no clear effectiveness. Huge distrust among the United States and rising China has not yet disappeared. The United States and China have established the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) as a platform to promote political trust, constructive engagement and collaboration between the two countries. Four rounds of the U.S.–mainland China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) have taken place since 2009, and the fifth round is expected to be held from the 8th-12th of July, 2013. Nevertheless, the achievements of the S&ED are still ambiguous. From time to time, the United States and China have quarreled over issues such as American arms sales to Taiwan, China’s territorial claim over the East China Sea and South China Sea, and China’s lack of military transparency.

While China called to construct a new regional security order for the Asian Region this year, it is doubtful whether China can continue its self-constraint policy in the future. The regional territorial and maritime dispute has erupted from time to time. Because of the eroding of the United States power, concerning parties are less patient
to keep the old way to put the dispute aside. Instead, both China and her counterparts took fait-accompli measures to consolidate their presence in the disputed areas. The establishment of regional confidence-building is harder than before.

China uses the BRICS mechanism to expand her political power in the world stage. Despite numerous pledges from the Chinese side that China will not challenge the United States, the shadow of the future forbids both countries from casting away their uncertainty, while the power gap between these two states has remarkably and quickly diminished in the first decade of the 21st century. And most importantly, the regional states have less and less diplomatic freedom of room to maneuver between the relative declining American hegemony and the rising China.
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