After Harmony: The Crucial Role of China to the Pacific Century
Josie-Marie Perkuhn
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Abstract

The Chinese Dream is said to promote a Harmonious Society (hexie shehui) to the world. In the course of the last few decades, China has repeatedly altered its foreign policy role. A role that is crucial for the development of the Pacific region at large. In May 2015, the government published a White Paper on China’s military strategy (Zhongguo-de junshi-zhanlüe), which called for a powerful national army and increased military spending in order to promote the Chinese concept of a Harmonious Society more actively. The recent role performance is widely perceived as assertive in nature. Therefore, the IR research community is consumed by the puzzle of which supportive or contradicting role China will take in the future, especially in regard of the neighboring relations of the Pacific region. A closer look at the underlying foundation of the concept of a peaceful world with Chinese characteristics as in the so-called "Harmonious Society" seems potentially insightful. The question is by what underlying motives is China driven? This paper is based on the assumption that foreign policy roles origin from contradicting political factions within the Communist Party that shape the foreign policy role conduct. This paper argues that the harmonious world is a peace concept, which stems from a leadership era that -in regard to the reform and opening strategy – was keen to integrate into the Western dominated world. However, with the change of leadership, this concept might be re-interpreted. Harmonious World clearly envisions a peace with Chinese characteristics. In order to display the underlying domestic discourse, this paper conceptualizes contradicting political factions (pai) within the Chinese government as role conception carriers and second, examines how this factional interpretation shapes the foreign policy conduct before and after Xi Jinping took office in regard to the Chinese peace concept of a Harmonious world.
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