
by

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PhD dissertation

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES</th>
<th>.................................</th>
<th>.................................</th>
<th>FEIL! BOGMÆRKE ER IKKE DEFINERET.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Presenting the research question</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 The grand strategy of a rising China</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining Chinese grand strategy: the mainstream IR approaches</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 On the logic of social identity in IR</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Identity Theory: deriving the logic of social identities</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State identity and Chinese identity from an inside-out IR perspective</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual complements to social identity: discourse and narrative</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A relationship between the logic of state identity and state grand strategy</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The narrative logics of Chinese state identity</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying Chinese state identity</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Chinese state identity shapes Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Overview of the dissertation</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART I: THE LOGIC OF SOCIAL IDENTITY</strong></td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 2: A bounded constructivist approach to social identities</strong></td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Critical realism and bounded constructivism</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The cognitive, material and structural ontology of social identities</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 The bounded construction of causal identities</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 3: Substantiating the logic of social identities</strong></td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 The basic insights of Social Identity Theory</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need for social distinctiveness</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need for a positive self-esteem</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 IR and SIT: The identity strategies of low-status states</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The characteristics of international relations as a social realm</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five different identity strategies</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 The China case: Fraught with identity logics?</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese identity strategies</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 4: A discursive-structural framework for identity narratives</strong></td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Narratives and the role of identity narratives</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The conceptual anatomy of identity narratives</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Discursive structuralism and the hierarchy of identity structures</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State identity as a layered hierarchy of discursive structures</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dose of social constructivism</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 On the relationship between state identity and state grand strategy</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for the systematization of state identity narratives</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical argument and hypothesis</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART II: CHINA’S IDENTITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY</strong></td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 5: Questions of methodology: case design and the study of identity</strong></td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 A plausibility probe: designing a case study of China</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research design of the case study</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A crucial case study?</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Mapping Chinese identity narratives: an outsider’s perspective</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources and methods for measuring Chinese identity</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>.................................</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 6: A DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF CHINESE IDENTITY

6.1 Discursive building blocks of Chinese identity

Building block 1: ‘Sino-civilization’
Building block 2: ‘Confucianism’
Building block 3: ‘The century of humiliation’
Building block 4: ‘The communist march’

6.2 Constructing the narrative categories of Chinese identity

Introducing five ideal-typical narrative categories of Chinese identity

Bringing it all together

CHAPTER 7: IDENTIFYING THE OFFICIAL NARRATIVES OF CHINESE IDENTITY

7.1 Data material: primary sources on Chinese identity

7.2 ‘Globalist China’

Building blocks and narrative evolution of ‘Globalist China’

7.3 ‘Sovereign China’

Building blocks and narrative evolution of ‘Sovereign China’

7.4 ‘Unified China’

Building blocks and narrative evolution of ‘Unified China’

7.5 ‘Sino-centric China’

Building blocks and narrative evolution of ‘Sino-centric China’

7.6 ‘Rising China’

Building blocks and narrative evolution of ‘Rising China’

7.7 Critical reflections and an overview of Zhongnanhai’s identity discourse

The main findings of the discourse analysis

CHAPTER 8: THE EVOLUTION OF CHINESE IDENTITY NARRATIVES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

8.1 Designing the content analysis: Beijing Review as a primary source

8.2 Measuring the discursive strength of China’s identity narratives

‘Globalist China’: From discursive hegemony to marginalization

‘Sovereign China’: From dwindling discursive significance to a recent surge

‘Sino-centric China’: Ascending the discursive horizon and fading out again

‘Rising China’: Establishing a new discursive hegemony?

8.3 Assessing the evolution of Chinese state identity in the 21st century

PART III: CHINA’S GRAND STRATEGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

CHAPTER 9: STATE GRAND STRATEGY AND THE RISE OF CHINA

9.1 The IR debate on the rise of China and Chinese grand strategy

Contending explanations of Chinese grand strategy

The realist IR school on Chinese grand strategy

The liberal institutionalist IR school on Chinese grand strategy

The constructivist IR school on Chinese grand strategy

9.2 Defining state grand strategy

State grand strategy in relation to international order

9.3 Chinese grand strategy: Hypotheses and operationalization

Setting up criteria for assessing Chinese grand strategy

CHAPTER 10: EXAMINING CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY BEHAVIOR

10.1 Chinese grand strategy in the 20th century: zooming in on the 1990s

China’s institutional engagement in the 2000s

China’s power-related behavior in the 2000s

China’s normative positioning in the 2000s

10.2 Chinese grand strategy in the first decade of the 21st century

China’s institutional engagement in the 2000s

China’s power-related behavior in the 2000s

China’s normative positioning in the 2000s
List of figures and tables

Figure A: A hierarchical discursive formation of state identity ..................................................118
Figure B: Five ideal-typical identity narratives......................................................................... 126
Figure C: Overview of case study............................................................................................... 139
Figure D: Different types of conceptions and sources of China's identity ..............................152
Figure E: Four discursive building blocks of China's state identity in the 21st century.........191
Figure F: Constructing the main narrative categories of Chinese state identity ..................205
Figure G: A hierarchical discursive formation of China's identity as a state community ......214
Figure I: The five main narratives of Chinese state identity.....................................................276
Figure J: The structural linkage between the 2nd and 3rd layer of China's state identity ......282
Figure K: Relative discursive strength of the main narratives of Chinese state identity ......316
Figure L: Analytical distinctions and ideal-typical principles of state grand strategy ........364
Figure M: Four narratives of Chinese state identity in the 21st century................................367
Figure N: Four Chinese identity narratives and their distinct narrative logics .....................369
Figure O: Hypotheses on the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy ....372
Figure P: China's uniformed personnel in UN Peacekeeping Operations, 1990-2013 .........398
Figure Q: China's defense budget in the 2000s.....................................................................405
Figure R: Military expenditure patterns ..................................................................................446
Figure S: The patterns of Chinese identity and grand strategy since the late 1990s ..........479

Table 1: An overview of the secondary literature on Chinese state identity .........................194
Table 2: Summary of the contents analysis of Beijing Review ..............................................291
Table 3: The five main narratives of Chinese state identity in Beijing Review ......................294
Table 4: Prominent scholars in the IR debate on Chinese grand strategy (2005-2014) ....329
Table 5: Proposed relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy ..................370
Table 6: Operationalization criteria for categorizing Chinese grand strategy ......................374
Table 7: Four periods of the PRC's grand strategy in the 20th century ................................392
Table 8: Annual costs and growth of China's military expenditures in the 2000s ............405
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Presenting the research question

Despite the more sluggish growth rates of the Chinese economy in the past few years, the impressive rise of the People’s Republic of China (the PRC) from a poor, peripheral peasant society in the Mao-era to a modern, globalized great power likely constitutes a – perhaps even the – defining moment of international relations in the 21st century. Indeed, China has by now become the world’s second largest economy, it ranks first in many areas of global impact (e.g. the biggest trading nation, the largest consumer of most commodities, the biggest emitter of CO2), it has systematically modernized its military capacity and it is a non-Western country with a distinct identity profile. In short, China’s rise has already fundamentally altered the center of gravity in world politics.

Inasmuch as the PRC has become increasingly capable of pursuing its overall foreign policy interests, the outside world is left wondering, in an often used phrase, “what China wants”.¹ Basically, the question pertains to China’s grand strategy as a rising power, notably on how China “positions itself” on the international stage. By shedding light on what I will call the motivational drivers of China’s grand strategy, this dissertation offers a theoretically guided answer to the question of “what China wants”.² Within the study of International Relations (IR³), scholars have suggested a set of quite diverse motivational drivers of Chinese grand strategy, including power and security-related dynamics from “a realist approach”, institutional and economic incentives from “a liberalist ap-

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¹ See for instance Legro (2007); Gong (2011); Nathan (2011); see also the Economist, front page, August 23, 2014.

² The term motivational driver has not previously been employed in IR, but I find it useful in this context as it implies a conceptual link to social psychology, from which the dissertation draws heavily.

³ Following conventional terminology, I use “IR” as shorthand expression for the academic discipline of International Relations.
approach” and norms, culture and identities from “a constructivist approach”. This dissertation studies how social identity constitutes a critical motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy, as seen from a mainstream constructivist IR perspective.4

To be sure, the dissertation is far from the first IR study to propose social identity as a key motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy. Indeed, the IR discipline has witnessed a surge of scholarly interest in Chinese identity as a way of gaining insights into the rise of China in the 21st century.5 The dissertation is the first, however, to systematically theorize China’s identity as a motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy. This is done by developing a theoretical framework centered on what I will refer to as the logic of social identity. Specifically, I ground this logic of social identity in a number of key propositions from Social Identity Theory derived from the basic cognitive predisposition of the human mind to distinguish between social “in- and out-groups”.6 While a number of IR scholars have likewise tapped into Social Identity Theory, this dissertation is novel in its way of theorizing its key insights and translating them into the social realm of international relations.

The dissertation claims that by theorizing the logic of social identity, and thereby also Chinese identity, as a motivational driver, we are able to explain the overall patterns of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. Other IR schools,

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4 I use the term mainstream constructivism to loosely refer to a number of IR scholars (such as Emmanuel Adler, Jeffrey Checkel, Ted Hopf, Alastair Johnston, Christian Reus-Smit and Alexander Wendt) who adopts a conventional methodology to study and theorize the social construction of international relations (see Chapter 2 for a specification of my own constructivist perspective).
5 See e.g. Gries (2005); Hughes (2006); Kang (2007); Deng (2008); Jacques (2009); Callahan (2010); Larson & Shevchenko (2010); Qiu (2010b); Forsby (2011); Kissinger (2011); Rozman (2011); Sambaugh (2011); Yan (2011); Kelly (2012); Chong (2012); Feng (2013); Zhao (2013); Harnisch et al. (2016). Some of these scholars focus on identity-related concepts such as self-understanding, narratives and international roles.
6 Social Identity Theory was originally conceived by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the late 1970s (see especially Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Chapter 3 specifies my use of Social Identity Theory.
notably realism, may stake similar claims to explanatory power of Chinese grand strategy based on different types of motivational drivers, but I will argue and demonstrate that the logic of social identity is a necessary, if insufficient factor that needs to be taken into account. The crux of my argument is that the prevailing narrative conception of Chinese state identity is predicated on a particular way of framing the distinction between the Chinese in-group and its salient out-group states, which in turn generates China’s grand strategy. Without fully recognizing how China’s identity as a state community constitutes a key motivational driver, we will be unable to properly account for its grand strategy. In fact, we might miss out on a key aspect of “what China wants”.

Against this backdrop, the dissertation will be guided by the following research question:

**How can we theorize the logic of social identity in IR, and to what extent does the logic of Chinese identity constitute a motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century?**

By the end of the introduction, this research question is broken further down into three key questions each of which will guide one of the three main parts of the dissertation. The remainder of this introduction unpacks the main concepts and overall claims of the dissertation, offers some guidance as to **how** I intend to answer my research question and locates the dissertation within the existing IR scholarship. Section 1.2 focuses on Chinese grand strategy. It presents the basic terminology and outlines my own approach to the study of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. The section also introduces the IR debate on China’s grand strategy as a rising power and compares my own approach to the existing
mainstream IR schools. Section 1.3 provides an overview of how I intend to develop an IR logic of social identity. I define the concept of social identity and argue that we may employ Social Identity Theory to derive the core logics of social identity as a motivational driver. The section subsequently presents some of the other key concepts used for building a theoretical framework – narratives and discursive structures – and ends with my theoretical hypothesis on the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy. Section 1.4 offers an introduction to the way I study Chinese identity as a motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy. The section clarifies how my own approach differs from existing scholarship on Chinese identity and briefly specifies how I intend to study Chinese identity. The last part of the section suggests how the narrative logics of Chinese identity generate the behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. Finally, Section 1.5 outlines the main argument of the dissertation, breaks down the research question into three main questions and gives a quite detailed overview of each chapter in the dissertation.

1.2 The grand strategy of a rising China
The rapid rise of China has astonished the world, even leading some observers to proclaim that the 21st century belongs to the Chinese.7 Stimulating the greatest interest among IR scholars is the perennial question of whether the rising power will challenge the existing international order. The question has preoccupied IR scholars from the early 1990s onwards, roughly dividing them into opposing camps according to whether they see China either as a status quo or a re-

7 See e.g. Elliot (2007); Jacques (2009); Subramanian (2011); Stiglitz (2014).
visionist power. Although the distinction can rightly be criticized for being too simplistic – and even for framing the whole issue of rising powers in a Western-centric manner – the terminology provides a highly useful entry point to the IR debate on the rise of China. At the same time, the distinction between revisionism and status quo aptly epitomizes one of the central dilemmas that a rising China itself faces: Should China accept the prevailing Liberal Order, conceived and still dominated by the West, or should China reject it in favor of an alternative international order more to China’s own liking?

Yet, China also faces another essential dilemma in relation to the existing international order: Should China involve itself actively in the making of international order (i.e. engagement), or should it rather stay aloof (i.e. detachment)? This distinction has likewise pervaded the IR debate on the rise of China, triggering, among others, a heated discussion about whether China should be perceived as a “free-rider” or a “responsible stakeholder” in international society. While much of the existing scholarship tends to blur these two distinctions, I will argue that they should be clearly distinguished from each other. In fact, a revisionist China that rejects the legitimacy of the prevailing international order would ultimately pose no direct challenge if, at the same time, it were to assume a detached or completely isolationist position in its overall foreign policy. Conversely, a status quo-oriented China that accepts the legitimacy of the existing order

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8 Some of the most explicit discussions of Chinese grand strategy along these lines include Shambaugh (2001); Johnston (2003); Feng H. (2009); Buzan (2010); Mearsheimer (2010); Schweller and Pu (2011); Kastner and Saunders (2012); Buzan (2014).
9 See especially Johnston (2003).
10 See especially Kristensen (2015: paper 5).
11 Following John Ikenberry (esp. 2009; 2011) I will refer to the prevailing international order as the Liberal Order (for a more elaborate discussion, see below section 9.2).
12 The debate followed a speech by then-US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick (2005) entitled “Whither China: From membership to responsibility”; see also Christensen (2005); Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small (2007); Gill and Schiffer (2008); Kleine-Ahlbrandt (2009); Pei (2010); Etzioni (2011); Richardson (2011).
will only become an integral member of this order if it engages itself actively in
the governance of that order.

By investigating how China “positions itself” in the prevailing Liberal Order in
terms of the two suggested analytical distinctions, this dissertation provides a
study of China’s grand strategy as a rising power. Admittedly, there is more to
Chinese grand strategy than how China positions itself in the existing interna-
tional order, but this certainly constitutes one of the most critical aspects of Chi-
na’s grand strategy today.\footnote{Another important aspect of Chinese grand strategy, which traditionally has been of paramount concern, is
how to counter major military threats to its sovereignty or even survival as a state.}
Even though there is no universally accepted defin-
tion of state grand strategy within IR (there hardly is of any key concept), sever-
al leading scholars have recently advocated defining the concept in a broad
sense \textit{as a set of ideas or principles for the strategic employment of a state’s re-
sources to pursue its overall goals or interests}.\footnote{See especially Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth (2012: 11); for similarly broad definitions, see Goldstein
(2005: 19); Narizny (2007: 8); Gaddis (2009: 7); Drezner (2011: 58); Feng Z. (2012: 319).}
Since the dissertation adopts a
somewhat narrower perspective on Chinese grand strategy, I suggest a short defi-

One may reasonably ask if the leadership of the PRC has even formulated any
such principles or overarching guidelines that amount to a Chinese grand strat-
gey as such. Whereas several China scholars answer the question in the negative,
I will argue, along with other scholars, that Beijing\textsuperscript{15} does in fact apply a quite strategic approach to its use of resources (to pursue its overall goals in relation to the existing international order). It is true, as stated by the prominent Chinese IR scholar Wang Jisi\textsuperscript{16}, that the Chinese government has yet to disclose any \textit{singular} document that comprehensively expounds its grand strategy, but one may nonetheless deduce its guiding principles from a broader set of authoritative documents.\textsuperscript{17} Even so, in order in advance to deflect the criticism that such documents from the Chinese government are at best irrelevant, at worst deliberately misleading (and also to avoid conflating the main variables, see Chapter 5), I prefer to derive the principles of Chinese grand strategy from a range of \textit{behavioral} indicators. Based on seven different behavioral indicators, covering the institutional, normative and power dimension of China’s grand strategy in relation to the existing international order, I shall thus conduct a systematic examination of Chinese grand strategy in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

The purpose of the examination is to methodically map the evolving behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century in order to gauge the extent to which these patterns reflect a grand strategy of status quo or revisionism, engagement or detachment. Only by accurately describing a phenomenon, can we hope to understand and explain it. That such a description is far from straightforward (or “innocent”\textsuperscript{18}) has recently been testified by the highly contentious issue of whether since 2009 Beijing has embarked on a more assertive foreign and security policy. While most observers have claimed that this is the

\textsuperscript{15} Throughout the dissertation, I use ‘China’, ‘the PRC’, ‘Beijing’ interchangeably for the sake of variation, and I furthermore use these terms in an anthropomorphized sense even where it would be more correct to refer to the authoritative representatives of China. I take up this issue in more detail later in Sections 4.2 and 5.2.

\textsuperscript{16} Wang (2011: 68).

\textsuperscript{17} For some examples of such an approach, see e.g. Heath (2012); Buzan (2014); Blasko (2015).

\textsuperscript{18} Some scholars (e.g. Johnston, 2013; Jerdén, 2014) have pointed out how the notion, meme and/or discourse among China-scholars of “Chinese assertiveness” itself may serve particular (e.g. American) foreign policy interests.
case – variously describing the shift in terms of “China’s foreign policy revolution”,19 “foreign policy muscle-flexing”,20 “Beijing’s abrasive diplomacy”21, “The strident turn”22 or merely “Chinese assertiveness”23 – a number of critical voices have contended that the evidence for such a shift is rather limited.24 My own examination, which is more comprehensive (but in some respects less detailed) than the existing analyses, supports the majority view. It demonstrates that in the wake of the global financial crisis (2007-2009) China has displayed sufficient change within the institutional and power dimension of its grand strategy behavior for this to count as an overall shift from engaged status quo to engaged revisionism. Moreover, although the dissertation first of all studies Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century, I extend the examination back into the 1990s to obtain some variation with regard to the distinction between detachment and engagement. Hence, I will demonstrate how Chinese grand strategy experienced another major shift around the turn of the century, namely from detached status quo to engaged status quo.

**Explaining Chinese grand strategy: the mainstream IR approaches**

As already stated, the primary objective of this dissertation is to explain the evolving pattern of Chinese grand strategy by identifying its key motivational drivers. By striving to explain rather than understand or critically deconstruct Chinese grand strategy, this dissertation primarily engages with the mainstream “schools” of the IR discipline: realism, liberalism and constructivism. Theorizing

20 Layne (2012: 3).
21 Christensen (2011: 54).
22 Zhao (2013: 535).
23 E.g. Wang J. (2011: 68); see also Shambaugh (2010: single-page article); Friedberg (2011: xvi); Rozman (2011: 87); Thayer (2011: 555); Yahuda (2013: 446).
24 See especially Swaine (2010); Swaine and Fravel (2011); Johnston (2013); Jerdén (2014).
the motivational drivers of state grand strategy has traditionally been considered the preserve of IR realism. From a realist viewpoint, a state’s grand strategy is first of all driven by power and security-related dynamics, stemming from the anarchical character of the international states system and the pervasive sense of insecurity such a system generates. With regard to the rise of China, John Mearsheimer, one of the most prominent realist voices in the debate, has highlighted growing Chinese power, inherent great power competition and not least China’s aspirations to become a regional hegemon as the most critical factors in the country’s grand strategy. According to Mearsheimer, such a grand strategy is bound to be of a revisionist nature given the already extensive U.S. strategic presence in the region. Another vocal realist voice in the debate, that of Aaron Friedberg, likewise insists that a rising China will be a revisionist power locked into “a struggle for mastery/a contest for supremacy” with the United States, due not only to the factors emphasized by Mearsheimer, but also to China’s authoritarian regime type. Still other realist scholars have further supplemented or moderated the realist core logic of power and security dynamics, in effect reaching differing and sometimes even contrasting conclusions about the direction of Chinese grand strategy (a full review is provided in Section 9.1).

Realists have been challenged by both liberalist IR scholars, who tend to focus on inter-state interdependence, economic incentives and institutional constraints as the key motivational drivers of Chinese grand strategy, and constructivist IR scholars, who are mainly concerned with norms, culture and identity-

25 Prominent realist scholars, who have inspired many of the realist writings on state grand strategy, notably include Kenneth Waltz (e.g. 1979) and John Mearsheimer (e.g. 2001).
26 See Mearsheimer (2006; 2010).
27 Friedberg (2000; 2011). The two referenced books are entitled A Struggle for Mastery and A Contest for Supremacy.
28 Other prominent realist contributions to the debate include those by Goldstein (2005); Kaplan (2010); Glaser (2011); Wang (2011); Schweller and Pu (2011); for some realist-inclined sinologists, see especially Ross (2009) and Nathan and Scobell (2012).
related dynamics as another set of motivational drivers. The liberalist perspective on the rise of China has been championed notably by John Ikenberry, who has drawn attention to the specifically *liberal* character of the prevailing international order, that is, its extraordinary openness, institutional denseness, consensus-oriented governance and ruled-based nature. Accordingly, a rising China is most likely to be status quo-oriented, not only because of the Liberal Order’s remarkable capacity to integrate rising powers, but also because China’s continued modernization itself presupposes integration into the institutional architecture of the Liberal Order. From a constructivist perspective with strong liberalist connotations, Alastair Johnston, one of the leading figures in the debate, has also reached the conclusion that China is unlikely to be a revisionist power. Based on a study of China’s expanding and deepening involvement in the existing institutional architecture of international society, Johnston stresses the normative socialization effect of international institutions on China’s political elite even within issue areas that mostly concern China’s security interests. Conversely, most other constructivist-oriented scholars, such as David Kang, Deborah Larson and Peter Gries, focus on identity-related factors from an “inside-out” perspective that tends to accentuate the distinct cultural, political and historical features of China and its specific developmental trajectory (more on this below in Section 1.3).

While this brief introduction to the IR debate on the rise of China suggests that all three “IR schools” are well represented, my extensive review of the debate in Section 9.1 will demonstrate that realist scholars assume a dominant position in

29 Ikenberry (2008); see also Ikenberry (2011). Other prominent liberalist scholars in the debate include Achar-ya (2006); Kent (2007).
31 See especially Kang (2007); Deng (2008); Larson and Shevchenko (2010); see also Gries (2005); Qin (2010b); Kelly (2012); Feng (2013).
several respects.\textsuperscript{32} Most importantly, and despite the fact that a sizeable constructivist-oriented IR literature on the rise of China has emerged, few constructivist scholars have so far explicitly attempted to theorize the motivational drivers of Chinese grand strategy. There is certainly no shortage of literature suggesting that China’s identity affects its bilateral relations, its foreign policy objectives or even its overall international role and position as a rising power.\textsuperscript{33} What is largely missing, however, is the development of an identity-based theoretical framework from which the motivational drivers of Chinese grand strategy can be derived as an alternative to the prevailing realist (and liberalist) explanatory logics.\textsuperscript{34} This dissertation offers such a framework based on the logic of social identity (see Section 1.3) and more specifically the narrative logics of Chinese identity (see Section 1.4). Let me stress from the outset that I harbor no illusions about theorizing the motivational drivers of Chinese grand strategy in a way that renders existing realist (and liberalist) approaches redundant. Chinese grand strategy is no doubt shaped by a diverse set of motivational drivers, and even though some of these are more important than others, I resist the temptation to claim that the logic of Chinese identity is the single-most important one. Rather, I make the somewhat more moderate claim that the logic of Chinese identity constitutes a necessary, but insufficient motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy. If this claim can be corroborated by the present dissertation, it would not only strengthen our ability to explain the course of Chinese grand strategy; it would also, from an IR perspective, offer a specific constructivist explanatory

\textsuperscript{32} In fact, the pattern has become particularly pronounced in recent years (cf. Table 4, section 9.1).

\textsuperscript{33} Just within the past five years such publications include Qin (2010a); Larson and Shevchenko (2010); Forsby (2011); Gries et al. (2011); Hughes (2011); Rozman (2011); Shambaugh (2011); Callahan (2012); Kelly (2012); Feng (2013); Turner (2013); Chong (2014); Gustafsson (2014); Suzuki (2014); Ford (2015); Harnisch et al. (2016).

\textsuperscript{34} A few constructivist contributions do attempt to theorize the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy, most notably Larson & Shevchenko (2010). I will deal with their contributions below.
logic, which can supplement or vie with the prevailing realist and liberalist
logics of IR.

1.3 On the logic of social identity in IR
In a broad sense, logic refers to the principles of valid reasoning that are appli-
cable to any branch of knowledge or study. More specifically, logic pertains to
the act of making inferences – that is, deriving logical conclusions – from prem-
ises known or assumed to be true. In the social sciences, the use of logic in this
narrower rendering of the term only makes sense in relation to what we consid-
er to be the most well-established theoretical assumptions. In IR, we have seen
specific attempts to explore, for instance, the logic of anarchy,\textsuperscript{35} the logic of institu-
tionalist theory\textsuperscript{36} and the logic of two-level games.\textsuperscript{37} Even constructivist IR
scholars, generally wary of employing a terminology that smacks of positivism,
have proposed exploring some of the \textit{social logics} of international relations such
as the logic of appropriateness\textsuperscript{38} and the logic of habit (or practicality).\textsuperscript{39} Admi-
tedly, as both of these social logics are to some extent derived from identity-
related dynamics, one may argue that constructivist IR theory has already indi-
crectly developed a logic of social identity. That is, while the logic of appropriaten-
ness usually refers to the idea that state behavior is shaped by conscious consid-
erations of the legitimacy of certain norms, rules and institutions associated
with specific social identities, the logic of habit links state behavior instead to

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{35} Buzan et al. (1993).
\item\textsuperscript{36} Keohane and Martin (1995).
\item\textsuperscript{37} Putnam (1988).
\item\textsuperscript{38} On the logic of appropriateness, see for instance Finnemore and Sikkink (1998); Müller (2004). The logic of appropriateness is typically set against the rationalist logic of consequences; see March and Olsen (1998).
\item\textsuperscript{39} On the logic of habit, see Hopf (2010); on the logic of practicality, see Pouliot (2008) and Adler and Pouliot (2011). See also Barkin (2010: Chapter 4) for a discussion of the logic of the social in IR.
\end{itemize}
unreflective, socially structured customs and traditions likewise associated with specific social identities. However, the logic of identity as theorized in this dissertation differs markedly from both the logic of appropriateness and that of habit. Whereas the other two social logics are based on a broader set of sociological, institutionalist, philosophical and social psychological theories, I theorize the logic of identity exclusively in terms of social psychological insights.

Since the term “identity” comes with a heavy conceptual baggage, it is also critical to specify my understanding of it from the outset. In an influential article entitled “Beyond identity”, Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper accused the concept of identity of being too ambiguous “to serve well the demands of social inquiry”. They further argue, on the one hand, that “the attempt to soften the term [to avoid essentialism] by stipulating that identities are constructed, fluid and multiple leaves us without a rationale for talking about identities at all…” On the other hand, they argue that the propensity to conceptualize “all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of commonality, connectedness and cohesion, all self-understanding and self-identifications in the idiom of identity saddles us with a blunt, flat and undifferentiated vocabulary.” However, instead of moving beyond identity, as Brubaker and Cooper suggest, I propose that we adopt a conceptualization of identity that is both leaner and harder, since much of their critique seems to hinge on the conceptual ambiguity of identity as a term. My own conceptualization is leaner in the sense that it employs a relatively narrow, primarily cognitive approach to identity that reduces it to the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem in line with Social Identity Theory (see below). It is harder, in the sense that it emphasizes how social iden-

40 For an overview of the academic debate on identity, see Gleason (1983); Fearon (1999); Brubaker and Cooper (2000); Abdelal (2006; 2009).
41 Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 2).
42 Ibid.: 1-2.
tities may come to have a coherent discursive form and how their discursive constitution is surrounded by significant structural as well as material constraints. Moreover, this dissertation focuses only on *social* identities, thereby leaving aside much of the conceptual complexity and analytical dilemmas that stem from the conflation of individual and social identity. Accordingly, individual identity conceptions such as those by key decision-makers will play no part in the present study.

Given these basic premises, my initial definition of a social identity, which will be explicated and elaborated in the course of Part I of the dissertation, is as follows:

A social identity is a materially constrained, discursively structured understanding of the shared categories of a social group, and this understanding is first of all generated by the basic (primarily cognitive) need of social groups for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem.

Social Identity Theory: deriving the logic of social identities

What makes Part I of the dissertation a theoretical exploration of the logic of social identity is my ambition to use insights from social psychology to derive a set of identity-generated needs that motivate social actors such as states. More specifically, I draw upon Social Identity Theory (SIT) to identify two fundamental

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43 Indeed, most of Brubaker and Cooper’s criticism seems most relevant for studies of individual identity. Yet, they do not distinguish sharply between these two levels of identity studies throughout their article.

44 For some IR studies that build on individual identity conceptions, see e.g. Hymans (2006); Feng (2009); Olesen (2012).

45 For an overview of the widely differing definitions of identity, see, for instance, Fearon (1999: 4-5); Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 6-8). A minimalist definition of collective identity, which is supposed to embrace the entire field of collective identity studies, is provided by Abdelal et al. (2009: 19): “We define a collective identity as a social category that varies along two dimensions – content and contestation.”
social identity needs, which stems from the cognitive predisposition of the human mind to divide the social world into in-groups and out-groups: the need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem.\textsuperscript{46} Crucially, the incorporation of insights from SIT into IR opens up several routes for hypothesizing about state interests and behavior, since states – like other social groups – are subject to significant social identity dynamics such as those pinpointed by SIT. A number of mostly constructivist-leaning scholars have already introduced SIT-related ideas and propositions into the field of International Relations over the past two decades.\textsuperscript{47} However, these scholars tend to focus \textit{either} on the need for social distinctiveness (e.g. how it generates security-seeking states) or on the need for a positive self-esteem (e.g. how it generates status-seeking states), thereby largely neglecting one of the two basic identity needs.\textsuperscript{48}

What is more, only a handful of IR scholars have adopted an SIT approach to shed light specifically on \textit{China’s} identity constitution as a state community.\textsuperscript{49} For instance, Peter Hays Gries has used SIT to build an explanatory model, based primarily on the need for social distinctiveness, to pinpoint the conditions under which China’s need for in-group identification is likely to turn into out-group competition and conflict.\textsuperscript{50} Moreover, Deng Yong has found inspiration in SIT, among others, to demonstrate how the need for positive self-esteem can explain China’s high sensitivity to status concerns in its foreign policy, especially in rela-

\textsuperscript{46} The origin of SIT is attributed to Tajfel and Turner (1979). See Chapter 3 for a thorough introduction to Social Identity Theory.
\textsuperscript{47} Mercer (1995); Kowert (1998); Cronin (1999); Hymans (2002); Gries (2005); Mercer (2005); Flockhart (2006); Hymans (2006); Greenhill (2008); Lebow (2008); Curley (2009); Wohlforth (2009); Larson and Shevchenko (2010); Larson (2012); see also Section 3.2.
\textsuperscript{48} For an example of an SIT-based focus on the need for a positive self-esteem (and status), see e.g. Lebow (2008); for an example of an SIT-based focus on the need for social distinctiveness (and security), see e.g. Mercer (1995). I elaborate on the use of SIT by IR scholars in Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{49} These include Gries (2005); Deng (2008); Li (2008: chapter 6); Larson and Shevchenko (2010); Larson (2012).
\textsuperscript{50} Gries (2005: 239). Gries’ model also includes the need for a positive self-esteem (or in-group positivity), but the main thrust of his argument rests on the need for social distinctiveness.
tion to the United States and other salient out-groups. Most importantly for the present study, Deborah Welch Larson has applied SIT to establish an explanatory link between China’s identity and its *grand strategy*, the only other IR scholar to do so. Yet, although Larson does succeed in harnessing some of the explanatory potential of SIT in relation to China’s grand strategy, her important study only takes some initial steps and can furthermore be criticized on a number of accounts, chief among which is her somewhat one-sided focus on social status-seeking (and thus the need for a positive self-esteem). Against this backdrop, I argue that, while the existing contributions clearly suggest the analytical merits of incorporating SIT into IR, SIT still has a large untapped potential for theorizing the foreign and security policies of states.

So more specifically, how will I employ SIT to theorize the motivational drivers of state grand strategy? From the outset, SIT has been preoccupied with investigating the different types of identity strategies that social groups may adopt to satisfy their basic psychological needs. Building on this work, I introduce five separate identity strategies, each of which represents a particular way of distinguishing between the in-group state and its salient out-group states in order to satisfy the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem: social affiliation, social competition and three types of social creativity (i.e. moral high-grounding, downward retargeting and self-cultivation). As such, each identity strategy represents a distinct way of framing the logic of social identity. The overriding theoretical claim of this dissertation is that, by framing the logic of

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52 See Larson (2012); Larson and Shevchenko (2010). Alexei Shevchenko has co-authored the second article to apply a SIT-perspective on Russia’s grand strategy.
53 Tellingly, by far the most cited of the two articles is entitled “Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy” (Larson and Shevchenko, 2010). I will engage more fully with Larson in later chapters (i.e. Sections 3.3 and 9.1).
54 See especially Tajfel and Turner (1979) and section 3.1 for a detailed account.
social identity in a distinct way, each identity strategy has wider strategic implications for how the in-group state approaches the outside world and positions itself on the international stage. In this sense, a state’s grand strategy is its identity strategy writ large. Hence, if a given state pursues an identity strategy of social competition rather than one of social affiliation, I expect this difference of identity strategy to be clearly reflected in its grand strategy.

**State identity and Chinese identity from an inside-out IR perspective**

Along with many other mainstream IR constructivists, I adopt a state-centric framework for studying the logic of social identity. Broadly speaking, mainstream constructivists have pursued two different routes to theorize the identity of states. On the one hand, they have applied an “outside-in perspective” in which state identity is seen as primarily constituted by ideational constructions at the systemic (regional or global) level, in effect socializing individual states to adopt the prevailing type of systemic identity. On the other hand, the constitution of state identity has been explored from an “inside-out perspective” in which the identity of the state is seen as unique, that is, as constructed from within the particular cultural, historical and political settings of the state in question. This distinction between an outside-in and an inside-out perspective also finds an equivalent to some extent in the specific identity-theoretical approaches favored by mainstream constructivists. That is, whereas “outside-in” IR

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55 Prominent “outside-in” contributions by mainstream constructivists include Alexander Wendt’s “Anarchy Is What States Make of It” (1992), Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett’s (eds.) Security Communities (1998), Christian Reus-Smit’s The Moral Purpose of the State (1999), and Alexander Wendt’s Social Theory of International Politics (1999); see also Cronin (1999); Bukovansky (2002); Mattern (2005).

56 Some early examples of this perspective are found in Peter Katzenstein’s edited volume on The Culture of National Security (1996, ed.); Barnett (1996); Berger (1996); Risse-Kappen (1996). Later examples include Hopf (2002); Hymans (2006); Mitzen (2006); Rousseau (2006); Lebow (2008); Steele (2008); Legro (2009); Shannon and Kowert (2012).
constructivists tend to be inspired by sociological theories such as Role Theory, Symbolic Interactionism and theories of social learning, “inside-out” constructivist identity studies are usually informed by social psychological theories such as Social Identity Theory or by various sociological theories centered on concepts such as ontological insecurity or stigmatization.\textsuperscript{57} The present dissertation clearly favors an inside-out perspective. In line with my SIT-based cognitive perspective on identity constitution, I place the in-group/out-group distinction at the center of my theoretical framework, demonstrating how the in-group’s need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem significantly affects its relations with the outside world.

An inside-out perspective on state identity constitution may be applied to all states, but some states seem better suited for it than others. In many respects, China is an ideal candidate, given its deep-seated domestic notions of constituting a state community, its unique and proud history as a civilizational center, its present rise to great power status and not least the sheer size of the Chinese state in relation to the outside world (see Sections 3.3 and 6.1).\textsuperscript{58} Indeed, most of the IR-related China scholars who study Chinese identity do so from an inside-out perspective. Much of this literature is either only implicitly theoretically grounded or it deliberately eschews any theoretical straitjackets in favor of critically deconstructing Chinese identity and inductively exploring its discursive complexities. As an illustrative example of the former, David Shambaugh, in his

\textsuperscript{57} Several of the “outside-in” constructivist scholars mentioned above use Role Theory or Symbolic Interactionism (especially Wendt, 1992, 1999) or sociological and cognitive theories of social learning (e.g. Adler and Barnett, 1998). For some “inside-out” constructivist IR scholars who use sociological concepts such as ontological insecurity and stigmatization, see respectively Kinnvall (2004); Mitzen (2006); Steele (2008); and Zarakol (2010); Adler-Nissen (2014). It should be mentioned that several of these scholars attempt to develop a balanced identity perspective between “the inside” (the state) and “the outside” (international system).

\textsuperscript{58} Similar types of argument for an inside-out approach are easy to find among China-scholars; see e.g. Pye (1992: 50-52); Jacques (2009: chapter 4); Kissinger (2011: chapter 1). Conversely, one might argue that as a low-status state (cf. above) China should be more susceptible to socializing forces from the prevailing liberal-democratic identity model at the international level.
widely cited book *China Goes Global*, has traced and ordered the domestic Chinese debate on China’s international identity role without any identity-theoretical guidance.\(^{59}\) Another example is provided by Martin Jacques’ international bestseller *When China Rules the World*, in which he studies the civilizational roots of China’s identity as a rising power in a similarly untheorized manner.\(^{60}\) An apt example of critical IR scholarship on Chinese identity constitution is offered by William Callahan, who has investigated the discursive construction of Chineseness from an inside-out perspective and shown “how [Chinese] culture and history are more than background: they very directly animate China’s encounter with the outside world”.\(^{61}\)

When it comes to the theoretically guided IR-related studies of Chinese identity, most of them likewise pursue an inside-out approach predicated on social psychological theories such as SIT or on sociological theories.\(^{62}\) Symptomatically for this trend, even the relatively large group of China scholars who use Role Theory to study Chinese identity constitution (in a broad sense) are diligent in stressing the need for a balanced perspective that focuses as much on the ego-driven, domestic self-identification of China as on Chinese role-taking processes of socialization into international society.\(^{63}\) For instance, Sebastian Harnisch, the editor of a new volume on *China’s International Roles* argues that “China’s international roles and its positioning in the international social order cannot be explained only or even primarily by external expectations in the processes of socialization, mim-

\(^{59}\) Shambaugh (2013: chapter 2).
\(^{60}\) Jacques (2009: esp. chapter 8).
\(^{61}\) Callahan (2010: 30). See also Callahan (2004; 2008; 2012); Chong (2014).
\(^{62}\) Apart from SIT, IR scholars have studied Chinese identity constitution based on sociological theory constructs such as ontological insecurity (e.g. Krolikowski, 2008; Gustafsson, 2014) or theories of collective ideas and beliefs (e.g. Legro, 2007; Wang, 2012).
\(^{63}\) See especially the edited volume on *China’s International Roles* by Sebastian Harnisch and his colleagues (2016). Earlier studies include Beylerian and Canivet (1997); Brittingham (2007); Shih and Yin (2013). It should be noted that social roles and social identities are not coterminous as theoretical concepts (see Harnisch, 2016: 16-17).
icking or imitation.” While this dissertation is thus located squarely within an already well-established tradition of studying Chinese state identity from an inside-out perspective, the dissertation could be criticized for treating central aspects of state identity constitution, usually highlighted by Role Theory and Symbolic Interactionism, as secondary (i.e. social recognition, role-taking, legitimacy, alter-casting processes and the socializing effect of the wider international society). Of course, every analytical perspective comes with inherent trade-offs, and I find that an inside-out perspective is most useful for theorizing the motivational drivers of Chinese grand strategy.

**Conceptual complements to social identity: discourse and narrative**

Apart from the identity concept, mainstream constructivists use a range of other concepts to theorize the social substance of international relations such as culture, norms, beliefs and discourses. The concept of culture has been especially popular among IR constructivists seeking to account for the overall patterns of state security behavior. For instance, the much-cited edited volume by Peter Katzenstein on *The Culture of National Security* contains several contributions identifying a link between state culture and state security behavior, Alastair Johnston’s analysis of a so-called realpolitik strategic culture in China being a case in point. Yet, what makes the concept of culture, along with those of norms and beliefs, less attractive as an analytical starting point, is that these

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64 Harnisch (2016: 3). Similar views are found in all the contributions to the edited volume; Chen Yugang even goes so far as to state that China’s “position in international society and alter’s prescriptions are important, but secondary” (2016: 116).

65 It should be noted that there is a considerable IR constructivist literature on the rise of China from an outside-in perspective that focuses on norms, legitimacy and China’s position in international society, rather than on China’s identity (e.g. Johnston, 2008; Clark, 2014; Zhang, 2015).

66 See e.g. Katzenstein (ed., 1996); Hall (1999); Wendt (1999); Bukovansky (2002); Farrell (2002); Lebow (2008).

67 Johnston (1996). For the other contributions, see Katzenstein (1996, ed.).
concepts tend to be either too specific to fully capture or too broad to adequately delimit those ideational elements that affect a given state’s grand strategy. Tellingly, several critics of Johnston’s study of China’s “realpolitik” culture have argued that he overlooks an important Confucian strand of Chinese identity, which has likewise shaped China’s strategic culture.\textsuperscript{68} Instead, I prefer to employ the concept of state identity, since it not only appears coterminous with the “aggregated ideational whole” of the state itself but also evokes the state as a corporate actor entitled to act strategically in the name of the state community. Moreover, my preference for the identity concept hinges on how I have defined state grand strategy in relation to international order (cf. Section 1.1). Hence, by specifying the relationship between the in-group and its salient out-group(s), state identity should be a critical motivational driver of how the state chooses to position itself strategically on the international stage.

However, apart from the identity concept another key constructivist term, namely that of discourse, will perform a central role in the dissertation, not as a \textit{driver} of any social logic but rather in its capacity as a framework for \textit{structuring} social identities.\textsuperscript{69} As such, a social identity (as well as a collective norm or a shared belief) reveals itself and may be studied through its discursively structured manifestations, which allows us to tap into the textual reality of an otherwise intangible phenomenon. There are, of course, other methodological entry points into the study of social identities, ones that provide access to the publicly or privately held conceptions and the behavioral manifestations of the identity in question.\textsuperscript{70} But I will argue that discursive sources offer the best option for

\textsuperscript{68}(e.g. Feng, 2007: 25-32; Wang, 2013: chapter 2).
\textsuperscript{69}For some examples of IR scholars who combine the identity and discourse concepts, see especially Hansen and Waever (2002); see also Bukovansky (2002); Steele (2008); Epstein (2010).
\textsuperscript{70}A fruitful introduction to the methodology of the study of social identities is offered by Rawi Abdelal and his colleagues (2009).
analyzing state identities, notably in the case of China where academic research is fundamentally restricted by the semi-authoritarian Chinese regime.\textsuperscript{71} The proposed conceptual marriage of identity and discourse should be a happy one, found in much of the constructivist IR literature, and by focusing more specifically on the \textit{structural} dimension of discourse, I also acquire a sort of antidote to the more radical constructivist implications of Social Identity Theory. Thus, in some sense I find SIT to be too thoroughly social constructivist, depicting social identities as nearly empty shells that can be injected with any sort of “formative fix” as long as the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem is satisfied (see Section 3.1). Conversely, I want to emphasize the basic discursive building blocks and substantive social categories of state identities and how they become discursively structured in ways that not only stabilize a given state identity, but also enable and constrain some renderings of “the collective self” rather than others.\textsuperscript{72} What I am developing here, in other words, is a “bounded constructivist” approach to the logic of state identity that incorporates key insights from SIT into a discursive structuralist framework.\textsuperscript{73}

The conceptual coupling of identity and discourse should be extended, I will argue, to include the concept of narrative as well. As already indicated, any state identity will be subject to differing and sometimes competing discursive conceptions of how to define and delimit the state community. Such discursive conceptions of state identity tend to assume a narrative form, whereby the logic of social identity is given a specific framing. As such, a state identity narrative can be perceived as a \textit{bounded and coherent articulation of the state’s identity discourse},

\textsuperscript{71} My reason for ignoring the behavioral manifestations of state identity, though, rests on methodological considerations – rather than the nature of the Chinese regime – inasmuch as I want to keep my main variables as separate from each other as possible (see Chapter 5).

\textsuperscript{72} For some examples of IR scholars who adopt a structuralist approach to the study of identity discourse, see e.g. Cronin (1999: 23); Reus-Smit (1999: 29-30); Waever (2002: 30); Hopf (2009: 280-281).

\textsuperscript{73} Chapter 2 specifies what I mean by a bounded constructivist perspective.
defining not only the social categories for distinguishing between the in-group state and salient out-group states, but also the overall identity-generated guidelines for collective action. What is essential here is that different identity narratives can be analytically separated from each other in terms of how they discursively frame the logic of social identity (in line with a specific identity strategy for satisfying the dual identity need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem). Hence, identity narratives can be analytically systematized into distinct narrative categories according to whether the logic of social identity is articulated in a particularistic or universalistic, extrovert or introvert manner. These narrative categories are highly useful, I claim, not only for ordering the multifaceted discourse on Chinese state identity, but also for hypothesizing about Chinese grand strategy.

**A relationship between the logic of state identity and state grand strategy**

In theorizing the logic of social identity as a motivational driver I prepare the ground for proposing a causal relationship between state identity and state grand strategy:

Any state’s prevailing narrative conception of state identity is predicated on a particular identity strategy – for framing the salient in-group/out-group distinction(s) and satisfying the basic dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem – which at the same time generates the grand strategy of the state in question.

More specifically, and using the suggested ideal-typical categories for systematizing state identity narratives and state grand strategy (cf. Section 1.1), I posit
the following relationship between the logic of state identity and state grand strategy pertaining to *a rising low-status state*: By shielding itself from salient out-groups, an *introvert* state identity narrative will generate a *detached* grand strategy that ignores the prevailing international order, whereas an *extrovert* state identity narrative, which directly compares the in-group to salient out-groups, will generate an *engaged* grand strategy that seeks to involve the state actively in questions of international order. Moreover, by perceiving the in-group as fundamentally distinct from its salient out-groups, a *particularistic* state identity narrative will generate a potentially *revisionist* grand strategy that challenges central aspects of the prevailing international order, whereas a *universalistic* state identity narrative, which sees the in-group as affiliated with its salient out-groups, will generate a status quo-oriented grand strategy that supports the existing international order.

The proposed relationship is causal insofar as the logic of social identity constitutes a universal, irreducible and independent driver of collective action (one among several drivers) from which one can extrapolate to the more specific case of how state identity has a generative effect on state grand strategy. While many mainstream constructivists aim to explain the phenomena they study, they generally shy away from phrasing their arguments in outright causal terms. Even so, for reasons to be discussed in Chapter 2, I prefer to use a rather conventional terminology of causality, treating the logic of state identity as an independent variable that potentially explains the dependent variable of state grand strategy. To examine the validity of the proposed relationship, I conduct a plau-

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74 For similar points made from an IR perspective, see e.g. Lebow (2008: 16); Wohlforth (2009: 35).
75 On the question of whether IR constructivists can or should study social identities from a causality-oriented perspective, see e.g. Mattern (2000); Zehfuss (2001); Hansen (2006: chapter 2); Abdelal et al. (2009); for a broader perspective that goes beyond identity, see e.g. Price and Reus-Smit (1998); Dessler and Owen (2005); Fearon and Wendt (2002).
sibility probe in the form of a case study of China’s rise in the 21st century to determine whether the logic of Chinese state identity affects the course of Chinese grand strategy in any significant way.76

1.4 The narrative logics of Chinese state identity
Theorizing the logic of state identity is one of the primary objectives of this dissertation. It adds to the stock of mainstream constructivist theory that engages with realist and liberalist IR theory to shed light on the motivational drivers of state grand strategy. However, the chief purpose is to use the theoretical framework to gain better insights into the specific case of China’s rise in the 21st century. That is, I intend to identify the specific narrative logics of Chinese state identity, which constitute, I claim, a key motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy.

There is certainly no shortage of scholarly work on China’s identity as a state community in the 21st century, and one may easily become overwhelmed by the plethora of identity categories ascribed to China in the academic debate. What is more, many scholars tend to concentrate on a single component of China’s state identity – like China’s exceptionalist nature,77 its socialist ideology,78 its humiliating past,79 its Confucian history,80 its civilizational mentality,81 its adherence to state sovereignty82 or its quest for rejuvenation83 – without much regard for al-

76 On the methodology of a plausibility probe, see Eckstein (1975) and below Chapter 5.
77 E.g. Feng (2013).
78 E.g. Holbig and Giley (2010).
79 E.g. Callahan (2010).
80 Bell (2010).
81 Yan (2011a).
82 Wenhua (2008).
ternative components. As such, the comprehensive and multifaceted debate about China’s state identity testifies to the rather commonsensical observations that it comprises multiple, even mutually irreconcilable, discursive strands and that China’s identity is far from fixed or settled.\textsuperscript{84} However, rather than dismissing Chinese identity altogether as too amorphous and indeterminate to be of analytical relevance, I find it to constitute a powerful motivational driver. And rather than inductively exploring and cultivating the discursive complexity of Chinese state identity, I strive to order and systematize its range of discursive articulations in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century on the basis of my theoretical framework. To my knowledge, few if any other China scholars have contemplated a similar analytical undertaking.\textsuperscript{85}

Putting together the different components of my identity-theoretical framework introduced above – i.e. the logic of social identity, inside-out state-centrism, discursive structures and narratives of identity – I begin my reductive systematization of Chinese state identity by conceptualizing it as a hierarchy of discursive structures.\textsuperscript{86} The hierarchy comprises three layers, consisting of \textit{the referent object of the state} as a reified frame for collective identity constitution (1\textsuperscript{st} layer), a number of highly entrenched \textit{discursive building blocks} that both constrain and enable narrative construction (2\textsuperscript{nd} layer) and a number of \textit{state identity narratives}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Wang Z. (2013).
\item David Shambaugh (2013: 316) even goes so far as to claim that “\textit{In short, China is a confused and conflicted rising power undergoing an identity crisis of significant proportions}.” Several other scholars have from different angles emphasized the conceptual complexity characterizing the discourse on China’s identity; see e.g. Nathan (2010: 74); Qin (2012: 50); Feng (2013: 323).
\item A number of scholars have in different ways sought to bring order to the discursive complexity of Chinese state identity constitution in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century (e.g. Wang, 2005; Zhu, 2010; Rozman, 2011; Shambaugh, 2013), but these analytical projects are not (explicitly) theoretically grounded. Those few scholars, who have been theoretically guided in their attempts to order Chinese state identity (Legro, 2007; Larson, 2012), have only conducted limited empirical analysis.
\item Other IR scholars of both constructivist and post-structuralist leanings have likewise viewed state identity as a set of hierarchically organized discursive structures, see especially Hansen and Wæver (2002); see also Dittmer and Kim (1993: 24); Reus-Smit (1999: 29-30); Bukovansky (2002: 43-44); Buzan (2004: 25-27).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
tives, each of which articulates a specific version of the logic of state identity (3rd layer). More specifically, my reductive systematization of Chinese state identity involves two analytical steps. First, I single out a limited number of discursive building blocks of Chinese state identity (at the 2nd layer), which can be perceived as China’s historical consciousness or collective memory about itself, containing deeply ingrained conceptions of Chineseness. Based on a comprehensive reading of both primary and secondary sources, I claim that the narrative construction of Chinese state identity builds on four relatively distinct discursive building blocks, namely `Sino-civilization´, `Confucianism´, `the Century of Humiliation´ and `the Communist March´. As part of my analysis of official government discourse I furthermore demonstrate empirically how these discursive building blocks enable and constrain the specific narrative construction of Chinese state identity.

Secondly, and more importantly for the overall explanatory agenda, I identify a limited number of main Chinese state identity narratives at the third layer of the discursive-structural hierarchy. That is, at the intersection of theoretical deduction (of ideal-typical identity categories from SIT) and empirical induction (of narrative categories found in the discourse analysis, see below) I derive five discrete narratives of Chinese state identity, each of which is modeled around one of the SIT-based identity strategies: `Globalist China´ (social affiliation), `Sovereign China´ (moral high-grounding), `Unified China´ (downward retargeting), `Sino-centric China´ (self-cultivation) and `Rising China´ (social competition).

The dissertation describes the discursive manifestation of these narratives, placing the spotlight on how each narrative frames the logic of Chinese state identity in a distinct way. In highly reductive terms, `Globalist China´ can be categorized

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87 For a graphical illustration, see Figure A in Chapter 4.
as an extrovert/universalistic narrative, `Sovereign China´ as an introvert/universalistic narrative, `Unified China´ as another introvert/universalistic narrative, `Sino-centric China´ as an introvert/particularistic narrative and finally `Rising China´ as an extrovert/particularistic narrative. Despite being based on ideal-typical theoretical categories, I will demonstrate that the five narratives do actually turn out to represent more or less distinct and exhaustive empirical categories discernible in the official government discourse on Chinese state identity. Importantly, inasmuch as the observed Chinese identity narratives differ markedly from each other in terms of their identity logics, it matters greatly, I claim, whether the official conception of Chinese identity is shaped by one narrative rather than another.

**Studying Chinese state identity**

One may study the identity conceptions of China as a state community in several ways. Given my “inside-out” IR constructivist approach – thereby ruling out foreign (e.g. U.S.) conceptions of Chinese identity – there are basically four different angles from which Chinese state identity may be studied: public elite conceptions, private elite conceptions, public lay conceptions and private lay conceptions of Chinese state identity. Deeming the fourth option to be largely irrelevant in this explanatory context (of linking Chinese state identity to Chinese grand strategy) and considering the second option (private elite conceptions) to be virtually inaccessible, I am left with two main options that most China scholars likewise resort to, namely public elite and lay conceptions of identity. Although one may certainly gain important insights into the constitution of Chinese

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88 For an eminent introduction to the different methods for studying social identities, see Abdelal et al. (2009).
state identity by studying public lay conceptions of it, this dissertation is based exclusively on public elite conceptions.\textsuperscript{89} In fact, I will narrow down my perspective further to include only the official government-based discourse on Chinese state identity. The primary reasons for favoring such an approach – apart from the practical one of possessing no Chinese language skills – are not only that the overall flow of Chinese politics is strongly top-down, in line with the semi-authoritarian nature of the Chinese regime.\textsuperscript{90} But also, that the part of the discourse on Chinese state identity, which is most relevant for China’s grand strategy, is chiefly formulated by key decision-makers and distributed via official channels of public communication (in English or with English translations ready to hand).\textsuperscript{91} In other words, at the end of the day it is China’s political leadership that narrates Chinese state identity and formulates China’s grand strategy.

In order to gain access to the Chinese leadership’s public elite conceptions of Chinese state identity in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the dissertation relies on a combination of discourse and content analysis for respectively teasing out and ranking the different narratives found in the discursive material. Specifically, the discourse analysis employs a large number of primary sources, most of which are white papers, speeches and reports directly attributable to representatives of the Chinese leadership.\textsuperscript{92} While the discourse analysis attempts to establish the five proposed narrative categories of Chinese state identity empirically and to pinpoint their specific logics of identity, the content analysis measures the rela-

\textsuperscript{89} Many IR sinologists have undertaken thorough studies of Chinese state identity from a public lay perspective, using not only different types of discourse analysis, but also public surveys, interviews and observational studies. For some IR-related examples, see e.g. Gries (2001); Callahan (2010); Gries et al. (2011); see also Leonard (2008), Shirk (2008) and Callahan (2013) for some studies based on interviews with public intellectuals not part of the political elite.

\textsuperscript{90} See e.g. Fukuyama (2012); Lawrence and Martin (2012); Nathan (2015).

\textsuperscript{91} Most of the sources used here can be accessed via the homepages of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC or the authorized governmental portal site to China at http://www.china.org.cn/index.htm.

\textsuperscript{92} For an overview of these primary sources, see Appendix B.
tive discursive strength of each narrative over time to provide an “evolutionary ranking” of the five narratives in the 21st century. Accordingly, the content analysis will draw on a more homogenous set of data than the discourse analysis to ensure that a reliable assessment can be made of the narratives’ relative discursive strength. To this end, I read through the editorials of *Beijing Review*, a weekly Chinese newsmagazine in English often described as a de facto mouthpiece of the Chinese government.93 The evolutionary mapping of the five narratives that emerge from the content analysis enables me to single out those narratives that have periodically dominated the official discourse on Chinese state identity during the past 15 years.

**How Chinese state identity shapes Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century**

Now, in order to establish a causal relationship between Chinese state identity and Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century, I will start by drawing on the evolutionary ranking of the five main narratives of Chinese state identity (i.e. the content analysis). Without such a ranking, the independent variable of Chinese state identity would contain too much variation to be any useful for explaining a particular course of Chinese grand strategy. What the evolutionary mapping shows is that three of the five main narratives of Chinese state identity have been particularly prominent, each holding periodic sway over the official government discourse: ‘Globalist China´ until the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2007, ‘Sino-centric China´ during 2007-09 and ‘Rising China´ since 2009. To be sure, none of the three identity narratives have dominated the official government discourse on Chinese identity to the exclusion of other narra-

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93 For an overview of this data material, see Appendix D. Several other China-scholars have tapped into *Beijing Review* to conduct both discourse and content analyses; see e.g. Sullivan (1989); Beylerian and Canivet (1997); Wang (2005); Meng and Berger (2008).
tives, but they are sufficiently strong to warrant treating each of them as an explanatory variable from which to derive a specific narrative logic of Chinese state identity.

It is against the backdrop of this evolutionary mapping (and the proposed theoretical relationship between state identity and state grand strategy, see above) that I formulate a set of hypotheses about how Chinese state identity in the 21st century has shaped Chinese grand strategy in relation to international order. Specifically, I expect the `Globalist China` (extrovert/universalistic) narrative to have generated a Chinese grand strategy of engaged status quo until 2007, the `Sino-centric China` (introvert/particularistic) narrative to have generated a grand strategy of detached revisionism during 2007-09 and finally the `Rising China` (extrovert/particularistic) narrative to have generated a grand strategy of engaged revisionism since 2009. For reasons discussed later, I will concentrate on the narrative shift from `Globalist China` to `Rising China`, treating the global financial crisis in 2007-09 as a sort of critical juncture or transition period. The main question guiding the empirical examination thus becomes whether the narrative shift from `Globalist China` to `Rising China` is reflected in the course of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. More broadly, my attempt to demonstrate the empirical plausibility of the suggested causal relationship rests on a three-pronged strategy. First of all, I conduct a systematic investigation of Chinese grand strategy (along the lines suggested in Section 1.2) to determine if a *pattern of co-variation* between the narrative logics of Chinese state identity and the behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy is discernible in the 21st century. Next, I take a closer look at some of the key discursive texts that provide insights into both Chinese state identity and Chinese grand strategy in order to trace more directly a causal link between the two variables during the
examined period. Finally, I discuss alternative IR explanations, focusing specifically on whether realism offers a sufficient source of explanation in accounting for Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century.

So how does the narrative logic of Chinese state identity more specifically generate Chinese grand strategy? In anticipation of later chapters, let me briefly suggest how I see, for instance, the relationship between the ‘Rising China’ narrative and a grand strategy of engaged revisionism. Following the global financial crisis in 2007-09, the ‘Rising China’ narrative has gradually assumed a dominant discursive position, centered on an identity strategy of social competition. ‘Rising China’ (an extrovert/particularistic narrative) tells the story of an ascending China, rooted in a distinct civilization and poised to resume its historical position as a leading great power after a prolonged and humiliating period as a low-status state. In that sense, ‘Rising China’ articulates the dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the desire to assert China’s status as a great power. Importantly, the narrative aims not only to provide China with a stronger voice in the international arena to further its core interests, but also to use its emerging great power profile to elicit respect and recognition from the outside world. The dominant position of the ‘Rising China’ narrative in the official government discourse has generated, I argue, a new grand strategy of engaged revisionism. Most notably in a behavioral sense, Beijing has actively pursued new institutional platforms, such as the G20, BRICS and the AIIB, and proposed ambitious infrastructural initiatives, such as the Maritime Silk Road and the Silk Road Economic Belt, to gradually revise the existing international order and gain a more prominent international role. Furthermore, China has become far more willing not only to bear the costs of opposing the security agenda of the Western great powers in the UNSC, but also to undertake assertive and even
confrontational actions in order to pursue Chinese claims and interests in the South China Sea, East China Sea and elsewhere. Taken together, there has been sufficient change in the behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy since 2009 to allow one to categorize it as a new course of engaged revisionism.

The overall ambition is to pinpoint the different narrative logics of Chinese state identity and to establish a relation from these logics to Chinese grand strategy. Yet, I will also, in a more tentative manner, draw on my theoretical framework to attempt to explain why China changed its basic identity strategy during the global financial crisis as reflected in the narrative shift from ‘Globalist China’ to ‘Rising China’.

1.5 Overview of the dissertation
The dissertation is organized into three main parts (Parts I-III), each of which revolves around one of the following three main questions (derived from the research question posed at the beginning of this chapter):

- **What is the logic of social identity in IR, and how can we theorize the logic of social identity as a motivational driver of state grand strategy?**
  [Part I of the dissertation: Chapters 2-4]

- **What are the main narratives of China’s identity as a state community in the 21st century, and how does each narrative articulate the logic of social identity?**
[Part II of the dissertation: Chapters 5-8]

- What is the main behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century, and to what extent is this pattern generated by the logic of Chinese identity?

[Part III of the dissertation: Chapters 9-11]

After this introduction, the rest of this dissertation consists of ten substantive chapters followed by a conclusion. Chapter 2 raises the question of how to study the logic of social identity from a constructivist perspective. Given my ambition to treat the logic of social identity in a causal manner as an explanatory source of social behavior, I find critical realism, a philosophy of science, to offer a good starting point, in that it strikes a tenable balance between the positivism/post-positivism divide, which has haunted IR constructivism since its heydays in the 1990s. I coin the term “bounded constructivism” to capture my specific approach to the logic of social identities – an approach that is rooted in critical realism and centered on the various “objective” constraints that surround the construction of social identities. Against this backdrop, I briefly outline the ontology of social identities from a bounded constructivist perspective, concentrating on the cognitive, material and structural constraints that are critical to any attempt to tentatively objectify social identities. Chapter 2 ends with a discussion of the extent to which the logic of social identity can be studied in a causal manner, and I consider a number of reservations that should be kept in mind before venturing down that path.
Chapter 3 is concerned with pinpointing the logic of social identities as viewed from the social-psychological perspective of Social Identity Theory (SIT). Based on experimental studies of group behavior, SIT has showcased how the cognitive predisposition of the human mind to divide the social world into in- and out-groups and to be positively biased in favor of the in-group generates important social identity-constitutional dynamics. After reviewing the SIT-literature I single out what are generally regarded as the two main assumptions of SIT, namely that social groups strive to satisfy the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem. Against this background, I argue that SIT may be incorporated into the state-centric social realm of international relations inasmuch as states – with a few reservations – can be treated like other social groups in being powerfully motivated by the need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem. Crucially, I distinguish five discrete identity strategies that low-status states may adopt, each of which represents a particular way of differentiating between the in-group and its salient out-group(s) in order to satisfy the basic identity needs: social affiliation, social competition and three types of social creativity (i.e. moral high-grounding, self-cultivation and downward retargeting). I furthermore argue that the adoption of one identity strategy rather than another depends on the relative stability and openness of the material and social hierarchy between the in-group state and its salient out-group state(s). In the last part of Chapter 3, I discuss to what extent a SIT-based perspective on China’s identity constitution seems relevant for shedding light on the rise of China and Chinese grand strategy.

Chapter 4 seeks to embed the suggested SIT approach in a discursive-structuralist framework centered on identity narratives as the main analytical concept. First, since SIT is not a theory pertaining specifically to political com-
munities, I find it useful to introduce the concept of narrative into my theoretical framework to address the way in which questions of social identity can be framed by political representatives in a bounded and coherent fashion and furthermore connected to purposeful political behavior. Hence, for any given state identity there will be a number of more or less discrete identity narratives, each of which articulates the logic of social identity in a specific way. In the particular context of relating state identity to state grand strategy, I also emphasize two sets of identity markers for narrating the relationship between the in-group state and its salient out-group(s), that is, a distinction between articulating a particularistic or universalistic and an introvert or extrovert logic of social identity. Secondly, given that SIT is originally far more thoroughly constructivist than my state-centric focus suggests, I prefer to incorporate the key insights from SIT on the logic of social identity into a discursive-structuralist framework. Specifically, I conceptualize state identity as a hierarchical formation of discursive structures comprising three levels of discursive depth, namely the referent object of the state itself at the deepest level, a limited number of basic discursive building blocks at the next level and finally the specific identity narratives at the top-most level. These discursive structures exert a constraining and enabling effect on the range of relevant social categories for differentiating between the in-group state and its out-group state(s). In the last part of Chapter 4, I combine the different parts of my theoretical framework and propose a causal relationship between state identity – i.e. the logic of the prevailing identity narrative – and state grand strategy in both a structural and a generative sense. This causal relationship is stated as a theoretical hypothesis, which will guide the design of my empirical case study.
In the transition from theoretical exploration to empirical examination, **Chapter 5** raises a number of methodological questions concerning my case study of China. First of all, how should I design the empirical examination of China to shed light on the theoretically inferred relationship between the logic of state identity and state grand strategy? I argue that I am best served by designing it as a plausibility probe of a single-case study, as this offers me a useful and well-established means for teasing out the posited causal relation, that is, for pinpointing the narrative logic of Chinese identity and its effect on Chinese grand strategy. Specifically, I divide my case study of China into a number of sub-cases to obtain some variation on the independent variable (Chinese identity narratives) and dependent variable (Chinese grand strategy). Next, I discuss to what extent my case study constitutes “a crucial case” for probing the plausibility of the theoretical framework, and I also specify the scope conditions of the proposed causal proposition in order to discuss the relative representativeness (external validity) of my case study. In the second part of Chapter 5, I focus exclusively on the independent variable, setting out the methodological guidelines for exploring the logic of Chinese identity. Basically, one may study Chinese identity from four different angles – in terms of a distinction between public or private identity conceptions and one between elite or lay conceptions – but I argue that only public elite conceptions constitute a perspective that is both practically feasible and relevant. In light of this, I define my approach to the study of Chinese identity as an “outsider’s perspective” that is well-suited to a theory-driven examination of the official leadership discourse on Chinese identity.

In **Chapter 6**, I begin the empirical mapping of Chinese state identity as it is manifested in the 21st century. Drawing only on the secondary literature, I first attempt to identify what I have termed the discursive building blocks of Chinese
state identity narration, that is, a set of rather abstract and entrenched discursive structures that may be perceived as China’s collective memory about itself. I argue that at the beginning of the 21st century narrative construction of Chinese state identity was primarily constrained and enabled by four relatively distinct discursive building blocks, which all have a solid, if somewhat selective, discursive-structural grounding in Chinese history. The four discursive building blocks of Chinese identity comprise `Sino-civilization´, featuring the distinctiveness, longevity, greatness and barbarian counter-image of dynastic China as “the Middle Kingdom”; `Confucianism´, highlighting the moral virtue, collectivism, social harmony and universalism of dynastic China as the empire of “all-under-heaven”; `the Century of Humiliation´, framing the inequality, trauma and weakness of China during its recent semi-colonialized past; and `the Communist March´, emphasizing the struggle for sovereignty, modernity and socialism with “Chinese characteristics” as part of a rising China’s quest for national rejuvenation. The second objective of Chapter 6 is to introduce the deductively derived (SIT-based) identity categories into the specific context of Chinese state identity constitution in the 21st century. To this end, I first describe the conceptual variation of the wide range of narrative categories found in the secondary literature on Chinese identity, and then use this preliminary empirical mapping to guide the translation of the theoretical ideal-types into the specific context of Chinese state identity constitution. Specifically, my review of the Chinese identity literature yields twelve relatively distinct Chinese narrative categories, which are further reduced to five main narratives, each of them modeled on one of the ideal-typical identity strategies for differentiating between the Chinese in-group and its salient out-groups and for achieving a positive self-esteem.
Chapter 7 conducts an extensive discourse analysis of Chinese state identity. Drawing on a wide range of primary sources of the official Chinese government discourse, such as speeches, white papers and reports, I systematically analyze the narrative construction of Chinese state identity in the 21st century. The main objective is to demonstrate that, despite being deductively modeled on theoretical ideal-types, the five main narrative categories do indeed constitute a set of relevant, valid and more or less exhaustive empirical categories, which are useful for systematizing the discourse on Chinese state identity. The discourse analysis establishes each of the five main narratives as discrete discursive categories, teases out their distinct logics of identity – defining the relation between the Chinese in-group and its salient out-groups as well as the strategy for satisfying the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem – and illustrates how each narrative is embedded in an underlying set of discursive building blocks. More specifically, the discourse analysis demonstrates how the `Globalist China´ narrative (based on an identity strategy of social affiliation) seeks to tone down China’s distinctiveness as a state community, instead positioning China as an active and responsible member of international society, thereby earning outside respect and recognition from salient out-group states; how the `Sovereign China´ narrative (based on an identity strategy of moral high-grounding) strives to preserve China’s distinctiveness based on China’s inviolable right to political and territorial sovereignty, while castigating potential violators as morally depraved out-group states; how the `Unified China´ narrative (based on an identity strategy of downward retargeting) depicts China as a civilized, modern and harmonious state community of multi-ethnic unity, challenged only at the margins by radicalized out-groups of China’s ethnic minorities; how the `Sino-centric China´ narrative (based on an identity strategy of self-cultivation) celebrates China’s distinctiveness as a political and civilizational
community in a self-absorbed manner, without directly rejecting the prevailing societal model of liberal democracy championed by salient Western out-group states; and how the ‘Rising China’ narrative (based on an identity strategy of social competition) creates a powerful discursive linkage between China’s historic greatness, its recent humiliations and its present national rejuvenation whereby China reasserts its great power status in the face of salient out-group states like the United States.

In Chapter 8, I trace the discursive evolution of the five main narratives of Chinese state identity over the course of the 21st century so far. To this end, I undertake a content analysis of a single authoritative source of Chinese state identity, well suited for systematically ranking the five main narratives year-by-year in terms of their relative discursive strength. Specifically, the content analysis is based on the editorials of the weekly newsmagazine *Beijing Review*, a de facto mouthpiece of the official government line. What emerges from the analysis is a relatively clear-cut evolutionary hierarchy of shifting discursive authority, showing that three of the five main narratives have held a dominant position at different times during the examined period. That is, the ‘Globalist China’ narrative held sway over the official identity discourse before the global financial crisis; ‘Sino-centric China’ was the most prominent narrative during the global financial crisis from 2007 to 2009; and ‘Rising China’ has subsequently established itself as an increasingly powerful narrative of Chinese state identity. On this background, I argue that despite comprising five separate narratives with discrete identity logics, Chinese state identity is neither too multifarious, nor too ephemeral to be a useful analytical variable. In fact, at any point in time during the 21st century the prevailing official conception of Chinese identity drew chief-
ly on one of the main narratives, from which we may derive a rather distinct identity logic that potentially shapes Chinese grand strategy.

Having thoroughly mapped the narrative logics and evolution of Chinese state identity, Chapter 9 introduces the second main focus point of this dissertation, namely Chinese grand strategy. To begin with, I review the scholarly IR debate on Chinese grand strategy, identifying the mainstream disciplinary dividing lines that dominate the debate: realism, liberalism and constructivism. The purpose of the review is not only to shed light on existing attempts to explain Chinese grand strategy, but also to specify how my own constructivist approach centered on the logic of social identity offers a novel perspective. Subsequently, I consult the wider IR literature on state (rather than merely Chinese) grand strategy in order to provide a baseline definition of the concept, that is, as a set of principles for the strategic employment of a state’s resources to pursue its overall goals. Specifically, I argue that the key grand strategy challenge of any major rising state like China is how to position itself within the existing international order, and I also argue that we should study a rising state’s strategic positioning in terms of the institutional, normative and power dimensions of the prevailing international order. Furthermore, I propose to examine and categorize Chinese grand strategy according to two sets of commonly used analytical distinctions concerning the extent to which China accepts and involves itself in the existing Liberal Order. In ideal-typical, binary terms, Chinese grand strategy may thus be captured through a distinction between status quo and revisionism, engagement and detachment. Against this backdrop, I suggest how Chinese grand strategy (dependent variable) may be causally related to Chinese state identity (independent variable) by virtue of a set of empirical hypotheses linking the distinct narrative logics of Chinese state identity to different ideal-types of Chinese grand strategy.
Finally, the chapter provides an operationalization of the four ideal-typical variants of Chinese grand strategy (primarily based on behavioral indicators) to be able to determine whether the observed behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy should be categorized as detachment or engagement, revisionism or status quo.

**Chapter 10** provides a thorough empirical examination of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. That is, I describe the evolving behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy and assess along the way whether there have been any major discernible changes over the course of the 21st century thus far. The underlying objective of the examination is to determine the extent to which the observed behavioral pattern supports the empirical hypotheses presented in Chapter 9. The patterns of Chinese grand strategy are measured in terms of a range of behavioral indicators that comprise the institutional, normative and power dimension of Chinese grand strategy. For each of these dimensions, the behavioral indicators are used to determine if Chinese grand strategy can be categorized primarily as engaged or detached, status quo or revisionist. The behavioral examination takes its starting point in the 1990s in order to establish a basis of comparison for categorizing Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. More specifically, China’s grand strategy in the 1990s is described as detached status quo as it was based on a fundamental acceptance of the prevailing unipolar Liberal Order (status quo) and a basic reservation of becoming directly engaged in that order in an institutional and normative sense (detachment). The bulk of the examination concentrates on the 21st century, which is divided into two main periods – the 2000s and the 2010s – that differ markedly from each other (and the 1990s) in terms of most of the behavioral indicators. Each period is precipitated by a critical juncture, respectively 9/11 2001 and the global financial crisis
in 2007-09. I will describe Chinese grand strategy in the 2000s as engaged status quo as Beijing assumes a far more constructive role in international society, engages more deeply in existing multilateral cooperation and involves itself more actively in the handling of international security issues in the UNSC. Moreover, China refrains from using coercive power or confrontational behavior in its disputes with neighboring states, it avoids challenging U.S. unipolarity in any direct way and it even supports the U.S.-led Global War on Terror. However, in the wake of the global financial crisis, Chinese grand strategy takes a turn towards engaged revisionism. This new behavioral pattern is primarily reflected in China’s active role in promoting new institutional platforms such as the BRICS, the G 20 and the AIIB and its ambitious “Maritime Silk Road” and the “Silk Road Economic Belt” framework of investments to position China as a central actor on the international stage. In addition, China has in the 2010s demonstrated an increased willingness to confront the Western powers, notably in the UNSC, and not least to take assertive measures in its territorial disputes with neighboring countries. On this background, the overall assessment of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century concludes that its behavioral patterns are broadly in line with the empirical hypotheses.

In Chapter 11, I assess the explanatory power of Chinese identity as a motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy more directly. I argue that it is not sufficient to establish a pattern of co-variation between Chinese identity and grand strategy in the 21st century as Chapter 10 did. I also need to pinpoint how the narrative logic of Chinese identity was indeed a key motivational driver of the observed behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy. To this end, I first conduct some process-tracing of the proposed relationship, using a number of official government documents. While the relevant sources are somewhat limited,
the process-tracing does enable me to establish a more direct link between Chinese identity and grand strategy. In addition to the process-tracing, I extend the scope of the empirical analysis into the 1990s in order to obtain more variation on the main variables (in a preliminary fashion) and thereby widen the data material from which to evaluate the hypothesized relationship. Against this wider backdrop, I provide a comprehensive evolutionary account of the entire examined period, including the critical junctures, to specify how the narrative logic of Chinese identity has generated Chinese grand strategy. Subsequently, I critically examine the entire theoretical and empirical argument as part of my evaluation of the overall plausibility of the proposed relationship. I address a number of validity and reliability issues pertaining to different parts of the empirical analyses, and I also discuss the main limitations of the theoretical framework. Finally, I compare my own constructivist approach, centered on the logic of social identity, to the dominant approach in the IR debate on the rise of China, realism, which focuses on the logic of power and security dynamics. The purpose of the comparison is to demonstrate that the logic of social identity constitutes a necessary, if insufficient motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy.
PART I: THE LOGIC OF SOCIAL IDENTITY

Chapter 2:
A bounded constructivist approach to social identities

Constructivism has come a long way since the heyday of the so-called fourth meta-theoretical IR-debate in the 1990s when constructivist scholars engaged their rationalist and critical-reflectivist counterparts to carve out a more or less distinct meta-theoretical position in IR.\(^{94}\) The endeavor to `seize the middle ground´ between rationalist and reflectivist IR-approaches was spearheaded by mainstream constructivists, who announced their commitment to “normal science” arguing that social constructivism did not necessarily imply hermeneutical methods or a de-constructivist/emancipatory agenda.\(^{95}\) The fourth IR-debate gradually subsided in the wake of Alexander Wendt’s comprehensive treatise on the meta-theoretical foundation of constructivism in *Social Theory of International Politics*.\(^ {96}\) Although his *Social Theory* did not really settle the debate, it did have the indirect effect of instilling meta-theoretical fatigue into the ranks of constructivists.\(^ {97}\) Consequently, so far in the 21st century the large majority of mainstream constructivists have preferred either to be relatively pragmatic in questions of ontology and epistemology or to eschew such questions altogether


\(^{95}\) Adler (1997); see also Jepperson et al. (1996) and Hopf (1998). The commitment to normal science was most explicitly captured by Alexander Wendt’s (1995: 75) famous statement that “constructivists [...] fully endorse the scientific project of falsifying theories against evidence”.

\(^{96}\) Wendt (1999).

\(^{97}\) The ensuing debate on Wendt’s *Social Theory* included “Forum on Social Theory of International Politics” (2000), *Review of International Studies*, 26(1): 123-180; “Forum on, Review of International Studies, 30(2): 255-316; and Guzzini & Leander (eds. 2006), *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and His Critics*. Tellingly, most of the contributions in the latter anthology were revised editions of earlier publications.
in favor of concentrating on empirically guided research. Nevertheless, given that the central puzzle in Social Theory’s chapter two – how to combine a social constructivist perspective with social scientific aspirations – is no less relevant for this dissertation, I will start with a meta-theoretical discussion of how to theorize the logic of identity.

Chapter 2 consists of three sections, which will lay down the underlying premises for developing “the logic of identity”. First, section 2.1 briefly takes stock of critical realism as a philosophy of science that may provide some sort of basis for IR-constructivists to engage in theorizing. It is argued that critical realism may serve as an entry point for embracing what I will refer to as a “bounded constructivist perspective”. Section 2.2 then moves on to elucidate the ontology of social identities – i.e. what generates and constitutes the phenomenon itself – as seen from a bounded constructivist perspective. More specifically, I highlight three ontological dimensions of social identities – pertaining to their cognitive, material and structural properties – which are critical for the ability to treat them in a quasi-objectified manner. The last section of chapter 2 raises the question of causality in order to discuss the potential of objectifying social identities and studying their causal effects.

2.1 Critical realism and bounded constructivism
This dissertation subscribes to a realist philosophy of social science in the sense that not only does the world exist independently of human thought; it also ex-

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99 Likewise, Christian Reus-Smit (2013: 589-608) has recently lamented the widespread disregard for meta-theoretical debate, arguing that we need (once again) to explicate our meta-theoretical assumptions.
erts an autonomous influence on our representations of the world.\textsuperscript{100} In other words, there is an external or objective aspect to reality that cannot be reduced to our sense-experienced observations (empiricist positivism) or our intersubjective discourses (post-positivism).\textsuperscript{101} While a realist philosophy may seem tenable as long as one stays within the confines of natural science, things become somewhat murkier if one extends these claims into social science. The main reason for this is, of course, that its subject matter is in itself constituted by social actors, thereby seemingly dissolving the idealized object/subject distinction of natural science.\textsuperscript{102} Furthermore, insofar as we are making this world comprehensible through language, discourse and eventually theories, it implies that our statements and knowledge about the world are always intersubjectively created.\textsuperscript{103} Conceding these widely embraced epistemological points about the construction of social reality should not, however, lead us to adopt a socially/discursively deterministic approach to the study of social phenomena, let alone to abandon the scientific aspiration of referring to the real world.

First of all, insofar as our statements and knowledge about the social world refer to \textit{really} existing phenomena, we cannot intersubjectively exhaust or determine reality, since it may turn out to have properties and effects that are incorrectly depicted or that elude the human mind altogether. Indeed, even social phenomena are in important ways conditioned by material, cognitive and other non-discursive factors, which exercise an autonomous, self-organizing influence on the constitution of a given social phenomenon by having a regulating effect on

\textsuperscript{100} Cf. Wendt (1999: 51-52); see also Bhaskar (1998: 18-21). Realist philosophers of science put ontology (what is?) before epistemology (how do we know?), and that premise is crucial for their approach to the study of social science.

\textsuperscript{101} Patomäki & Wight (2000: 223).

\textsuperscript{102} For an elaboration of the object/subject problematic, see e.g. Guzzini (2000); Kratochwil (2007).

\textsuperscript{103} See Wendt (1999: 62).
the range of discursive representations of the phenomenon.\textsuperscript{104} Secondly, insofar as our knowledge refers to an independently existing reality, this knowledge – far from being arbitrary constructs – represents more or less correct accounts of reality that must stand the unremitting test of peer evaluation.\textsuperscript{105} Thirdly, even social phenomena are ultimately real in the sense of being independent of any specific human being, which means that “social kinds confront the individual as social facts”.\textsuperscript{106} Especially, when it comes to large-scale, macro-level social phenomena like states, social scientists themselves rarely constitute the phenomena in any interesting way. As summed up by Milja Kurki: “This means that science is never purely objective. However, science is not ‘relativistic’ either because our knowledge is always of something, that is, our accounts of the world are not merely ‘imagined’ but make projections about really existing ontological objects, relations and processes.”\textsuperscript{107}

Following Roy Bhaskar, Margaret Archer and others, this realist line of reasoning in social science may be referred to as critical realism, and it has been adopted by a variegated set of IR-constructivists such as David Dessler, Alexander Wendt, Heikki Patomäki, Colin Wight, Milja Kurki, Fred Chernoff and Andrew Bennett.\textsuperscript{108} In general, critical realism is regarded as an alternative route to social science that does not entail the outright empiricist or rationalist objectives associated with a positivist philosophy of science.\textsuperscript{109} Instead, critical realists seek to strike a sort of balance between positivist and critical IR-scholars by

\textsuperscript{104} For a related argument, see Wendt (1999: 64).
\textsuperscript{105} Patomäki & Wight (2000: 224).
\textsuperscript{106} Wendt (1999: 75); Wight (2012: 43).
\textsuperscript{107} Kurki (2006: 203). For a similar account of how reality and knowledge is partially conditioned by objective as well as intersubjective “determinants”, see Collin (1997: 18-20, 223-224); Hopf (2009: 279).
\textsuperscript{108} For essential readings on critical realism, see Archer (1998). It should be noted that some of these IR-scholars identify themselves as ‘scientific realists’ rather than ‘critical realists’, but for the present purposes the distinction is largely negligible (for a discussion of the differences, see Chernoff (2007)).
\textsuperscript{109} Wight (2012: 41). One of the best introductions to a positivist social science approach is provided by King, Keohane & Verba (1994).
making three commitments: To ontological realism (there exists an independent reality), epistemological relativism (all knowledge is socially produced) and judgmental rationalism (that despite epistemological relativism it is still possible to choose among competing statements/theories). Moreover, in striking this balance, critical realism allows us – as argued persuasively by Alexander Wendt, Milja Kurki, and Andrew Bennett – to engage in causal theorizing as long as we keep in mind the ultimately conditional status of all social knowledge production.

Construed this way, critical realism is naturally accompanied by the sort of scientific aspirations characteristic of much mainstream constructivism, notably a specific variant of it, which I shall label ‘bounded constructivism’. What I mean by bounded constructivism is an underlying concern with the constrained and bounded nature of social constructions and a preference for tentatively treating social phenomena as objects of analysis by emphasizing their structural (in a discursive sense) as well as non-discursive (e.g. cognitive and material) aspects. Bounded constructivism acknowledges both the indispensable role of human beings in constituting social phenomena discursively and the absence of an absolute “Archimedean point”, from which to ascertain competing truth claims. But it stresses at the same time the real cognitive and material determinants, exerting an autonomous, generative effect on the discursive process, and the equally real social structures, which have a constraining and stabilizing

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112 I prefer to use the somewhat narrower term of bounded constructivism – rather than mainstream constructivism – for several reasons: It highlights my interest in the fundamental constraints of all social constructions; it comes without the strong associations to American IR-scholarship that mainstream constructivism usually implies; it is – unlike much mainstream constructivism – explicitly grounded in a critical realist philosophy of science.
113 For an extensive discussion of the social constructivist aspect of reality and knowledge production from a critical perspective, see e.g. Guzzini (2000); Smith (2004).
effect on the range of discursive representations. To the extent that a social phenomenon may indeed be treated as an object of analysis, the social scientist can refer to it more or less successfully by presenting “evidence” in terms of logical and empirical plausibility compared to competing claims to capture the same phenomenon.\textsuperscript{114} Accordingly, a bounded constructivist perspective informed by critical realism holds the possibility of arriving at better explanations of social reality, since – as Andrew Bennett puts it – “useful standards exist for judging theoretical progress and assessing some interpretations and explanations to be superior to others.”\textsuperscript{115}

2.2 The cognitive, material and structural ontology of social identities

Now, what does it mean to study social identities from the perspective of bounded constructivism? While critical constructivists accentuate the inherently social, irreducibly discursive and fundamentally malleable nature of identities, a bounded constructivist sees them through another set of lenses, allowing one to treat social identities in a relatively objectified manner, to theorize them and to infer behavioral consequences from them.\textsuperscript{116} In this section, I focus on the ontology of social identities – i.e. what generates and constitutes the phenomenon itself – as seen from a bounded constructivist perspective. More specifically, I zoom in on three dimensions (the cognitive, material and structural) of any social identity that are critical for the ability to tentatively objectify social identi-

\textsuperscript{114} See also Price & Reus-Smit (1998); Hopf (1998); Finnemore & Sikkink (2001).
\textsuperscript{115} Bennett (2013: 470).
\textsuperscript{116} For critical constructivist approaches to identity formation, see e.g. Campbell (1992); Neumann (1996); Zehfuss (2001); Guzzini & Leander (2005); Hansen (2006); Epstein (2010).
ties and for studying their causal effects. It should be noted that the cognitive and structural argument will be far more thoroughly unpacked in sections 3.1 and 4.2 respectively, whereas the material argument is added in this section primarily to further strengthen the overall plausibility of employing a bounded constructivist approach to social identities.

First of all, I emphasize the cognitive dimension of social identities that in itself produces an important, autonomous and discernable effect on the discursive constitution of social identities. Based on experimental studies, Social Identity Theory (SIT) has convincingly pinpointed some of these cognitive drivers by demonstrating how groups of people, even groups constructed at random, invariably engage in social identity dynamics with each other (by means of categorization, identification, comparisons and competition), thereby creating in-group loyalties and out-group demarcations. In addition to this purely cognitive in-group bias, SIT also points out how people derive important emotional satisfactions and gratifications from their group membership, which create strong incentives to achieve positive self-esteem. As a result, SIT shows us that all identity formation processes are characterized by a basic tendency for “in-group favoritism” at the expense of out-groups (see section 3.1). Furthermore, some IR-scholars have reached similar conclusions about in-group favoritism after reviewing not only SIT but also various other identity-related literatures. For instance, William Wohlforth writes that “cumulative research in disciplines ranging from neuroscience and evolutionary biology to economics, anthropology, sociology and psychology [demonstrates] that human beings are powerfully motivated by

\[\text{\textsuperscript{117}} \text{For a partially comparable approach, see Hopf (2009: 280), who studies the cognitive, social and structural dimension of social identities.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{118}} \text{The material dimension will thus be included in subsequent chapters in a selective ad hoc-manner rather than as an explicitly theorized cornerstone of the framework.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{119}} \text{For an introduction to SIT see Brown (2000); Hogg (2004); McDermott (2009) – a more detailed account of SIT follows below in section 3.1.}\]
the desire for favorable social status comparisons. This research suggests that the preference for social status is a basic disposition rather than merely a strategy for attaining other goals.”  

120 And based on a comprehensive empirical study of international relations from ancient Greece to modern day American unipolarity, Richard Ned Lebow claims that, “the spirit animates all human beings and that the need for self-esteem is universal, although manifested differently across societies.”

Such general insights seem to lend some initial credence to pursuing a causal approach to social identities. Most fundamentally, the predisposition of human collectivities to favor the in-group and care about their self-image has been shown by SIT-scholars to constitute a universal psychological trait of intergroup behavior.  

122 We may thus understand – i.e. refer to – the cognitive mechanisms of collective identity construction more or less correctly, yet collective identities still exercise their cognitively generated, self-regulating effects on social life. As such, social identities provide a basic driver for human collectivities, creating discursive and behavioral patterns and regularities, which may be categorized and generalized along several dimensions (e.g. according to type, content or relative stability).  

123 Moreover, by taking the first step in establishing the autonomy and irreducibility of social identities as a generic driver of group behavior, I am at the same time preparing the ground for treating social identities as a causal factor that can be juxtaposed to other determinants of social behavior. Only if social identities can be argued to constitute a distinct and principal factor, which

120 Wohlforth (2009: 35).
122 Needless to say, differences in social and material settings may function as mediating factors on the identity dynamics in numerous ways, but the basic identity-generating predisposition of social groups is universal (cf. McDermott, 2009: 351-58) – see also section 3.1.
is therefore not primarily reducible to other causal factors or simply negligible in comparison to them (such as economic incentives or power logics), does it make sense to formulate an explanatory model based on social identity dynamics as this dissertation intends to do.\textsuperscript{124}

Secondly, I highlight the \textit{material} dimension of social identities as another autonomous source of social identity constitution.\textsuperscript{125} Materiality matters as an autonomous source in at least two respects. One is in the form of those material properties/attributes that social groups refer to as they (re)constitute the boundaries that separate them from each other.\textsuperscript{126} In a very general sense, such material factors may comprise, among other things, geographical features, facial characteristics, ethnic customs, cultural artefacts and physical monuments. It is not argued that materiality exerts a determinate influence on the constitution of social identities; rather, it is claimed that the social identity process always involves a number of salient material constraints that cannot be completely arbitrarily construed by the involved social actors.\textsuperscript{127} For instance, material manifestations of religion, ethnicity and race have played an important role for identity constitution and border demarcation between social groups throughout history. Ethnic distinctions may, of course, be deliberately downplayed for the sake of promoting a more inclusive identity narrative as has been the case in the People’s Republic of China since 1949.\textsuperscript{128} But given that such features cannot be eas-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[124] Cf. Mattern (2000: 302). As pointed out by Janice Bially Mattern (2000), many mainstream constructivists are not very explicit about whether identity amounts to a causal or merely a constitutive variable with no independent effects on behavior.
\item[125] Let me point out that this dimension of social identities overlaps somewhat with what Wendt (1999: 224-25) refers to as the corporate aspect of social identities (related to organizational, judicial, geographical etc. features).
\item[126] See e.g. Cronin (1999: 31-32).
\item[128] E.g. Brady (2012); see also section 7.4.
\end{enumerate}
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ily disregarded, let alone eliminated, they tend to represent a set of material constraints on social identity construction.\footnote{129 For some studies of the impact of ethnicity and race on Chinese identity, see for instance Dikötter (1992); Jacques (2009: chapter 8); Callahan (2010: chapter 5).}

Another way that material factors have an autonomous influence on social identities is through the distribution of economic wealth and power capabilities. Hence, there is no shortage of studies in sociology and social psychology showing how identity-related comparisons and competition between groups are to some extent driven by differences in basic material conditions that are translated into differences in status.\footnote{130 See e.g. Weber (2009[1947]: part IV); Veblen (2007[1899]); Berger et al. (1980); Dittmar (1992).} One obvious example from IR are the identity categories of `great power’, `developing country’ and `rising power’, which all hinge on a certain material profile (i.e. in terms of economy, population, infrastructure, military capabilities, etc.). Interestingly, states may come to assume (or be assigned) different, even conflicting, roles in light of their material background. China is a case in point as its enormous population and imposing geography have earned it a formal great power role in the UN Security Council, whereas its status as a developing country for decades allowed Beijing to maintain a relatively low profile on the international stage, not befitting a great power.\footnote{131 Also, material factors are critical to the designation of China as a "low-status country" vis-à-vis the West in general and the United States in particular (see section 3.3).} In sum, while all material factors are discursively mediated by social actors, the very idea of mediating something implies that those actors engage in identity construction partly by referring to some non-discursive, material elements. Such elements may have an obvious or ambiguous meaning, but the bottom line is that they have an autonomous (causal) impact on identity construction.
Third and finally, I focus on the *structural* dimension of social identities understood here as the most congealed, well-established layers of the identity discourse that constrains as well as enables the representations of the identity in question.\(^{132}\) Whereas the first two dimensions lay the ground for a bounded constructivist ontology of social identities by stressing their non-discursive (cognitive and material) dimension, the third aspect pertains to discourse itself. After all, social identities belong to the category of unobservable phenomena, which are manifested primarily by virtue of their discursive imprints and studied through discourse analysis, content analysis, surveys etc.\(^{133}\) Emphasizing the discursive aspect of social identities does not, however, necessitate a focus on the openness and malleability of social identities.\(^{134}\) Social actors may always discursively reformulate their collective identities, but social engineering of identities is not easy as it is subject to structural constraints, especially in the case of large-scale social identities such as state identities.\(^{135}\) Hence, by concentrating on the structural dimension of social identities I further pave the way for a bounded constructivist ontology. In a similar vein, Rawi Abdelal and his colleagues have stated that “*[w]e accept Robert Cox’s (1986) implication that even if one assumes the social world is a constructed one, there may be periods and places where intersubjective understandings of these social facts are stable enough that they can be treated as if fixed and can be analyzed with social scientific methods.*”\(^{136}\)

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\(^{132}\) From a somewhat overlapping angle, one might also seek to ground a bounded constructivist ontology on the iterated patterned *practices* that stabilize social identities, cf. Adler & Pouliot (2011: esp. 6).

\(^{133}\) More on this in Abdelal et al. (2006: 702-705).

\(^{134}\) The discussion about the relative stability/malleability of social identities can be found in e.g. Wæver (2002: 22); Abdelal et al. (2006: 700-01); Cedermann & Daase (2006); Legro (2009: 38).

\(^{135}\) The point about the structural constraints on discursive identity construction has been made, among others, by Wendt (1995: 73); Wæver (2002: 30); Hopf (2009: 280-281).

\(^{136}\) Abdelal et al. (2009: 28); see also Cox (1986).
2.3 The bounded construction of causal identities

If we accept, firstly, that the cognitive dimension of social identities generates certain patterns of discursive practices that manifest themselves universally, secondly, that the material aspects of social identities moreover places important constraints on these discursive manifestations, and finally, that the discursive structures of large-scale social identities may periodically congeal to the point of reification, then social identities in general and state identities in particular can be treated as objects of study within a bounded constructivist ontology; that is, one may study the causal effects of identity dynamics.\textsuperscript{137} Indeed, I intend to take this logic of identity as a point of departure for constructing a theoretical framework (in section 4.3) that links state identity narratives to state grand strategy. In this section, I ask what the tentative objectification of social identities implies in terms of causality and then conclude chapter 2 with a brief justification of why, after all, bounded constructivism is still to be considered a social constructivist approach to the logic of identity.

When it comes to the question of causality, one may say that it has been weighing down mainstream constructivism like an incubus. Notwithstanding the widespread reservation among many mainstream constructivists to indulge in outright causal theorizing, I contend that the outlined meta-theoretical guidelines allow me to explore a bounded constructivist logic of identity in a causal sense. In order to illustrate how far down the path of causal analysis one may venture, it is useful to conceive of a number of standard criteria for causal analy-

\textsuperscript{137} For a critique of the aspiration to treat identities in a causal and essentialist manner see e.g. Neumann (1996); Zehfuss (2001); Hansen (2006: 25-28); Epstein (2010: 329-334).
sis usually associated with the more positivist quarters of social sciences. In other words, what would constitute the ideal premises for objectifying social identities in a way that would render them susceptible to causal analysis? Ideally, such premises include:

- Universality; that is, identity dynamics can be found across time and space. Admittedly, as the identity term itself is of recent origin and has a contested semantic meaning, it is rather the underlying social determinant (in a critical realist sense), which may be thought of as having a universal presence. As already suggested, this social determinant, referred to here as ‘the logic of identity’, is driven by the generic cognitive dispositions of humans to categorize and divide the social world into in- and out-groups (to be elaborated in section 3.1).

- Irreducibility; that is, identity dynamics and their effects cannot be reduced to other causal factors. Whereas some IR-scholars view state identities as mere windows dressing, in effect reducible to more primary behavioral incentives arising from, for instance, security or power dynamics, I argue that Social Identity Theory, among others, has managed to demonstrate the irreducibility of social identity dynamics. Provided that the logic of identity does indeed amount to an irreducible social determinant, its effects may, nevertheless, not easily be teased out from those of other causal factors. From a positivist viewpoint, this is ultimately a methodological challenge that re-

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138 For a standard introduction to causal analysis in political science, see King, Keohane & Verba (1994).
139 See for instance Krasner (1999: 57-58); see also Chan (2013: 11-12) for a similar point about the irrelevance of identity logics in the specific context of China.
140 For a similar point, see Wohlforth (2009: 35). It should be mentioned that from the perspective of epiphenomenalism, one may counter that cognitively generated identity dynamics are in fact reducible to the physical processes (such as neural impulses) in the brain (see Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on epiphenomenalism: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epiphenomenalism/).
quires a clear operationalization, tracing and testing of the “causal mecha-
nism of identity dynamics”. Yet, from a critical realist perspective one harbors
no illusion of being able to directly isolate the effects of the identity variable
(from other causal variables) in order to assess its relative explanatory pow-
er. Rather, I aim for the more realistic goal of substantiating empirically (via a
plausibility probe) not only that the logic of identity is implicated in the for-
mulation of a state’s grand strategy but also that the former is affecting the
latter in a significant manner (see sections 4.3 and 5.1).

- Effectiveness; that is, one need to specify the “causal mechanism” of the logic
  of identity, leading to its assumed effects. The term of causal mechanism is
  traditionally associated with a Humean-inspired, positivist notion of causality
  understood as the push or pull effect of one object in relation to another. From a bounded constructivist perspective informed by critical realism, how-
ever, one would rather describe the causal effect in a less mechanical manner
given the social/discursive nature of the variables under study. Hence, the
causal logic of social identities may be captured in two ways, the first of
which comes closer to a traditional view of causality as a mechanism than the
second. On the one hand, I see the logic of identity as a generative force pro-
ducing recurring patterns of social organization along the lines of in-
group/out-group differentiation due to underlying cognitive dispositions (see
section 3.2). On the other hand, I conceive of the logic of identity in a softer
sense as a structuring force having a both constraining and enabling effect on
social behavior by virtue of the specific discursively structured markers and

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141 On causal mechanisms in social science, see George & Bennett (2005: esp. p. 137).
142 On a Humean approach to causality, see Kurki (Kurki, 2006: 195-198).
143 See especially Bennett (2013). Bennett sticks to the term of ‘causal mechanism’, but he makes a number of
(critical realist) reservations that marks him off from a traditional positivist perspective.
guidelines found in any social identity (see section 4.2).  

- Independence; that is, one should be able to separate state identity (independent variable) from state grand strategy (dependent variable) in order to study the causal effect running from independent to dependent variable. Beginning with the issue of separating the variables, there are several strategies for reducing the risk of conflation. Most importantly, one must be diligent in defining and operationalizing the two variables independently of each other, thereby establishing them as both conceptually and substantively distinct phenomena (see section 5.1). However, independence also implies a straightforward, unidirectional effect from identity to grand strategy, which may appear untenable in light of the vast critical (as well as mainstream constructivist) literature exploring the mutually constitutive character of the relationship between state identity and strategic behavior (especially in a security sense). Nevertheless, there seems to be good reasons to downplay the issue of mutual constitutiveness in this specific explanatory context. First of all, the proposed irreducibility and effectiveness of the logic of identity both contribute to strengthening the autonomy of the identity variable as does its relative discursive-structural stability (see below). What is more, as I want to explain the strategic – in the sense of positional – rather than security dimension of overall state behavior, the potential feed-back effect on state identity

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144 At the same time, I am toning down the long-standing dividing line within constructivist IR-studies between causal and constitutive reasoning (e.g. Wendt, 1999: 77-88; Smith, 2000; Kurki, 2006; Adler, 2013: 121-23), since causality may take various forms from a critical realist standpoint. On the difference between causal and constitutive reasoning with respect to social identities see Mattern (2000: 301-302); see also Hymans (2006: 26).

145 Section 9.2 discusses how to operationalize and study state grand strategy in a way that clearly separates it from identity narratives. For example, whereas the latter is primarily studied by means of textual discourse on narratives of identity, the former is captured mostly by indicators of strategic behavior.

146 Much of this literature is investigating the existential nature and identity-shaping/reinforcing effects of identifying security threats and adopting military measures to counter them; see e.g. Huyssmans (1998); Buzan et al. (1998); Mitzen (2006); Hansen (2006); Rousseau (2006).
• Stability; that is, the logic of identity should generate discursively structured identity narratives that are stable enough to be treated meaningfully as an independent variable. While positivist IR-scholars view social identities as ephemeral and critical constructivists see them as important but in a state of flux, I have argued above that social identities in general and state identities in particular may congeal and become ingrained discursive structures, allowing one to study their specific identity logics and thereby treat them as an independent variable (see section 4.2).

Taken together, it seems reasonable to attempt to study the logic of identity in a causal manner, as an independent variable, as long as one keeps in mind the reservations made above. The relative significance of the logic of identity varies, of course, with the type of behavior that one seeks to explain. Here I want to demonstrate how the logic of identity is intimately involved in forging the grand strategies of states, but I will later address alternative logics that also affect state grand strategy (in section 9.1 and 11.4). The next step in investigating the logic of identity takes me further into the explanatory logic itself by identifying and employing some basic theoretical insights from Social Identity Theory. But before taking that step, I will conclude this chapter on a bounded constructivist approach to social identities by briefly pointing out why it is still to be regarded as a social constructivist perspective.

Inasmuch as a bounded constructivist approach is about highlighting the various bindings that impinge upon the construction of social identities, one may wonder what role is left for social constructivism. To begin with, I reject the argu-
ment that to be a social constructivist is to study how social actors (may) actively (re)construct their social world.\textsuperscript{147} In my view, it is no less important to investigate the bounded nature of social construction in order to explain why some social phenomena such as state identities are being constantly reproduced and how they generate, enable and constrain recurrent patterns of state behavior. More concretely, however, my theoretical framework does in fact leave some room for appreciating the actively constructivist role of social actors in at least three ways. Firstly, when it comes to the construction of state identity narratives, I emphasize the important role of so-called identity narrators in creating a specific narrative within the underlying structural constraints given by the discursive formation (see section 4.2). Indeed, at times of a severe identity crisis, identity narrators may even reformulate the basic discursive building blocks of state identity. Secondly, with respect to the policy-level of formulating a grand strategy, I turn the attention to the discursive maneuvering room that key decision makers enjoy in balancing the various causal factors that – apart from the logic of identity – affect the overall strategic priorities of states (see section 11.4). Finally, one thing is to argue the case of bounded constructivism from a theoretical perspective; another is to confront one’s theoretical framework with the complex empirical realities of a case-study, which tends inadvertently to empower social actors and their social constructions.

\textsuperscript{147} A typical proponent of this view is Emmanuel Adler (2013: 123), a mainstream constructivist, who has stated that “if constructivism is about anything, it is about change.” Interestingly, back in the 90s mainstream constructivism was far more structuralist in its orientation, leading one scholar (Checkel, 1998: 341) to lament that “agency has fallen through the ontological cracks for constructivists.”
Chapter 3:
Substantiating the logic of social identities

In their search for explanatory power, mainstream IR-constructivist have employed various theories to demonstrate how social identities affect international relations. Rooting the identity concept in different theoretical literatures reflects not only semantic/conceptual variations but also more substantial disagreements insofar as these literatures highlight different aspects of the social identity constitution process itself. Broadly speaking, mainstream constructivists have primarily chosen to ground their understanding of identity in two separate strands of thought: Role Theory associated with symbolic interactionism\(^\text{148}\) and Social Identity Theory.\(^\text{149}\) Without going into a lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of subscribing to either Role Theory or Social Identity Theory, I will merely list three main reasons why I find Social Identity Theory to be a better match for my theoretical agenda.

Firstly, from an explanatory perspective Social Identity Theory not only seems to enjoy a stronger foundation due to its solid base of experimental testing but is also more direct in identifying the causal mechanisms involved in the identity constitution process (see section 3.1). Given my overall ambition of explaining state grand strategy, Social Identity Theory thus provides a well-established starting point for pinpointing the key identity-generated drivers of social behavior, and these drivers may be translated into a state-centric context of strategic behavior. Secondly, Role Theory is essentially a more individualistic perspective, which has the indirect effect of favoring a humanized (anthropomorphized)

\(^{148}\) For some examples of IR-scholars using Role Theory, see Wendt (1992; 1999); Cronin (1999); Reus-Smit (1999); Mitzen (2006); Harnisch, Frank et al. (2011).

\(^{149}\) Some constructivists attempt to combine these theories (e.g. Cronin, 1999). For a systematic comparison of the two approaches to social identities, see Hogg, Terry et al. (1995).
state-subject when applied to an IR-context – something I want to avoid (see section 3.2).\textsuperscript{150} Finally, and most substantially, the identity constitution process in Role Theory hinges on interaction, the mirroring process between `self´ and `other´ and the need for social recognition, leading many IR-constructivists to focus on the socializing impact of the systemic (international) level stemming from, among other things, normative cultures, international identities or epistemic communities.\textsuperscript{151} Conversely, I want to pursue an inside-out perspective on state identity constitution, stressing its cognitive dimension and how it generates a need for social distinctiveness as well as a positive self-esteem on the international arena.\textsuperscript{152}

Chapter 3 consists of three sections, which unpack the substantive logic of social identities. First, section 3.1 presents an overview of Social Identity Theory, deriving from it the two main assumptions about the effects of social identity dynamics: the cognitive disposition to differentiate between in-groups and out-groups and the broader psychological need for a positive self-esteem. Subsequently, section 3.2 first discusses how the specific features of the international system as a social system affect the way the two basic SIT-insights can be employed in a state-centric context; and then focuses specifically on the various identity strategies that low-status states may adopt to resolve the sometimes conflicting needs for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem. Finally, section 3.3 further narrows down the analytical scope as it attempts to provide an initial answer to the question of how relevant a SIT-based identity approach

\textsuperscript{150} The best and most prominent example of this linkage is found in the work by Alexander Wendt (Wendt, 1999: 218-224).

\textsuperscript{151} For a related point, see Larson (2012: 59-62). Some IR-scholars use SIT in a similar way as Role Theory to analyze the socializing impact of dominant norms (e.g. Flockhart, 2006: 93-96), but only by emphasizing the desire for positive self-esteem and downplaying the desire for distinctiveness (more on this distinction below).

\textsuperscript{152} Despite these differences, Social Identity Theory and Role Theory do find some common ground in their emphasis on the need for (a positive) social status (see section 3.2).
is for the case of China. The section concludes with an introduction of the five main identity strategies that China can choose among in satisfying its dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem.

3.1 The basic insights of Social Identity Theory
Social Identity Theory (SIT) was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the late 1970s, largely in response to the prevailing approach within social psychology back then, Realistic Group Conflict Theory.153 Whereas the latter seeks to explain in-group favoritism and ultimately intergroup hostilities as a result of conflicting goals and competition over limited resources, Tajfel and Turner demonstrated that the mobilization of in-group favoritism – if not necessarily conflict in itself – can be accounted for merely in terms of cognitive biases inherent in all human beings.154 Accordingly, SIT primarily studies the cognitive mechanisms that cause people to identify with a social group and develop specific social identities.155 Together with its closely related theoretical peer, Self-Categorization Theory (SCT)156, SIT has managed to establish a thriving paradigm with a broad range of theoretical insights, most of which hark back to just

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155 SIT also focuses on non-cognitive psychological (e.g. emotional) dimensions of social identification, but here I primarily pursue the cognitive dimension.
156 Self-Categorization Theory places greater emphasis on the individual than the group level and is more concerned with the cognitive categorization process per se (see Turner, Hogg et al., 1987). I prefer SIT to SCT mainly because I pursue a group perspective and because I will employ many of the original SIT-insights formulated by Tajfel and Turner.
two elementary propositions deduced from experimental studies, which I shall return to below.\textsuperscript{157}

As a social-psychological approach, SIT in reality straddles two separate perspectives on identity constitution, in effect offering a sort of micro-level cognitive anchoring of social dynamics. This in-built tension has led some IR-scholars to portray SIT as an individual-based theory of social identity.\textsuperscript{158} Yet, SIT has from the outset striven to explain intergroup phenomena – such as discrimination, prejudice and conflict – without reducing them to an aggregation of individual or interpersonal processes, preferring instead to assign such phenomena to the social sphere driven by intergroup identity dynamics.\textsuperscript{159} In other words, SIT-scholars study the group in the individual rather than the other way round. As such, SIT represents a distinctly European – as opposed to American – tradition within social psychology, providing a non-reductionist starting point well suited for theorizing about large-scale social phenomena.\textsuperscript{160} Furthermore, even though the basic insights of SIT were originally generated from experimental settings with so-called minimal groups of random construction,\textsuperscript{161} subsequent research in more realistic social environments has replicated most of the basic findings, thereby warranting the application of SIT to large-scale groups with

\textsuperscript{157} Matthew Hornsey presents a crude measure of the exponential growth of SIT-related research in recent years (Hornsey, 2008: fn. 2). It should be noted that SIT has to some extent been eclipsed by SCT as the dominant perspective (McDermott, 2009: 367).

\textsuperscript{158} Hymans (2002); Mattern (2005: 47); Flockhart (2006: 92-93); see also Brown (2000: 746-747). The individualist reading of SIT is often based on Tajfel & Turner’s definition of social identity \textit{“as those aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging”} (Tajfel and Turner, 1979: 40).

\textsuperscript{159} See Hogg, Abrams et al. (2004: 248); see also Larson (2012: 62). In the same vein, Hogg, Abrams et al. (2004: 251) underline that social identity processes are qualitatively distinct from personal/individual identity processes.

\textsuperscript{160} Conversely, the American tradition analyzes social identities from an individualist perspective.

\textsuperscript{161} Minimal groups were deliberately employed by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues in order to control for alternative explanations for in-group favoritism.
long histories and well-established borders such as states. In practice, however, one needs to supplement SIT with a set of additional premises when applying its basic insights to the realm of interstate relations (more on this in section 3.2).

**The need for social distinctiveness**

So what are the two basic propositions of Social Identity Theory? The first one is predicated on the cognitive predispositions of the human mind, causing people not only to divide the social world into in- and out-groups but also to be biased in favor of the in-group. More specifically, SIT pinpoints how this cognitively induced differentiation of social groups occurs in three analytically separate processes:

- Categorization, where people mentally segment, classify and order the social world into comprehensive units, some of which are readily available (e.g. sexual, religious, racial or political units), while others may be constructed at random if no obvious categories are available.
- Identification, where people define themselves and are viewed by others as members of certain social categories that define them as a group.
- Social comparison, where people compare their in-group with relevant out-groups, thereby facilitating the distinction between in- and out-groups.

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162 That is, the external validity of the original experimental SIT-studies has been strengthened (Hornsey, 2008: 213; Larson, 2012: 64); for an overview-article see e.g. Boldry & Kashy (1999).
164 For an overview of this process, see Tajfel and Turner (1979: 40-43).
165 SIT-experiments have convincingly demonstrated the centrality of the categorization-process even in settings where no readily available social identity markers are present.
Categorization is the “cognitive core” of social identity processes insofar as the predisposition to categorize the social world initiates a mental process of over-emphasizing similarities within social categories and exaggerating differences between them, a process that eventually leads to in-group favoritism in itself. Once people start dividing the social universe into categories of in- and out-groups, ‘us’ and ‘them’ – the most basic of perceptual divisions – certain assumptions readily follow.\textsuperscript{166} Rose McDermott describes the implications in the following way: “Individual group members assume that out-group members are more similar to each other than those in the in-group, that they are different from the in-group, and that they are different from the in-group in ways that are bad and wrong.”\textsuperscript{167} Indeed, numerous SIT-experiments have shown that all identity formation processes are characterized by a basic propensity to “in-group favoritism” at the expense of out-groups with respect to the ascription of motives, the evaluation of qualities and the distribution of goods.\textsuperscript{168}

Why do people engage in this cognitive process of social categorizations in the first place, thereby leading them down the road to in-group biases? The answer, according to SIT, lies in the likewise cognitively-derived need for uncertainty reduction. According to Michael Hogg, the leading theorist on the relationship between cognitive uncertainty and social identification, “[p]eople strive to reduce subjective uncertainty about their social world and about their place within it – they like to know who they are and how to behave, and who others are and how they might behave.”\textsuperscript{169} Hence, the social identification process is catalyzed by a basic cognitive desire for managing – by virtue of social categorization – the

\textsuperscript{166} See e.g. Perdue et al. (1990) for an account of how cognitive categorizations lead to in-group bias.
\textsuperscript{167} McDermott (2009: 348).
\textsuperscript{168} Hymans (2002: 5-6). The basic motivation for in-group favoritism has also been depicted in detail by anthropologists. For example, Clifford Geertz (1972: 18) notes in his famous Balinese study that even at the expense of personal material interests “A man virtually never bets against a cock owned by a member of his own kin-group.”
\textsuperscript{169} See Hogg, Abrams et al. (2004: 256). For a more elaborate account, see Hogg (2000a).
flood of stimuli and sensory impressions that would otherwise overwhelm us and leave us in a state of deep subjective uncertainty. Yet, the same cognitive mechanisms that are functional for ordering, understanding and acting in the social world also generate social differentiation, stereotyping and in-group favoritism. In a similar vein, Michael Hogg and his colleagues have demonstrated that people tend to identify more strongly with groups, which rest on simple, clear and prescriptive social categorizations, when they feel uncertain about themselves and their social context.

Interestingly, the cognitively motivated need for uncertainty reduction comes to play much the same critical role for social identity constitution in SIT as does the concept of ontological insecurity within other more sociological approaches to social identity. In short, ontological security concerns the need for having a fundamentally stable sense of self and `significant others’, and the concept goes beyond the mere cognitively driven need for uncertainty reduction to also include other types of psychological (mainly emotional) motivations for maintaining a stable social universe. Given that ontological (in)security seems better suited than subjective uncertainty for capturing both the existential and social aspect of collective identity constitution, and that ontological (in)security has become a key concept within IR-studies on collective identity, I prefer to employ the concept of ontological insecurity here even though I still mainly concentrate on its cognitive dimension.

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170 See also Hogg & Abrams (1988: 17-20).
171 Hogg, Sherman et al. (2007). Such unambiguous social categorizations provide what is referred to as a “high group entitativity”.
172 The most well-known use of the concept of ontological (in)security comes from Anthony Giddens’ theoretical coupling of ontological (in)security and self-identity (Giddens, 1991). Another important contribution located in the borderland between social psychology and IR has been made by Katarina Kinnvall (2004).
173 Within IR, ontological security is primarily associated with Kinnvall (2004); Mitzen (2006); Steele (2008); Subotic (2015).
There is another aspect of the identity process that needs to be highlighted, namely social comparisons. It is by means of social comparisons that group members are able to establish and evaluate the distinctiveness of their own group in relation to other groups.\textsuperscript{174} The relevance of social comparisons depends on a range of factors – such as intergroup similarity, relative proximity and the evaluative significance of specific attributes – which all add up to provide a measure of the relative salience of intergroup comparisons.\textsuperscript{175} Accordingly, although the in-group in practice has various potential out-group targets, these tend to be hierarchized in terms of relative salience, leaving the in-group with a preferred out-group target for social comparisons.\textsuperscript{176} Furthermore, on this background, SIT-research has shown that salient intergroup comparisons generally follow a logic that is quite different from interpersonal or intragroup contexts in that the former do not strive towards uniformity or assimilation but rather towards maximization of intergroup differences. Such differentiation incentives naturally spur intergroup competition, but the cognitive determinants studied by SIT do not, it should be stressed, in themselves imply any inherent disposition towards intergroup conflict.\textsuperscript{177}

Without going into further details about the cognitive drivers of the social identity process, let me sum up the first of the two SIT-based propositions that are central for my explanatory framework:

In order to reduce their ontological insecurity, people are cognitively predisposed to categorize the social world into in-groups and out-groups and

\begin{itemize}
  \item See Tajfel (1971); Hogg (2000b); Hogg et al. (2004).
  \item Tajfel & Turner (1979: 40); Brown & Haeger (1999). For the broader context, see also Oakes et al. (1994).
  \item In an IR-context, Jacques Hymans (2006: 28) uses the term “key comparison other” to denote the idea of a preferred out-group target for social comparisons.
  \item As argued by Marilynn Brewer (1999: 429): “in-group identification is independent of negative attitudes towards out-groups”; see also Gries (2005: 239); Hymans (2002: 7).
\end{itemize}
to differentiate between them in a way that not only emphasizes the distinctiveness of the in-group (in relation to salient out-groups) but also generates in-group favoritism.

**The need for a positive self-esteem**

Turning, then, to the second core proposition of SIT regarding the need for a positive self-esteem, it has attracted considerable more theoretical controversy than the first proposition.178 Basically, positive self-esteem may be defined as the positive differentiation (through self-enhancement) of the in-group from relevant out-groups, and SIT therefore rests on the assumption that a positive social identity is based on favorable intergroup comparisons. More specifically, the desire to see one’s own group in a positive light implies, at least implicitly, that people want their social group to be not only different from, but also better than (or at least as good as) other groups along relevant parameters of comparison. Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams have encapsulated the universality of this psychological desire in the following way: “People strive to promote or protect the prestige and status of their own group relative to other groups” [...] People do this because one of the most basic human motives is for self-enhancement and self-esteem, and in salient group contexts, the self in self-enhancement and self-esteem is the collective self”.179

While SIT-scholars generally agree on the psychological need for a positive self-esteem as an integral part of their paradigm, the concordance largely evaporates when it comes to the status of the self-esteem assumption and its relation to the

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179 Hogg, Abrams et al. (2004: 256); for a more elaborate account, see Hogg & Abrams (1988).
other main assumption of social differentiation. Although Henri Tajfel and John Turner originally argued that social differentiation, in-group favoritism and even competitive intergroup behavior were motivated by the desire for a positive and secure social self,\textsuperscript{180} other SIT-scholars have subsequently had great difficulties unraveling the exact relationship between the two central SIT-variables.\textsuperscript{181} That is, should the need for a positive self-esteem be seen as a primary motivational source, as originally envisioned by Tajfel and Turner, or rather as a cognitively induced effect (or even by-product) of in-group favoritism in the sense that the latter bolsters self-esteem?\textsuperscript{182} Furthermore, as pointed out by some SIT-scholars, it is necessary to move beyond the purely cognitive determinants of the social identity constitution process to fully appreciate the motivation behind the need for a positive self-esteem. After all, the desire to see oneself as not only different from but ultimately better than others seems to require some sort of affective motivation.\textsuperscript{183} As a result of these challenges, SIT-related research has displayed a tendency from the late 1990s to downplay the self-esteem assumption somewhat in favor of concentrating on other theoretical variables.\textsuperscript{184} However, as noted by Matthew Hornsey in a review-article on SIT, “self-esteem has not been written out of the theory. The need for a positive self-esteem is still fundamental to SIT […] but it is a simplification of the theory to argue for a straightforward relationship between the two variables.”\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{180} Tajfel & Turner (1979: 40-41).
\textsuperscript{181} The relationship between the two variables has been examined by several SIT-studies, see e.g. Hogg & Abrams (1988); see also Hogg & Abrams (1990) and Rubin & Hewstone (1998) for more elaborate accounts.
\textsuperscript{182} It should be added more generally that the question of whether cognitive processes \textit{per se} can account for seemingly motivational effects is a persistent and bothersome one in social psychology (Sedikides and Gregg, 2008: 104).
\textsuperscript{183} For an overview, see McDermott (2009: 349).
\textsuperscript{184} For instance, Hogg & Abrams has focused increasingly on uncertainty reduction, while Self-Categorizing Theory has largely ignored the assumption of positive self-esteem.
\textsuperscript{185} Hornsey (2008: 214).
On this background, I will sidestep the question of the relationship between the need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem, preferring instead to treat the two variables as separable basic psychological desires, the former being largely cognitive and the latter being rooted in a broader set of psychological motivations.\(^{186}\) Thus, people derive important satisfactions and gratifications of a more emotional character from belonging to a group with a positive self-esteem. Importantly, one need not venture far into other branches of social psychology to uncover ample support in favor of the assumption that the psychological desire for a positive self-esteem is universal. Most prominently, Constantine Sedikides, a leading social psychologist, and his colleagues have conducted meta-analytical, cross-cultural studies of relevant data, demonstrating that the specific practice and manifestation of self-enhancement may vary across cultures but the underlying motive itself is universal.\(^{187}\) This conclusion is further corroborated by a range of findings from, among others, evolutionary biology and neural brain science to cultural studies and social psychology, all of which from various angles lend credence to the universality of a positive self-esteem motive in human psychology.\(^{188}\)

Still, one might ask whether the culturally diverse manifestations of the need for a positive self-esteem impinge upon my ability to develop a generalized explanatory framework. After all, there are a number of studies that explore and document the differences between an Eastern and Western variant of the desire for a positive self-esteem with the Eastern category encompassing the Chinese.\(^{189}\)

\(^{186}\) From a non-SIT identity perspective, Kenneth Locke (2003) has attempted to systematize the same two basic psychological needs, which he defines in terms of solidarity (being together or apart) and status (being above or below).

\(^{187}\) Sedikides, Gaertner et al. (2003; 2005).

\(^{188}\) Sedikides and Gregg (2008: 110).

\(^{189}\) See Markus & Kitayama (1991); Heine et al. (1999); Heine & Hamamura (2007); see also Nisbett (2004) for a more general account of social psychological differences between Asians and Westerners.
According to these studies the more collectivistic mentality of Eastern societies (especially Confucian ones such as China, Korea and Japan) implies that the desire for explicit self-enhancement is weaker if not entirely absent here, whereas the individualistic outlook of Western societies stimulates a conspicuous form of self-enhancement. In contrast, people in Confucian societies display a more self-critical propensity and a general preoccupation with maintaining face. But as several recent studies have borne out, even people from Confucian countries are motivated by some sort of self-enhancement. Only, it is expressed in a more implicit and tactical (rather than candid) way and assumes a more self-protecting rather than self-advancing character as witnessed by the social imperative to maintain face.

In my view, all of this amounts to treating the psychological need for a positive self-esteem as indeed a universal motive, but one that – along the lines of the present SIT intergroup-context – is more adequately rephrased as a desire for a positive social status. While differences in cultural settings undoubtedly color the various manifestations of collective self-esteem, all social groups seem to be concerned about their relative status in the social hierarchy – in a positive sense to attain prestige, in a negative sense to maintain face. What is more, social status is often construed as a positional zero-sum good where the relative rise of an out-group is seen as the relative decline of the in-group and vice versa. It means that the motivation for a positive social status is conducive to a state of intergroup competition, not least among groups that view each other as salient points of reference. However, as SIT-scholars have made clear, social groups

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190 Heine & Hamamura (2007: 5).
191 E.g. Yamaguchi, Greenwald et al. (2007); Sedikides and Gregg (2008: 109); Brown & Cai (2010). See also Cai, Wu & Brown (2009) for a study conducted in China that reports "normal" levels of more explicit self-esteem.
192 See Norenzayan & Heine (2005) for a general discussion of the use of psychological universals.
have various types of basic identity strategies at their disposal for dealing with the question of how to achieve a positive social status in the event of unfavorable intergroup comparisons (see next section).^{194}

I am now in a position to advance the second core proposition of SIT (with inspiration from other branches of social psychology), which is central to my explanatory framework:

In order to satisfy cognitive as well as other psychological incentives people are powerfully motivated to see their group in a positive light – i.e. the need for a positive self-esteem – and to strive for favorable intergroup-comparisons, thereby maintaining or enhancing the relative social status of the in-group.

Section 3.1 has juxtaposed the psychological motivation for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem as two fundamental aspects of the overall social identification process, which may be separated theoretically even if they in practice constitute inter-related dual motives. Accordingly, I will treat them as a pair of social identity-generated motivations that may be employed to explain important aspects of group behavior. The explanatory potential of using a SIT-perspective, encompassing these dual motives, has been nicely encapsulated by Michael Hogg and his colleagues: \textit{``At the level of intergroup relations, this explains why groups compete with each other to be both different and better – why they struggle over status, prestige and distinctiveness.''}^{195}

^{194}See Tajfel & Turner (1979: 43).
^{195}Hogg & Abrams (2004: 258).
A final point to be made concerns the relationship between the two psychological desires for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem. Although I choose, as already indicated, to be agnostic about their mutual relationship, preferring instead to treat them as dual drivers, it seems reasonable to allow for the possibility that one of the two desires may periodically come to overshadow the other. On the one hand, the need for social distinctiveness may sometimes – for instance, in the case of hyper-nationalist movements – be pursued so vehemently that it ultimately compromises the self-esteem of the social group in question. On the other hand, the need for a positive self-esteem may lead some groups to derogate their own social distinctiveness to the point where they exhibit out-group favoritism rather than in-group favoritism. This tendency has been registered among low-status groups and it is often accompanied by a socialization process where the in-group seeks to imitate the out-group, depending on the permeability of intergroup boundaries. Notwithstanding the possibility of finding such imbalanced instances, I maintain the assumption that social groups generally strive to satisfy both the need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem.

3.2 IR and SIT: The identity strategies of low-status states
The popularity and broad application potential of SIT has enabled it to reach well beyond the confines of social psychology. From the mid-1990s, the field

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196 For a brief and instructive overview of how SIT has used the notion of out-group favoritism, see Jost (2001: 92-93); see also Rubin & Hewstone (2004). There has been a debate on whether the notion of out-group favoritism is even compatible with SIT (Rubin and Hewstone, 2004: 828-829), which is one of the reasons why I prefer to operate with the need for distinctiveness and self-esteem as separate psychological drivers.

197 I discuss this process in more detail below (next section) as an instance of an identity strategy of social affiliation.

of International Relations has also witnessed a growing interest in SIT as part of a broader turn towards psychological theories in IR.\(^{199}\) In particular Jonathan Mercer’s controversial *International Organization* article about “Anarchy and Identity” spurred an ongoing debate about the merits of incorporating SIT-insights into IR.\(^{200}\) Mercer saw in SIT – and notably its proposition about in-group favoritism – a readily employable theoretical linkage between in-group identification and out-group conflict, which could provide an interesting corroboration of IR-realism’s view of a conflict-ridden realm of international politics. Other IR-scholars took issue with Mercer’s too simplified usage of SIT-insights and stressed that SIT has actually been widely recognized as (and also criticized for) being better at explaining “in-group love” than out-group derogation.\(^{201}\) This limitation of SIT, however, is of little significance here since I want to build an identity-based framework for explaining state grand strategy rather than interstate conflict in itself.\(^{202}\)

Section 3.2 discusses how the specific social system of international relations affects the way the two basic SIT-insights can be brought to bear on the identity dynamics of states. Even though most SIT-scholars study social groups that are found in intra-state settings (such as ethnic, religious or social groups), there are no inherent obstacles in the theoretical set-up of SIT that prevents it from being applied to the state-centric realm of international relations, as the considerable

\(^{199}\) For an overview see Goldgeir & Tetlock (2001); Shannon & Kowert (2012). For a critique of this psychologization of IR, see Epstein (2010).

\(^{200}\) Mercer (1995); see also Kowert (1998); Cronin (1999); Hymans (2002); Gries (2005); Mercer (2005); Flockhart (2006); Hymans (2006); Greenhill (2008); Lebow (2008); Curley (2009); Wohlforth (2009); Larson (2012).

\(^{201}\) For a critique of Mercer, see e.g. Cronin (1999: 20); Wendt (1999: 241-243); Hymans (2002: 10); see also Gries (2005) for a discussion of the conditions under which in-group positivity may turn into out-group hostility. From a SIT-perspective, see especially Marilynn Brewer’s article “The Psychology of prejudice: Ingroup Love or Outgroup Hate?” (Brewer, 1999).

\(^{202}\) Hence, I use SIT only to account for the need for both distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem and how this need may be translated into state grand strategy.
number of SIT-inspired IR-studies indirectly attest. Inasmuch as the state can be regarded as a social group – albeit a highly institutionalized and large-scale one with corporate features – it has a social identity, generated by the kind of primarily cognitive determinants examined in SIT-studies. That is, those institutional actors, who speak on behalf of the state, may readily use the referent object of the state, as well as the state apparatus itself, to invoke and harness the cognitive need for in-group distinctiveness as well as positive self-esteem. What is more, inasmuch as these channeled psychological desires of its constituent people endow the state with a social identity, this `collective self of the state´ takes on – and this is a critical point – a holistic and dynamic group-life of its own, predicated on discursively structured identity narratives (see chapter 4). Consequently, my conceptualization of state identity eschews an overly individualized (reductionist) position favored by some SIT-informed IR-scholars without, on the other hand, resorting to direct anthropomorphization. That is, the state is not embodying its own “states-are-people-too” version of what essentially resembles an individual’s identity constitution process. Throughout the dissertation, I will for practical reasons use corporate terms such as `China’, `Beijing’ or `Zhongnanhai´ (see section 5.1) in conjunction with psychological concepts such as `identity´ and `cognitive needs´ when I am in reality referring to a discursively constructed social identity structure, whose referent object is China.

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203 Tajfel & Turner (1979: 40) specifically note that their theory also encompasses large-scale social categories.
204 Wendt (1999: 213) sums up the essential features of the corporate state as “an organizational actor embedded in an institutional-legal order that constitutes it with sovereignty and a monopoly of the legitimate use of organized violence over a society in a territory.”
205 Examples of such individualistic SIT-perspectives in the study of IR usually involve a focus on key decision-makers and thereby individual leaders’ identity conceptions (e.g.Cronin, 1999: 22; Hymans, 2006: 18-19). See also Guzzini (2000) for a cogent general argument about why constructivism implies a focus on intersubjectivity rather than on individual actors.
206 For an explicit discussion of such anthropomorphization, see Ringmar (1996); Wendt (1999: 221-224); see also Cronin (1999: 22) for a brief discussion of anthropomorphization in relation to SIT; and Mitzen (2006: 342) for a similar point from a role identity theory approach.
So what qualifications and reservations should be made before incorporating the two basic SIT-insights into the state-centric context of international relations? Again, the frequent use of SIT among IR-scholars suggests a relatively unproblematic translation from the field of social psychology to that of international relations. Yet, most IR-scholars do not trouble themselves with elucidating the premises of such inferences. Here, I will discuss a number of issues that all have a bearing on my ability to employ SIT in a state-centric context.

**The characteristics of international relations as a social realm**

“According to SIT, identities can change quickly in response to contextual changes” as Michael Hogg and his colleagues put it. This view is largely a theoretical legacy from the minimalist settings of early SIT-experiments, which intended to demonstrate how randomly constructed groups could still unleash powerful social identity dynamics. As already noted, SIT has since been tested and validated in more realistic settings, and there is accordingly no need to insist on a fluid and context-determined identity concept once we replace the experimental site of arbitrary minimal groups with the real world of intergroup relations. Indeed, in line with my underlying approach of bounded constructivism, I will emphasize the discursive-structural constraints that characterize the social identification process (more on this in section 4.2).

More specifically, there are a number of features that seem distinctive for the realm of international relations as set against the domestic (intra-state) social

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207 Given my state-centric perspective, I use the term ‘international relations’ synonymously with that of ‘inter-state relations’.

208 One exception is provided by William Wohlforth (Wohlforth, 2009: 36), who limits himself to a few overall considerations, though.

environment that most SIT-researchers analyze. One striking feature is that inter-state borders are considered fixed and impermeable in a way that finds no obvious counterpart in domestic settings.\textsuperscript{210} Not only do states themselves clearly demarcate and ultimately patrol their own state borders, their mutual territorial exclusiveness is further bolstered by the well-established norm of the sanctity of sovereign state borders, in effect reifying the impregnable status of states in the international system.\textsuperscript{211} This would appear to have at least one significant implication with respect to the first of the two basic SIT-insights: Insofar as state communities tend to be relatively more ontologically secure behind their sovereign territorial borders, their cognitive need for in-group distinctiveness should, ceteris paribus, be reduced. However, there are at least three other factors that may offset these positive effects on ontological security. Firstly, the extent to which a specific state is seen as a legitimate member of international society is crucial, since perceived illegitimacy relegates the state to the margins of international society and increases the risk of provoking foreign interventions.\textsuperscript{212} Secondly, ontological security also depends on whether a specific state is experiencing a period of domestic turbulence and unsettledness due to, among other things, a steep ascent or decline in terms of material power. Thirdly, the extent to which a specific state has any outstanding territorial disputes with its neighbors may also have an unsettling effect on its sense of ontological security. As I shall argue below (section 3.3), in the case of China all of these three factors impinge on China’s sense of ontological security – and by extension its desire for manifesting in-group distinctiveness.

\textsuperscript{210} See Wohlforth (2009: 36). For a more general (i.e. non-SIT-related) discussion of the distinctiveness of international relations as a field, see e.g. the various contributions in Der Derian (1995).

\textsuperscript{211} On the sanctity of sovereign state borders, see for instance Hurd (1999: 393-399).

\textsuperscript{212} This point will be further elaborated in chapter 3.
Another specific feature of the realm of international relations is the limitations to group mobility. After all, state communities happen to be land-locked to a specific geographic location with a fixed set of neighbors and a more or less commanding regional environment, all of which shape the choice of salient comparisons between the in-group state and relevant out-groups. Geographic proximity – as also pointed out by SIT (in section 3.1) – thus increases the relative salience of social comparisons, reflecting the simple point that most neighboring states already share a long history of positive or negative interaction. For instance, the fact that Japan figures so prominently in China’s identity constitution process is in large part a result of geographic proximity. Yet, the effects of geographic proximity are to some extent offset by what is sometimes referred to as the interaction capacity of the state in question. That is, major powers such as China are less weighed down by geography in their choice of relevant comparisons because of their far more global outreach. Apart from this, the lack of mobility is also interesting in another sense. While state citizens may ultimately resort to individual mobility (migration) to achieve a higher social status, the state community as such must instead attempt to attain a positive identity by engaging in direct status competition or by employing a strategy of either social affiliation or social creativity (more on this below).

A third prominent feature is the stratified character of international relations. Although the truism that the anarchical character of an international system comprised by sovereign states shrouds international relations in a veil of equality, states are in reality hierarchically differentiated from each other in several

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213 The importance of geographical constraints in a state-centric context has been pointed out by several IR-scholars; see for instance Mouritzen (1998: 6-16); Buzan & Wæver (2003: 43-45).
214 On the concept of interaction capacity, see Buzan, Jones et al. (1993: 66-80); Deudney (2009: 347-358).
215 Admittedly, it was only the original experimental SIT-settings that deliberately avoided any social stratification of the studied groups to isolate the effects of in-group favoritism.
respects.\textsuperscript{216} Most conspicuous perhaps are the material underpinnings of a state’s relative status, which are determined, among other things, by its population and country size, resource endowment, economic capacity, level of infrastructure, and not least its military capabilities. As already noted (in section 2.2), important state identity categories – like that of great power or secondary state – follow more or less readily from the distribution of material resources among states, and hence a rudimentary social hierarchy of states materializes. Yet, it is rudimentary because a state’s social status is furthermore conditioned by international norms of legitimacy, favoring certain normative standards with respect to what constitutes a legitimate state regime.\textsuperscript{217} More to the point, international society is still dominated by the Western norms of liberal democracy, in effect socially stigmatizing states with deviating regime types and assigning them an inferior status (more on this in section 9.2).

\textit{Five different identity strategies}

With these specific characteristics of the realm of international relations in mind I turn next to the question of what identity strategies states may adopt to satisfy their dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem. More specifically, I want to narrow down my theoretical focus to a subset of states namely so-called low-status states understood here as any state whose \textit{salient} out-group enjoys a higher status in the international hierarchy with status being, as noted above, a result of both material and normative considerations (more on this in section 3.3). From its inception, SIT has been mostly preoccupied with studying identity-related questions of low-status groups, and the seminal theoretical

\textsuperscript{216} Wohlforth (2009: 37). For an overview of the usage of the concept of hierarchy in international relations, see Lake (2009: 59-62).

\textsuperscript{217} Cf. Barkin & Cronin (1994); Reus-Smit (1999); Hurd (1999).
framework of Tajfel and Turner contains a discussion of a range of archetypical identity strategies that low-status groups may employ to attain a positive self-esteem. Based on this framework, I introduce five different identity strategies of low-status states, each of which represents a particular way of distinguishing between the in-group and its salient out-group(s) in order to satisfy the dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem.

To begin with, if the status hierarchy between a low-status state and its salient out-group(s) is regarded as being malleable in a material sense – due to uneven growth rates or external shocks favoring the former – then the low-status state may simply adopt an identity strategy of social competition to overturn the status hierarchy. This sort of strategy often underlies the aspirations of rising states to revise or even cast aside the prevailing international order, which they consider to be a reflection of a status hierarchy that no longer obtains. For instance, much of Wilhemine Germany’s strategic decision-making in the lead-up to and during World War I turns out, on closer inspection, to be best accounted for by widespread concerns for relative standing and honor among the German elite as well as in the German population in general. Interestingly, there is by now a wide range of IR-scholars who contend that rising great powers’ quest for social recognition and positive self-esteem – rather than security needs or economic dictates – is the main reason why they engage in direct competition and ultimately conflict with established great powers. Indeed, there are strong

\[\text{218} \text{ See Tajfel & Turner (1979).} \]
\[\text{219} \text{ Larson (2012: 65). See Horowitz (1985) for a comprehensive account of the distinction between settled and unsettled status hierarchies in ethnic group contexts.} \]
\[\text{220} \text{ See Richard Ned Lebow (2008: 338-365), who has produced the hitherto most comprehensive and persuasive constructivist IR-account of how social status considerations inform state behavior.} \]
\[\text{221} \text{ See e.g. Ringmar (1996) for an account of how Sweden was motivated by similar status concerns during the Thirty Years War; Wohlforth (2009) for an account of how the Crimean War was primarily about status competition among the great powers; and Larson & Shevchenko (2010) for an account of how rising powers today such as China and Russia are deeply concerned with their international social status. Moreover, several classical real-} \]
reasons to assume that such status competition becomes more intense, the more evenly distributed the material capabilities are among the rivaling states.\textsuperscript{222}

However, if the hierarchy is conversely perceived as settled in material terms while the social boundaries between the high- and low-ranked states appear to be permeable, then the latter may choose a strategy of \textbf{social affiliation}.\textsuperscript{223} In doing so, the lower-ranked state embraces the ideals, norms and values of the higher-ranked state(s), in effect toning down its own distinctiveness in order to become part of a wider in-group and attain a more positive self-esteem – ultimately to the point of replacing in-group with out-group-favoritism.\textsuperscript{224} To be sure, a strategy of social affiliation presupposes that the identity of the higher-ranked state(s) is predicated on some sort of universalistic social category (e.g. an ideological belief or set of norms) that allows the low-status state to associate itself with the higher-ranked state(s) and become part of the in-group.\textsuperscript{225} In the post-Cold War era, the unprecedented degree of openness and universalism with respect to the social identity categories defining the U.S.-centered Liberal Order has no doubt increased the feasibility of adopting such a strategy.\textsuperscript{226} On the other hand, since a successful strategy of social affiliation increases self-esteem at the expense of the in-group’s own distinctiveness, this type of strategy

\textsuperscript{222}Wohlforth (2009: 37-38).
\textsuperscript{223}Larson and Shevchenko (2010: 71) label such an identity strategy \textit{social mobility}, but as noted above, it doesn’t make much sense to speak of the mobility of states in this way. Moreover, Tajfel & Turner (1979) do not operate with ‘social mobility’ as an identity strategy even though Larson & Shevchenko rather oddly credit them for the concept. See also Ellemers, Knippenberg & Wilke (1990: 233-246).
\textsuperscript{224}Out-group favoritism thus represents an extremely imbalanced preference for higher self-esteem at the expense of distinctiveness.
\textsuperscript{225}For instance, Trine Flockhart (2006: 94-96) has used SIT to study this process in the context of European integration. See also Johnston (2008: esp. 74-76) for a (non-SIT) discussion of how status-concerns have prompted China to socialize itself into a range of institutions that are central to the liberal world order.
\textsuperscript{226}On the specific characteristics of the Liberal Order, see Ikenberry (2009); in the context of China’s rise, see Ikenberry (2008).
is less likely – i.e. from a purely identity-constitutional perspective – the more deeply ingrained (discursively) the sense of in-group favoritism is in the low-status state. 

If the material hierarchy is considered to be settled and the social hierarchy impermeable, then a low-ranked state must resort to an identity strategy of social creativity in order to achieve a positive self-esteem. Importantly, whereas a strategy of social competition or social affiliation is primarily an outwardly directed, status-oriented endeavor to improve self-esteem, social creativity is a far more inwardly oriented strategy for attaining a positive self-esteem. As such, a strategy of social creativity does not require explicit recognition or acceptance from the higher-ranked state(s) to be effective in improving self-esteem as long as the low-status state itself – i.e. its domestic audience – perceives the strategy to be successful. As proposed by Henri Tajfel & John Turner in their original theoretical framework, social creativity involves three different constructivist strategies for framing the identity of the in-group in relation to salient out-group(s), all three of which may be adapted to a specific state-centric context.

Firstly, the low-status state may choose an identity strategy of moral high-grounding vis-à-vis the higher-ranked state(s) to attain a positive self-esteem, either because it cannot or will not diminish its own distinctiveness. Moral high-grounding is a strategy of deliberately and systematically comparing the in-group with the higher-ranked state(s) on some more favorable dimension(s),

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227 The question of the discursive-structural depth of an identity is addressed in section 4.2.
228 Larson & Shevchenko (2010: 74) conversely claim that the dominant out-group’s recognition is decisive for a strategy of social creativity to be effective. Yet, they merely ground this criterion in the general observation that social status is relational, in effect ignoring the domestic audience.
229 Tajfel & Turner (1979: 43-44). Apart from these three options of social creativity, Peter Hays Gries (2005: 252) has suggested a fifth strategy of “self-deception”, where the low-status state misinforms the domestic audience of the material realities of the in-group’s social status. As it is only the most repressive regimes (like North Korea) that can use self-deception as an overall identity strategy, I will disregard this option here.
thereby attempting to reverse the status hierarchy. That is, even though a salient out-group state is superior in a material sense, it is portrayed as immoral, inferior or even barbarian in terms of its regime (e.g. uncultivated or oppressive), its policies (e.g. violating common principles/agreements), its history (e.g. aggressive) or even its people (e.g. racially inferior). A strategy of moral high-grounding bolsters the self-esteem of the low-status state in a defensive and self-righteous way by primarily focusing on the negative attributes of the high-ranked state(s) and by ultimately framing it as the Other.

Secondly, the low-status state may employ an identity strategy of cultivating its distinctiveness from the higher-ranked state(s) to achieve a positive self-esteem. Instead of strategically distancing itself from salient out-group states, the low-status state may nurture, promote and celebrate its own distinctiveness, in a deliberate attempt to transform the negative values often associated with a low-status group into a more desirable self-image. Given that the low-status state does not change the dimension itself for in-group/out-group comparison but rather the values associated with different social categories, this is in effect a more offensive and positive approach to dealing with the need for collective self-esteem. More specifically, a low-status state may choose to accentuate and positively reframe its religious character, cultural uniqueness, ideological purity or

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230 Moral high-grounding is my own IR-rendering of Tajfel & Turner’s (1979: 43) first strategy of social creativity.
231 Such an identity strategy of negative stereotyping has also been studied by social psychologists in an inter-state context; see e.g. Oren & Bar-Tal’s (2007) case-study of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For an illustrative example in the context of the Sino-Japanese relationship, see Suzuki (2007).
232 The classical example from social psychology of such an identity strategy is found in the “Black is beautiful”-movement that was started in the 1960s by African Americans. An interesting example from a state-centric context is presented by Bhutan’s attempt to elevate its own international status by virtue of introducing a so-called Gross National Happiness index, see for instance http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/.
any other category of identity that sets it apart from its salient out-group state(s).\(^{233}\)

Thirdly, the low-status state may adopt an identity strategy of *downward retargeting* by changing the target for social comparisons away from the higher-ranked state(s) and to a lower-ranked out-group state in order to attain a positive self-esteem.\(^{234}\) For instance, instead of comparing themselves to high-ranking Western states in general and the United States in particular, rising powers may raise their self-esteem by comparing themselves to out-group states that are still stuck in a state of backwardness. Or they may direct their attention inwards, comparing the dominant domestic group with a more or less distinct, marginalized intra-state group of lower status in terms of religion, ethnicity, economic standing etc. Since alternative identity strategies of moral distancing and self-cultivation can be costly inasmuch as they enhance the dividing lines between in- and out-group, downward retargeting offers a seemingly more attractive solution to the desire for positive self-esteem. However, the salience requirement of intergroup comparisons – i.e. the more salient the out-group, the stronger the in-group/out-group identity dynamic\(^{235}\) – may militate against a strategy of downward retargeting simply because a higher-ranked out-group state would seem to figure more prominently on the cognitive horizon.\(^{236}\)

\(^{233}\) For instance, low-status countries like North Korea (e.g. Kwon, 2003) have actively used such an identity strategy focusing on their ideological purity. For a more general introduction to state identity strategies of creationism (i.e. social creativity) one may consult the literature on nationalism, see e.g. Hobsbawn (1990); Anderson (1991).

\(^{234}\) One often-cited example from social psychology is the finding that self-esteem is improved among “black” Americans whose out-group comparison is switched from white Americans to other groups of colored Americans (see Rosenberg and Simmons, 1972).

\(^{235}\) Ellemers, Knippenberg & Wilke (1990); see also Turner (1981).

The incorporation of SIT-insights into IR opens several routes for hypothesizing about state behavior. States are – like other social groups – subject to significant identity dynamics such as the dual psychological need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem. In order to address and satisfy these basic needs a low-status state (i.e. its state representatives) may adopt various types of identity strategies depending mainly on the relative stability and openness of the material and social hierarchy between the in-group state and its salient out-group state(s): Social competition, social affiliation, moral high-grounding, downward retargeting and self-cultivation. While this section has presented a number of general considerations on how to use SIT in IR and suggested a specific SIT-derived framework for systematizing the identity strategies of low-status states, the last section takes another step down the ladder of theoretical abstraction to discuss the relevance of SIT with respect to the rise of China.

3.3 The China case: Fraught with identity logics?
How much explanatory potential does SIT hold in relation to the rise of China? Quite a lot, I will argue. To begin with, it is interesting to note that even though there is certainly no shortage of IR-scholars adopting an identity-based approach to the rise of China (see chapter 1 and 6), few scholars have done so from a SIT-perspective. Instead, most of the identity-related scholarship on the rise of China either subscribes to some version of Role Theory or tends to employ the identity concept in an un-theorized, commonsensical manner.237 Yet, there are a few notable exceptions. For instance, sinologist Peter Hays Gries has applied SIT

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237 For a number of recent contributions on the rise of China from a Role Theory-informed perspective, see Harnisch et al. (2016); for an overview of earlier IR-work based on Role Theory, see Chen (2016: 77).
to explicate the conditions, under which China’s need for in-group positivity is likely to turn into out-group negativity and conflict, while Deng Yong has found inspiration in SIT, among other theories, to highlight China’s high sensitivity to status concerns in relation to its salient out-groups.238 Most interestingly in this context, Deborah Welch Larson has taken some promising initial steps to render China’s grand strategy intelligible in the light of different SIT-based identity strategies.239 Since Larson’s explanatory ambitions to some extent overlap with those of my dissertation, I should take a moment to stake out how our approaches differ from each other in important ways, in the end causing us to explain Chinese grand strategy in quite dissimilar ways.

The most significant difference between our SIT-perspectives can be boiled down to Larson’s rather one-sided focus on social status concerns as the essence of the need for positive self-esteem and thus her partial inattention to the need for social distinctiveness as an equally important – sometimes conflicting – identity-related motivation for states.240 This deficiency leads Larson not only to overemphasize the role and importance of out-group states for the in-group state’s self-esteem and thereby China’s desire for outside recognition (status). But also, more critically, to leave out central aspects of China’s identity strategy of social creativity – which I refer to as moral high-grounding and self-cultivation (see section 7.3 and 7.5) – and to overlook how the need for social distinctiveness has been a main driver of China’s identity strategy, notably from the second half of the 2000s (see chapter 11). Furthermore, there are a number of quite substantial conceptual differences in how we translate SIT into an IR-

238 See Gries (2005); Deng (2008); see also Li (2008: chapter 6), a UK-based scholar, for a more limited attempt to make use of SIT to explain Chinese foreign policy.
239 Larson & Shevchenko (2010); Larson (2012).
240 Larson sometimes uses the term “positive distinctiveness” (e.g. Larson & Shevchenko, 2010: 68) as an indirect acknowledgement of the dual motivations in SIT, but she still, in practice, subsumes the need for distinctiveness under the desire for a positive self-esteem (except for in the conclusion).
context, some of which were (foot)noted in the preceding section.\textsuperscript{241} Finally, as I conduct a far more in-depth exploration of Chinese identity than does Larson, I am also better able to tease out and order the discrete discursive logics characterizing the different identity strategies, which China may adopt (see chapter 7 and 8).\textsuperscript{242}

Notwithstanding the limited attempts by IR-scholars to understand the rise of China from a SIT-perspective, there are several reasons why such a perspective seems particularly fruitful in the case of China. Firstly, over the course of the past three and a half decades of rapid economic growth the People’s Republic of China has not only experienced a societal transformation of unprecedented magnitude but also opened itself up to the outside world at a brisk pace, driven mainly by the self-imposed dictates of economic globalization.\textsuperscript{243} Furthermore, China’s opening-up to the outside world has been accompanied by an unparalleled, if highly selective, import of foreign ideas and values, not least from the West, as China has gradually been incorporated into the existing international order.\textsuperscript{244} On top of this, the PRC has in reality divested itself of its ideological straitjacket of Communism without formally renouncing it or, for that matter, replacing it with an alternative ideological lodestar. Instead, China has in recent years been struggling to maintain a precarious balance between, on the one hand, accepting the norms and institutions of the prevailing international order and, on the other, insisting on a societal template “with Chinese characteristics” (see chapter 6). Glossing over the complexities of this ongoing transformation, there can be little doubt that it has generated a sense of cognitive confusion and

\textsuperscript{241} Apart from those differences already mentioned, Larson’s conceptualization of social creativity oddly includes elements – such as the introduction of new international norms, regimes and societal models – that are usually viewed as indicators of social competition (see Larson & Shevchenko, 2010: 75).

\textsuperscript{242} My examination of China’s grand strategy is also far more extensive than Larson’s.

\textsuperscript{243} See e.g. Breslin (2007); Zhang (2008); Guthrie (2012).

\textsuperscript{244} See e.g. Zheng (2004); Hutton (2008).
social turmoil among the Chinese, reflective of a widespread feeling of ontological insecurity pertaining to China’s identity. What kind of state community is China becoming and how is China related to the outside world (i.e. what are the salient in-group/out-group distinctions of Chinese identity constitution)? One would expect from SIT that such a heightened sense of ontological insecurity, *ceteris paribus*, increases the basic desire for social distinctiveness, that is, for China to stand out as a distinct entity in relation to salient out-groups.

It is not only China’s sense of ontological insecurity, however, that makes it particularly susceptible to identity dynamics in general and a SIT-approach in particular. The specific circumstances surrounding China’s struggle for a positive self-esteem are equally relevant. Notwithstanding its impressive economic ascendance, which has lifted hundreds of millions of Chinese out of poverty and transformed China into the second largest economy in the world, the People’s Republic is still a developing middle-income country in per capita terms and accordingly a low-status country in a material sense vis-à-vis the West in general and the United States in particular. On the face of it, it may still seem somewhat odd to describe China as a low-status state given the pace and scale of China’s rise. According to Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell, two prominent China scholars, “*Great power is a vague term, but China deserves it by any measure: the extent and strategic location of its territory, the size and dynamism of its popu-

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245 Krolikowski (2008: 126-129) demonstrates that China has indeed been subject to an increased level of ontological insecurity in recent years, (as seen from an individualized rather than anthropomorphized, state-as-actor perspective).

246 A similar point is made by Krolikowski (2008: 117): “More specifically, ontological insecurity is expected to prompt its reinforcement of an existing identity through routinized relations.” As Kinnvall (2004: 742) more generally points out, the nation provides a particularly compelling narrative of ontological security; see also Huysmans (1998: 242-243).

lation, the value and growth rate of its economy, its massive share of global trade, the size and sophistication of its military, the reach of its diplomatic interests and its level of cultural influence.”

This observation, although certainly true, does not change the fact that China in the 21st century has been, and still is, a low-status country, understood here in relative terms (cf. Section 3.2) as any state whose salient out-group states enjoy a higher status in the international hierarchy, with status being defined in terms of both the material and social hierarchy of international relations. As I will demonstrate discursively in Chapters 7 and 8, China’s most salient out-group state is constituted first of all by the United States and secondarily by Japan. Compared to China, the United States is clearly ranked higher in most relevant material respects as reflected, for instance, in the fact that China’s military capabilities are still dwarfed by those of the United States. Indeed, China sometimes portrays itself as a developing country or, more frequently nowadays, as part of a group of emerging powers (see section 7.7), which to some extent reflects a self-perceived position as a low-status country in relation to the West. Although the global financial crisis has unsettled the material hierarchy between China and the West (see section 5.1 and 11.2), China’s struggle to attain a positive self-esteem is thus still marked by its relative material inferiority towards notably the United States.

But apart from the material-developmental gap, China’s sense of inferiority also has a social/normative dimension, which can be illustrated in two ways. First, there is China’s position as a semi-authoritarian regime, placing it outside the inner (mostly Western) circles of the prevailing international Liberal Order and exposing Beijing to recurrent “normative lectures” by Washington about how to

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248 Nathan and Scobell (2012: xii).
249 For a recent comprehensive analysis of China’s continued material inferiority vis-à-vis the United States, see e.g. Christensen (2015: chapter 3); see also Beckley (2011); Nye (2011a: 157-163); Nathan and Scobell (2012: chapter 4); Wohlforth (2012).
conform to certain ideals of good governance (see chapter 10).\textsuperscript{250} Secondly, there is China’s recent history, marred as it is by its Century of Humiliation (1839-1949) when China suffered at the hands of imperialistic powers (see section 6.1). This period has – thanks in no small part to China’s educational system\textsuperscript{251} – instilled in the Chinese population a deep-seated awareness of the historical injustice associated with its protracted struggle as a low-status developing country, in effect generating an even stronger need for a positive self-esteem. In light of this, China’s rapid rise not only has an unsettling effect on the existing international hierarchy but also builds up pressure within China for resuming its “rightful” place in the sun before the Century of Humiliation reduced China to a second rate power.\textsuperscript{252} After all, dynastic China perceived itself to be “the Middle Kingdom”, an unrivaled civilization of the East, which is why the current rise of China is widely understood within China as the long-promised revival of China to its historical greatness (see section 7.6).

In sum, China does seem to be “fraught with identity logics” making it a likely case for illustrating the merits of a SIT-based explanatory framework and for examining the effects of state identity on state grand strategy. More than anything, China’s rise itself is intensifying the identity dynamics of a country that is already analytically ripe for a SIT-perspective, owing to its heightened level of ontological insecurity, its acute sensitivity to questions of social status and its keen historical awareness of itself.

\textsuperscript{250} For some recent analyses of China’s perceived social/normative inferiority vis-à-vis the West, see e.g. Suzuki (2014); Zhang Y. (2015).
\textsuperscript{251} See especially Callahan (2010); Wang (2012).
\textsuperscript{252} Hughes (2011: 602); Shambaugh (2013: 17).
**Chinese identity strategies**

I conclude chapter 3 by briefly presenting the five SIT-inferred, ideal-typical identity strategies that China may adopt as a rising low-status state to satisfy its basic psychological need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem. Whether China will pursue an identity strategy of social competition, social affiliation or social creativity depends – as long as one stays within the confines of the proposed theoretical framework – largely on the relative flexibility and openness of the material and social hierarchy between China and its salient out-group state(s). Yet, I should stress that it is not so much the shifts between different identity strategies – and the causes for such shifts – that takes center stage in this dissertation as it is the implications for Chinese grand strategy of adopting a particular Chinese identity strategy with a specific logic of identity. That is, once China has adopted a particular strategy for satisfying its basic dual identity needs, it will furthermore shape the character of China’s grand strategy on the international arena.

The five identity strategies may be adapted in a preliminary fashion to the specific context of 21st century China in the following way:

1. **Social affiliation**: China tones down its own distinctiveness and accepts the norms and institutions of the prevailing Liberal Order backed by the Western states, China’s most salient out-group comparison, in order to avoid social stigmatization and instead become part of a larger in-group, thereby receiving recognition and raising self-esteem.

2. **Moral high-grounding [social creativity]**: China hides behind its sovereign statehood and distances itself from its salient out-group(s) – the West and
Japan – by defensively disputing their legitimacy and by claiming moral superiority on selective dimensions of comparison in order to shore up China’s own self-esteem.

3. **Self-cultivation (social creativity):** China actively reframes the values associated with central dimensions of comparison between China and the West by cultivating the positive distinctive features of China’s civilizational heritage – yet, without framing them as directly incompatible with Western-style liberal democracy.

4. **Downward retargeting (social creativity):** China deliberately ignores the most salient out-group targets and systematically redirects attention towards an inferior out-group – located either in its neighborhood (like the Philippines) or within China’s domestic arena (like the Uyghurs or Tibetans) – in order to enhance China’s self-esteem.

5. **Social competition:** Emboldened by its rapid rise and the (perceived) malleability of the material hierarchy, China engages in direct competition with its salient out-group (the United States) to assert itself as a great power with its own distinctive profile, in effect bolstering its self-esteem by revising the international status hierarchy – and ultimately international order itself.
Chapter 4:
A discursive-structural framework for identity narratives

If there is indeed a causal logic of social identities (chapter 2) and that logic may be derived from Social Identity Theory (chapter 3), how does the logic manifest itself and how is it translated into behavioral guidelines for social actors? My argument in this chapter is that we need to supplement Social Identity Theory with a discursive structuralism centered on narratives to develop a framework for studying the effects of state identities on state grand strategy.

To some extent, Social Identity Theory is actually more thoroughly social constructivist than what I am aiming for here given my bounded constructivist approach. As noted above, the original experimental findings of SIT suggest a completely instrumental arbitrariness in the designation of social categories distinguishing the in-group from the out-group. In other words, social identities appear to be empty shells that may be injected with any sort of “formative fix” as long as the dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem is satisfied.\(^{253}\) In contrast, I want to emphasize how the specific social categories of identities may become structured discursively in ways that not only stabilize the given social identity but also enables and constrains some renderings (i.e. narratives) of “the collective self” rather than others. I furthermore pursue the notion that such a discursive identity structure may be conceptualized as a hierarchical formation with a set of rather abstract and highly stable discursive building blocks setting the stage for the formulation of more specific identity narratives. By embedding social identities in discursive structures, I also gain access to a

\(^{253}\) As such, SIT would seem an optimal spouse for critical IR-scholars with their radical constructivist assumptions, were it not for SIT’s positivist leanings in questions of methods and epistemology.
well-established methodological instrument for tapping into the textual reality of an otherwise intangible phenomenon (see chapter 5).

Apart from introducing an analytical framework of discursive structuralism, I accord the narrative concept a central role in my theorization of social identities. While Social Identity Theory has its strength in pinpointing primarily the cognitive aspects of social identity constitution, SIT is not a theory pertaining specifically to political communities, as pointed out in section 3.2. I therefore argue that we need to introduce the concept of identity narrative to address the way questions of social identity can be framed by political representatives in a bounded and coherent fashion and furthermore connected to purposeful political behavior. Indeed, infusing SIT with a narrative component holds several additional merits. First, both social identities and narratives may be seen as universal cognitive instruments (for making the flux of experience comprehensible), each having specific cognitive features that can be combined into the concept of identity narratives. Second, by conceptualizing a state’s identity as a number of discrete more or less conflicting identity narratives, these narratives can be tentatively differentiated from each on the basis of the five ideal-typical strategies for satisfying the dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem. Third, while I subscribe to a narrow understanding of the logic of identity (i.e. derived from SIT), the narrative concept opens up for a broader range of “stories about the collective self”, some of which can not necessarily be reduced to the logic of identity needs (as defined here), and which may accordingly be at least partially driven by other causal factors.

Chapter 4 consists of three sections. In section 4.1, I first briefly engage narratives as a theoretical construct in the social sciences and then discuss how the
narrative and identity concept may be theorized and combined from a cognitive perspective. On this background, I introduce the concept of identity narrative and specify how state identity narratives, in this explanatory context, should be analyzed in terms of their markers and guidelines. In section 4.2, I ground identity narratives in a set of underlying discursive structures to emphasize how these structures constrain and enable specific narrations of the collective self. More specifically, I argue that the discursive-structural component of state identity can be conceptualized as a hierarchical discursive formation consisting of three structural layers mediated by so-called identity narrators. Finally, in section 4.3, I discuss how the discursively structured identity narratives of states exert a constraining/enabling effect on overall state policies, and then suggest how the different theoretical elements can be incorporated into an overall framework for studying both the generative and structural relation between state identity and state grand strategy.

4.1 Narratives and the role of identity narratives

“It is whose story wins, and if you don’t understand the importance of narrative in shaping preferences and setting agendas, then you are going to have a foreign policy that relies only on one part of the spectrum of power.”254 This statement by Joseph Nye bluntly encapsulates the analytical potential of narratives. That is, narratives, by shaping preferences and setting agendas, also affect the formulation of foreign policies, especially – one may add – at the level of grand strategy. Before discussing the question of how and to what extent narratives of identity af-

fect policies, I should first take a step back to consider the concept of narrative itself and delineate my own approach.

Although narratives have been there all along as an implicit analytical category, it was not until the 1970s that the explicit usage of the narrative concept – as a theoretical instrument – mushroomed in the social sciences, leading some scholars to speak of ‘a narrative turn’. Narratives have been theorized in a myriad of ways, producing a large inventory of technical terms used by scholars when analyzing a narrative’s structure, its plot, chronology, characters, tension, context, purpose etc. Moreover, some scholars have pitted a narrative-based mode of interpretation against a more traditional scientific mode of explanation as part of the postmodernist onslaught on positivist science. At the same time, however, as observed by Marie-Laure Ryan in the *Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, “few words have enjoyed so much use and suffered so much abuse as narrative and its partial synonym, story”. For my own part, I refrain from delving into the intricacies of the narrative concept as I use it in a relatively simple manner and without the epistemological premises of postmodernism that usually accompany the concept. Instead, I will briefly outline the overall premises for my understanding of narratives as an analytical category.

First of all, just like social identities, narratives can be perceived as a sort of cognitive instrument for ordering the complex social reality. Whereas the cognitive

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255 See Czarniawska (2004: 1-6); Barusch (2012). The narrative turn was initiated by French structuralists (such as Todorov and Barthes), who conceived of narratology as a science, and it has since influenced diverse disciplines such as history, psychology, sociology, political science and economy. For an introduction, see e.g. Polkinghorne (1988); Hinchman & Hinchman (1997).


257 See Gibson (1996); Kreiswirth (2000); Holstein & Gubrium (2000).


259 Although a postmodernist approach seem to underlie much of the scholarship on narratives in the social sciences, including in IR (e.g. Mattern, 2005), the field is sufficiently variegated and the concept itself sufficiently indeterminate to allow for a more instrumental approach to narratives.
lens of social identities organizes social reality into distinct categories of in-groups and out-groups, narratives function cognitively by relating a series of elements in a chronological form, thereby organizing the various elements framed by the narrative into a coherent whole.\textsuperscript{260} In the words of Louis Mink, who pioneered a cognitive perspective on narratives: “\textit{Even though the narrative form may be, for most people, associated with fairy tales, myths, and the entertainments of the novel, it remains true that narrative is a primary cognitive instrument – an instrument rivaled, in fact, only by theory and metaphor as irreducible ways of making the flux of experience comprehensible.}”\textsuperscript{261} Mink furthermore stressed the universal aspect of narratives, arguing that “\textit{...although kinds of stories vary widely and significantly from culture to culture, story-telling is the most ubiquitous of human activities.}”\textsuperscript{262} While few narrative scholars explicitly engage the cognitive dimension of narratives, there seems to be a widespread consensus about this minimalist definition of a narrative as a written or oral account of chronologically connected elements (or events), which form a more or less coherent story.\textsuperscript{263}

Next, in further outlining my understanding of the narrative concept, it is useful to make a conceptual distinction between `narrative identity´ and `identity narrative´. In the former sense, one finds a wide range of (usually critical) scholars who study how personal and social identities are (re)constituted within a wider, multi-layered system of ontological, cultural and societal narratives;\textsuperscript{264} here, one also finds a number of psychologists who examine how our identities are creat-

\textsuperscript{260} Mink (2001). For a broad introduction to a cognitive approach to narratives, see e.g. Herman (2000).
\textsuperscript{261} Mink (2001: 212).
\textsuperscript{262} Mink (2001: 214). Similarly, Roland Barthes (2004: 65) has stated that “...narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural.”
\textsuperscript{263} See e.g. Stone (1979: 3); Polkinghorne (1996: 364); Czarniawska (2004: 17).
\textsuperscript{264} As stated by Margaret Somers (Somers, 1994: 606), “it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities.” See also Lyotard (1988); Brockmeier & Carbaugh (2001).
ed by the stories we construct and internalize as individuals. However, in the latter sense, i.e. identity narrative, the conceptual weight is shifted so that the emphasis is no longer primarily on the narrative process and on how identities are created herein. Rather, by using the concept of identity narrative, the balance is tilted towards identity in two ways that reflect my own approach. First, I am mainly concerned with the logic of social identity and how this logic is being played out and manifested in different narratives. Second, I consider identity narratives to be a specific (i.e. non-exhaustive) cognitive framing of a given social identity, which means that there is more to an identity discourse than its constituent identity narratives (see section 4.2).

The conceptual anatomy of identity narratives

According to the basic (minimalist) definition of a narrative, it is simply a relatively coherent and chronological account of a series of discursive elements (or events). Since not all narratives are about identity, let me tease out the central characteristics of an identity narrative. One such characteristic, already hinted at above, is its bounded form as it represents a single narrated perspective constructed from what is usually a multifaceted identity discourse. More specifically, an identity narrative highlights some – and deliberately ignores other – discursive elements in an attempt to create a storyline that not only links together the community’s past, present and future but also locates the community in its wider social context, in effect providing it with a specific temporal and spatial anchoring. Furthermore, when it comes to the identity constitution of states,

265 See especially McAdams (1993); McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich (2006); see also Singer (2004) for an overview.
266 On the spatial and temporal anchoring of identity discourse more generally, see Hansen (2006: 46-48); Subotic (2015: 3-4).
officially authorized identity narratives generally assume a *coherent* form, reflecting the fact that they are narrated in a strategic fashion by powerful corporate actors (see section 5.2). But more importantly – given my objective of state identity to state grand strategy – I will emphasize two other defining characteristics, which will be referred to here as the markers and guidelines of the state identity narrative.267

The *markers* of a state identity narrative are the discursive elements that define “who/what we are” and “who/what we are not” as part of an ongoing constitutive positioning of the state community in relation to other state communities in the international system. In line with my SIT-based framework, such identity markers are perceived here as the social categories, which the in-group uses to distinguish itself – by virtue of comparisons – from its salient out-group state(s). Yet, there is no shortage of terms in the identity-related IR-literature that seek to capture roughly the same constitutive aspect, whereby “the content” of social identities is being framed.268 What is essential here is how different types of identity markers can be defined and separated from each other in terms of the way they approach the fundamental identity-constitutional questions pertaining to the in-group/out-group distinction. In this explanatory context (of relating identity to grand strategy), there seems to be especially two sets of criteria of relevance for analyzing the relationship between in- and out-group(s) and thus for differentiating between the identity narratives, which states may adopt:

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267 In their study of rhetorical coercion, Krebs and Jackson (2007) employ a similar distinction between ‘frames’ (markers) and ‘implications’ (guidelines) to demonstrate how public discourse affects political outcomes.

268 In the terminology of Rawi Abdelal and his colleagues (2009: esp. 20-22), who has written a cogent and influential framework for analyzing social identities, “the content” of social identities has four dimensions, two of which (the constitutive and relational dimension) I prefer to merge and treat as identity markers, while a third dimension (social purpose) is discussed below under the heading of guidelines.
• The first set of criteria revolves around the distinction between holding a ‘universalistic’ (in the sense of being inclusive) or a ‘particularistic’ (exclusive) approach to the question of how to define the relationship between in- and out-group.

• The second set of criteria centers on the distinction between adopting an ‘extrovert’ (outward-looking/international) or an ‘introvert’ (inward-looking/intra-state) approach to the question of how to define the relationship between in- and out-group.

The guidelines of a state identity narrative are the discursive elements that point out “what we should do” as a state community on the basis of “who/what we are (not)”.269 Such political guidelines seek to define the overall (or national) interests of the state in the sense of a basic purpose or mission rather than more specific and substance-oriented policies. While various causal drivers may be involved in formulating the basic political guidelines for the state, the point here is to relate them to underlying identity logics. Hence, the identity narrative should create a discursive linkage between markers and guidelines by justifying, more or less explicitly, the community’s overall course of action in terms of its identity.270 In a similar vein, Erik Ringmar has observed that “[T]he narratives we construct about our state will specify who we are and what role we play in the world; how our national interests are to be defined, or which foreign policy to pursue.”271 Likewise, Brent Steele has made the point that an “[identity]-narrative is the lo-
From which we as scholars can begin to grasp how self-identity constrains and enables states to pursue certain actions over others.”

Against this backdrop, I conclude section 4.1 by recapitulating the definition of an identity narrative initially proposed in the introduction:

A state identity narrative is a bounded and coherent articulation of the state’s identity discourse, defining not only the social categories for distinguishing between in-group and out-group(s) (i.e. the identity markers) but also the overall identity-generated guidelines for collective action.

4.2 Discursive structuralism and the hierarchy of identity structures

Before outlining how the logic of identity may be explored in a systematic fashion within a narrative-centered, discursive framework (in section 4.3), this section zooms in on the concept of discourse and the purpose it serves for my theoretical framework. In line with my bounded constructivist ontology, I shed light on the structural constraints that surround the discursive construction of identity narratives; yet to avoid ending up with an excessively structuralist version of constructivism, I also briefly introduce an actor’s perspective on the narration of state identities.

Just like the narrative concept, the concept of discourse usually signals a critical (postmodernist/poststructuralist) perspective within IR, and many IR-scholars

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272 Steele (2008: 10).
do not seem to make a sharp distinction between the two concepts. I conversely prefer a relatively clear-cut analytical separation where identity narratives are seen as primarily cognitive instruments of categorization, the discursive manifestations of which are (indirectly) observable. As such, the discourse concept performs a central function in this dissertation, not as a driver of any social logic but as an analytically accessible framework for studying the logic of identity narratives. Moreover, in keeping with my critical realist position (section 2.1), I subscribe to a view of discourse (and language in general) that goes beyond a thoroughly relational approach. Rather, I treat language as partly instrumental in the sense of referring to something, which is therefore not determined completely within a self-referential system of discourse (language) as critical theory assumes. Accordingly, a discourse is always on something, partly conditioned by external (non-discursive) determinants such as material and – in the case of social identities – also cognitive factors.

Notwithstanding the fact that the discourse concept is intimately associated with critical IR-scholars, there is no “iron law” preventing it from being used by more mainstream approaches along the lines suggested here. Yet, in order to adapt the concept to my underlying theoretical framework I propose some adjustments to the standard definition of discourse (among critical scholars) as a collection of texts, speeches and practices constituting a formation of related statements, which produce meaning and organize our intersubjective knowledge. The adjustments are meant firstly to reflect my partially “instrumentalist” approach to

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273 Many critical IR-scholars draw especially on Foucault (1972), Laclau & Mouffe (1985) and Hall (1992) in their understanding of the discourse concept.
274 There are, of course, other ways to map social identities than through discourse, some of which will be briefly discussed in section 5.1.
discourse and secondly to separate out practice from the definition, thereby fa-
cilitating my explanatory agenda in a methodological sense (see section 5.1). The
result is a somewhat narrower (or perhaps thinner) conceptualization of dis-
course:

A discourse is a formation of related oral and written statements, which or-
organize our intersubjective knowledge, and which refer to an objectively ex-
isting phenomenon.

Crucially, whereas critical IR-scholars are generally prone to accentuate the
open-endedness of discourse – along with its emancipatory potential – a bound-
ed constructivist position is primarily concerned with the structural aspects of
discourse (as briefly set out in section 2.2). That is, my focus is on the more well-
established discursive positions, which may congeal and become discursive
structures insofar as they are being systematically privileged over time. Some
critical scholars actually (somewhat paradoxically) subscribe to a quite struc-
turalist perspective on the discourse-concept, not unlike what I have in mind.277
For instance, Lene Hansen has observed that “language, and the construction of
identity therein, is highly structured [...] Discourses strive to fix meaning around a
closed structure, but neither absolute fixity nor absolute non-fixity is possible.”278
Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan put it this way: “Identities as other social construc-
tions can petrify and become relatively constant elements to be reckoned with.”279
Likewise, Ole Wæver has stated that “foreign policy can be partially explained [...]”

277 As argued by Wæver (2002: 23) “post-structuralism does not mean anti-structuralism”; in fact, it is a position
that “shares more with structuralism than with its opponents”.
by a structural model of national discourses”, but he also stresses “the contingency and fragility of all conceptual closure, of all discursive systems”280

I, too, fully endorse the key reservation that discursive structures are never entirely settled, but the fundamental question here is whether or not discursive structures can be sufficiently strong as to warrant treating them in an objectified manner (cf. section 2.3). Along with other IR-scholars, I argue that discursive structures are particularly important in the case of state identities due in no small part to the scale and accumulated historical weight of the discursive inter-subjectivity, on which a state identity rests.281 Apart from this, most states – and especially authoritarian ones – hold what may be called a “discursive prerogative” in strategically formulating and institutionalizing specific narratives about their identity (see also section 5.2).282

State identity as a layered hierarchy of discursive structures

If we accept that the discourse on a state’s identity is characterized by structural constraints of varied discursive depth (strength), then how should we conceptualize such a discursive-structural formation? One useful approach is to conceive of it as a layered hierarchy of discursive structures with deeper layers of discourse not only being more entrenched but also more fundamental in terms of

281 See for example Wendt (1999: 221); Cronin (1999: 23); Krebs & Jackson (2007: esp. 45). For some examples on how history provides discursive bindings, see e.g. Gries (2004: 46-47); Runge Olesen (2012: 90-95).
282 That is, by presiding over a range of powerful instruments for public communication – such as the educational system, the issuing/implementation of laws and privileged access (or control over) media channels – state representatives are in a position of authority to favor some discursive statements over others.
the level of abstraction. By making this conceptual distinction I introduce an indirect analytical measure of objectiveness (pertaining to the relative structural depth of the different discursive layers), which conditions my ability to treat state identity as an explanatory variable in two ways. Firstly, I claim that the deeper levels of the identity discourse, containing the more well-established conceptions about a given state community, have an enabling as well as constraining structural effect on the construction of more specific identity narratives. Chapter 7 sheds light on this structural effect by demonstrating how the formulation of Chinese identity narratives is conditioned on establishing a discursive link to deeper layers of China’s self-understanding. Secondly, I claim that once a specific identity narrative attains a position of discursive authority, it may itself become entrenched to the point where its identity markers and political guidelines become central for the formulation of authoritative state policies (more on this in section 4.3).

One thing is to conceive of state identity in terms of a hierarchy of discursive structures; another is to conceptualize its concrete structural configuration. In this context, I propose to distinguish between three different layers of structure that together make up the basic discourse on a state’s identity (with the first level being the deepest):

1\textsuperscript{st} structural layer: The state as referent object
2\textsuperscript{nd} structural layer: Discursive building blocks
3\textsuperscript{rd} structural layer: Identity narratives

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\(^{283}\) For some examples of how the idea about a discursive hierarchy of identity structures has been used in an IR-context, see especially Wæver (2002); see also Dittmer & Kim (1993: 24); Reus-Smit (1999: 29-30); Bukovansky (2002: 43-44); Buzan (2004: 25-27).
As I have already defined the content of the third layer, i.e. state identity narratives (cf. section 4.1), suffice here is to outline the basic components of the first two levels of the discursive hierarchy. At the 1st structural layer, one finds the referent object of the state itself, understood as a discursively reified frame for collective identity formation.  

One may think of other plausible referent objects for identifying with a political community – such as religious denominations, social classes, ethnic groups, ideological communities, civilizations etc. – but the state has not only managed historically to trump these alternative referent objects but also to incorporate much of their discursive content (at the 2nd level, see below). Broadly speaking, the discursive power of the state as referent object has a both external and internal dimension. 

Externally, the institution of sovereignty, which formally invests the state with outside recognition and legitimacy from the international society of states, is a crucial discursive foundation for upholding state-wide identity-projects (in the face of intra-state heterogeneity) and for excluding alternative non-state referent objects with political aspirations.  

Internally, deep-seated domestic conceptions of constituting a state community can also be critical in retaining the state as the prevailing referent object. In fact, it does not require a deep immersion into Chinese history to realize the presence and potency of an ancient desire for a centralized, dynastic state – a desire that far predates any external legitimation of a Chinese state (see section 6.1). What is therefore most important about the first layer of discursive structures in an analytical sense is the assumption that it enables and constrains

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284 See Wendt (1999: 198-214) for a more general discussion of the state as referent object in international relations. See also Buzan et al. (1998: 36-42) for a broader discussion of referent objects in an IR-context.

285 Needless to say, the discursive strength of the state as a referent object also has a material dimension as the ability of states to monopolize, or at least to centralize, the collective representation of political identity within their bounded territories is in no small measure conditioned by their material resources.

286 E.g. Cronin (1999: 26). For a more general discussion of how the discursive/normative institution of international sovereignty has evolved, see Barkin & Cronin (1994); Reus-Smit (1999).
identity narratives to be framed in a state-centric manner in order to be legitimate.

At the 2\textsuperscript{nd} structural layer, one finds \textit{the discursive building blocks} constituting the raw material for narrative construction.\textsuperscript{287} These building-blocks may be regarded as highly ingrained and rather abstract conceptions about “the content” of the state community, that is, a sort of collective memory or historical consciousness of the state.\textsuperscript{288} As such, building blocks may refer to, for instance, formative periods, critical junctures, essential values or defining characteristics, which enjoy a well-established historical and material foundation. Indeed, the relative strength of discursive building blocks hinges in no small part on their historical and material underpinning, be it the death of millions or the loss of “sacred land”, the cultural artifacts or architectural wonders of a golden age, the physical traits or ritual manifestations of a population and so on. However, it should at the same time be made abundantly clear that discursive building blocks are far from written in stone. Rather, although they represent the deepest and most stable layers of a state community’s collective memory, building blocks gradually evolve or may even be rooted out overnight (more on this below). In this theoretical context, there are two important analytical points to make about discursive building blocks. The first is that despite the complex and heterogeneous character of most state identity discourses, one may at a given point in time usually identify a limited number of prominent building blocks that function as the raw material for narrative construction (thus chapter 6 and 7 operates with

\textsuperscript{287} The concept of discursive building blocks is comparable to more commonly used concepts within IR discourse theory such as ‘metanarratives’, ‘basic discourses’ or ‘discursive nodal points’ (see e.g. Diez, 2001: 15-19; Hansen, 2006: 52-53; Epstein, 2010: 1-24). I prefer the former concept simply to avoid having to address the conceptual baggage of the other terms.

\textsuperscript{288} On the concept of collective memory, see e.g. Wang Z. (2012: chapter 1).
The four building blocks of Chinese identity constitution.\textsuperscript{289} The second point is that the discursive building blocks, as claimed above, have an enabling/constraining effect on the construction of legitimate identity narratives.

Figure A provides a graphical overview of the idea that a state’s identity can be conceptualized and analyzed as a three-tiered hierarchy of discursive structures.\textsuperscript{290}

\textsuperscript{289} The same basic idea about a limited number of discursive building blocks can be found in Wæver (2002: 33-38); Hansen (2006: 51-52).

\textsuperscript{290} This structuralist view of state identity can be contrasted to a (post-)constructivist scholar such as Janice Mattern (2005: 12), who states that “precisely because identity is nothing but narrative, it lasts only as long as authors keep authoring it”.

117
Figure A: A hierarchical discursive formation of state identity

The reference object of the state

Discursive building blocks

Identity narratives

Note: Arrows indicate structural relations of a constraining/enabling nature
A dose of social constructivism

As section 4.2 so far has unfolded a rather structuralist-informed concept of discourse, the rest of the section reflects a bit on the limitations of this approach and on what role is left for a more actor-oriented perspective in my theoretical framework. After all, bounded IR-constructivism is about identifying the bindings (e.g. structural, material and cognitive) on the social construction of international relations rather than jettisoning the constructivist dimension altogether.\(^{291}\)

Firstly, (and least relevant for my case study), even at the most ingrained structural layers of discourse – i.e. at the 1\(^{st}\) or, somewhat more plausibly, at the 2\(^{nd}\) layer – the prevailing conceptions may be politicized and replaced with entirely new ones as a result of external shocks to the societal fabric or mass-mobilizing revolutionary movements. During such times of severe identity crisis, when mounting pressure has been built up against the existing identity formation, alternative discursive building blocks can be introduced (or perhaps reignited) to allow the forging of radically new identity narratives that may solve the crisis of identity.\(^{292}\) The likelihood of encountering such societal upheaval depends, of course, on the time horizon of one’s empirical analysis, but at any given point in time the risk of seeing one’s structural framework being turned completely upside-down seems sufficiently low as to warrant treating it – at least at the two primary layers of structure – as a relatively fixed set of analytical premises. As shown in section 6.1, the basic building blocks of China’s self-understanding have indeed been reinvented on more than one occasion during the 20\(^{th}\) century.

\(^{291}\) It should be noted that most mainstream IR-constructivists subscribe more or less explicitly to a Giddens-inspired structurationist approach to the relationship between actors and structures (e.g. Wendt, 1987; Hopf, 1998: 172-173; Price and Reus-Smit, 1998: 267; Legro, 2005: 21; Steele, 2008: 7).

\(^{292}\) For a related approach to the transformation of basic identity structures, see e.g. Wæver (2002: 32); Legro (2009: 41-42).
Yet, as they have not suffered any major disruptions in the 21st century, the discursive building blocks of Chinese identity may, at least in this analytical context, be treated as a rather stable discursive formation.

If we instead turn to the third layer of the discursive formation, the (constructivist) limitations to a structuralist framework becomes more conspicuous in ways that are related to the agency of what we may call identity narrators. In a broad sense, identity narrators are all those different types of actors who contribute to the (re)formulation of state identity narratives. In a narrow sense, however, the list of relevant narrators can usually be reduced to a handful of mostly institutional actors, including primarily key representatives of the state itself and of major oppositional parties. When not merely reiterating the existing identity narratives, such narrators exert an actively constructivist role by reflexively interpreting the prevailing discursive building blocks to adjust a given narrative or, at times, to create a new coherent and compelling identity narrative about the state community.293 In this process, a narrator is – to borrow a phrase from E. H. Carr294 – “neither the humble slave, nor the tyrannical master” of the prevailing discursive building blocks. That is, even though identity narrators need to find some resonance in society by building on widely acknowledged discursive building blocks (except during times of severe identity crisis), they do at the same time enjoy some discursive engineering power, the amount of which appears to depend on the type of the political regime. As representatives of a semi-authoritarian regime, Chinese identity narrators should thus in general be less discursively constrained by the prevailing identity structures than their counterparts in more democratic states. Yet, even in China are the most well-

293 Agency-oriented accounts of state identity constitution include e.g. Mattern (2005); Flockhart (2006); Hymans (2006); Rousseau (2006).
294 Carr (1964: 29).
established structural layers of identity discourse exerting a considerable constraining and enabling effect on the formulation of identity narratives as chapter 7 will demonstrate.

4.3 On the relationship between state identity and state grand strategy

Part I of the dissertation has developed a bounded constructivist perspective, explicated the logic of identity in terms of SIT and then introduced a discursive-structuralist framework to study the construction of identity narratives. In this last section, I link together the main parts of my theoretical argument and conclude part I of the dissertation with a set of hypotheses about how the logic of state identity affects a state’s grand strategy. In addition, I present a third set of criteria for differentiating between identity narratives based on their relative discursive authority. To begin with, however, I need to be more explicit about how to couple state identity with state grand strategy in a causal sense and then to entertain the idea that not all identity narratives are necessarily primarily driven by the logic of identity.

The linkage between state identity and state behavior (or policies) is relatively well-established and empirically documented in the IR-literature.²⁹⁵ Whereas critical IR-studies on identity are mostly devoted to exploring how the behavior and policies of states – by actively constructing existential threats and by adopting securitizing measures²⁹⁶ – come to shape their identity, mainstream con-

²⁹⁵ Sometimes the focus is on state policies rather than behavior, reflecting the fact that identity-driven state policies are not necessarily enacted and implemented in a behavioral form (see section 9.2).
²⁹⁶ On deliberate and active threat construction, see e.g. Campbell (1992), Pedersen (2003); on securitization and identity construction, see e.g. Buzan et al. (1998); Croft (2012).
structivists have been more prone to view state identity as a relatively independent variable that affect state behavior (even if most of them shy away from framing their arguments in causal terms, cf. section 2.3).\textsuperscript{297} For instance, Christian Reus-Smit sees “state identity as constitutional structures [...] that define the basic parameters of rightful state action”\textsuperscript{298} Likewise, Bruce Cronin argues that “identities provide a frame of reference from which political leaders can initiate, maintain, and structure their relationships with other states.”\textsuperscript{299} Moreover, according to Brent Steele, the “central argument of [his] book is that states pursue social actions to serve self-identity-needs, even when these actions compromise their physical existence.”\textsuperscript{300} I, too, want to study the behavioral effects of state identity. I have thus argued that a bounded constructivist approach is well-suited for undertaking such a study, and that by embedding the generative logic of identity (SIT) in a narrative-centered discursive structuralism one may develop an explanatory framework.

Now, what I claim here is that the logic of state identity – discursively articulated by the prevailing state identity narrative(s) – explains state grand strategy if the latter follows a behavioral pattern that is generated by the specific identity strategy (for satisfying the dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem) of the prevailing narrative. Each identity strategy, by framing the relationship between the in-group state and its salient out-group state(s) in a distinct way, has wider strategic implications for how the in-group state approaches the outside world and positions itself on the international stage. This is

\textsuperscript{298} Reus-Smit (1999: 30).
\textsuperscript{299} Cronin (1999: 18). Although Cronin cautions that it is difficult to draw a direct line between identity and behavior (ibid.: 15), he still insists that “there is a direct positive correlation between what actors do and what they are” (ibid.:131) – and he investigates how the latter affects the former.
\textsuperscript{300} Steele (2008: 2).
what I mean by the *generative* logic of identity, and in this sense a state's grand strategy is its identity strategy writ large. Yet, the logic of identity also exerts a discursive-structural effect on state grand strategy, which comes closer to the way mainstream constructivists usually study the effects of social identities.\footnote{The distinction between a generative and structural logic was briefly touched upon in section 2.3.} In this sense, the specific discursively articulated markers and guidelines of the prevailing identity narrative constrain and enable the formulation and implementation of the state's grand strategy. That is, in order to appear legitimate to the domestic audience a state's grand strategy needs to be justified in terms of the dominant identity narrative by stating how the strategy is consistent with basic identity markers and guidelines defining “who we are (not)” and “what we should do”. Given that the generative and discursive-structural logic of identity in reality constitute overlapping perspectives and that this theoretical distinction is therefore difficult to maintain and illustrate empirically (cf. section 11.2), I only introduce it here for the sake of clarifying my theoretical argument and offering a preliminary methodological caveat. In some cases, it can be quite difficult to show how the logic of identity shapes social behavior if one only studies – like many mainstream constructivists do – the discursive-structural dimension and how a certain policy is justified and legitimized. The generative effect of the logic of identity may also, as I will argue, be illustrated by other means (see section 5.1).

Mainstream constructivists have already demonstrated the explanatory power of state identity in several respects, including in relation to alliance formation, threat construction and major foreign policy decisions.\footnote{On alliance formation, see e.g. Barnett (1996); Risse-Kappen (1996); Kang (2007); on threat construction, see e.g. Gries (2005); Gartzke & Gleditsch (2006); Rousseau (2006); on major foreign policy decisions, see e.g. Steele (2008).} This dissertation expands the existing theoretical literature by developing a framework for explain-
ing the overall strategic behavior of states from the logic of their identities. It should be pointed out that my claim to explanatory power only pertains to a state’s grand strategy. Whereas a specific piece of foreign or security policy – for example a negotiation mandate in an intergovernmental organization or a decision to intervene in a conflict area – may merely reflect bureaucratic, economic, party-related or even idiosyncratic interests, a state’s grand strategy seems to be more intimately connected to how that state envisions itself in relation to salient out-group states and how it accordingly defines its role and position in relation to the outside world. Hence, it is first of all at the most general level of the foreign and security policy domain that questions of identity come to the fore, thereby provoking or requiring some (not necessarily public) reflections on why a certain grand strategy policy should be privileged rather than another.

**Criteria for the systematization of state identity narratives**

If the logic of state identity may explain the course of state grand strategy, how do we then tease out the particular logic(s) of state identity? For any given state identity one may identify a number of more or less discrete, even conflicting, identity narratives, each of which articulates the logic of identity in a specific way. In order to differentiate among and systematize the various types of identity narratives that may affect a state’s grand strategy I have already offered two sets of criteria (in section 3.2 and 4.1 respectively), to which a third set of analytical criteria may be added:

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303 For a related point, see Wæver (2002: 27-28).
304 See also Reus-Smit (1999: 35).
• One set of criteria is derived from the five ideal-typical identity strategies in SIT, each of which involves a discrete strategy for how to satisfy the dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem.

• Another set of criteria is based on the different types of identity markers in the narrative, each of which frames the relationship between in- and out-group in a specific way according to whether the basic social categories are universalistic or particularistic and extrovert or introvert.

• A third set of criteria pertains to the relative discursive authority of the identity narrative, that is, how do we differentiate among different state identity narratives in terms of their relative discursive authority?

Before presenting the third set of criteria let me suggest how the first two sets may be linked together theoretically. Figure B offers an overview of how identity strategies and narrative markers are tentatively related although the relations are indicative rather than determinate and thus primarily serve as analytical suggestions prior to the empirical analysis.
Some of these relations should be relatively straightforward. For instance, in the case of identity strategies of social competition or social affiliation, the need for self-esteem and distinctiveness is addressed in an outward-looking (i.e. extrovert) fashion – by asserting oneself or receiving recognition – while the opposite is true of identity strategies of social creativity, which employ more inward-looking (i.e. introvert) ways of tackling the basic identity-constitutional questions. Other relations are perhaps not equally obvious. For instance, a strategy of social competition may be based on identity markers that are either particularis-
tic (exclusive to other states) or universalistic (inclusive), just as a strategy of moral high-grounding will frame the out-group negatively in terms of a set of alternative, morally superior values, which can be either universalistic or particularistic. Yet, one may draw, on the one hand, a theoretical linkage between social affiliation and universalism (as inclusiveness is a prerequisite for adopting such a strategy) and, on the other hand, between self-cultivation and particularism (as exclusiveness itself is being cultivated).

Turning, then, to the third set of analytical criteria, I will argue that we also need to be able to differentiate among state identity narratives on the basis of their relative discursive strength. There is little sense in operating with the logic of identity if this logic is completely indeterminate due to a plethora of available state narratives with more or less conflicting logics. Fortunately, when it comes to state identity narratives, one may rank the various narratives according to their relative position of discursive authority, reflecting the fact that some narratives enjoy a more privileged, and therefore stronger, discursive position than others. By discursive authority I simply mean the identity narrative’s relative strength in those state institutions that wield authoritative political power (such as the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government) and that accordingly formulate the policies of the state. While some regimes (notably “checks and balances style” presidential democracy) vest different branches of government with competing sources of authority, other regimes fuse power and authority to a degree where competing claims to discursive authority are relegated to oppositional mandates of parliamentary representation, civil society or (in the case of authoritarian regimes) even silenced altogether. Without delving

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305 Within Social Identity Theory the challenge of ranking multiple identities is usually referred to under the heading of “identity salience”, and some theoretical guidelines have been offered for determining which identities are likely to prevail (see e.g. Stets and Burke, 2000: 229-231).
into an intricate discussion of the institutional-political premises for discursive authority, I suggest four simple analytical distinctions based on the relative discursive authority of different narrative positions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authoritative narrative</th>
<th>Alternative narrative</th>
<th>Oppositional narrative</th>
<th>Radical narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The official discursive position of the government as manifested in government policies, legislation, whitepapers and speeches</td>
<td>A discursive position that is supported or at least tolerated by (parts of) the government but not actively promoted as the official policy line</td>
<td>A discursive position that competes with the authoritative narrative and that enjoys some (minority) parliamentary representation</td>
<td>A discursive position that competes with the authoritative narrative but without any institutionalized political backing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It almost goes without saying that the relative discursive authority of a state identity narrative is critical for its ability to shape the policies of the state. Consequently, one needs to locate the authoritative state identity narrative(s) to derive the specific logic of identity that shapes state grand strategy. Moreover, the relevance of including other narrative positions depends not only on the extent to which alternative, oppositional and radical narratives are present and observable in the state regime under study but also on the prospects such narratives face of replacing the authoritative narratives of state identity. Hence, section 5.1 argues that in the case of China it makes most sense to direct the empirical analysis at the level of authoritative and alternative identity narratives, whereas oppositional narratives are virtually non-existent and radical ones are
primarily interesting as a potential source for more fundamental disruptions of the prevailing discursive structures.

Another important point to make is that there can easily be more than one authoritative narrative of state identity, insofar as the official identity discourse involves conflicting sets of identity logics in a narrative form. Hence, the hegemonic conception of state identity encompasses all the authoritative identity narratives and their more or less conflicting logics at a given point in time. Such narrative variety may reflect strategic indecision, instrumentalism or internal power struggles of government, especially in (semi-)authoritarian regimes where oppositional or radical narratives are often being suppressed. In the case of China, I intend to show in chapters 6-8 that one may discern five distinct authoritative/alternative identity narratives in the 21st century (of relevance to Chinese grand strategy): `Globalist China´, `Sovereign China´, `Unified China´, `Si-no-centric China´ and `Rising China´. Since one may derive several conflicting identity logics from these narratives, I devise a strategy in section 5.2 for measuring the relative strength of each narrative during the 21st century.

Theoretical argument and hypothesis

Having come to the end of the first part of my dissertation let me recapitulate my overall argument about the logic of identity. Along with other mainstream constructivists I want to explore how identity-related dynamics affect the behavior of states. On the basis of a bounded constructivist perspective, informed by critical realism, I have argued for a harder and leaner conceptualization of social identities where the logic of identity is viewed as a universal, irreducible and potentially independent causal factor, having both generative and structural ef-
fects. The generative effects of social identities were narrowed down, by virtue of Social Identity Theory, to the primarily cognitive need of in-groups for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem in relation to salient out-groups. In order to address and satisfy these basic needs social groups may adopt various types of identity strategies, which (in this state-centric theoretical context) were translated into five ideal-typical variants: Social competition, social affiliation, moral high-grounding, downward retargeting and self-cultivation. The structural effects of social identities were theorized by conceptualizing state identity as a three-leveled hierarchy of discursive structures – most directly manifested at the level of state identity narratives – which have a constraining and enabling effect on the formulation of state grand strategy. As such, a state identity narrative – understood here as a bounded and coherent version of the state’s identity discourse, defining the social categories (or markers) for distinguishing between in-group and out-group – may serve as an analytical concept to systematize the different types of identity strategies and identity markers that a state may adopt (with identity markers being either universalistic or particularistic and extrovert or introvert in an ideal-typical sense). It is against this backdrop that I have linked state identity narratives to state grand strategy. My claim is that a state’s grand strategy is explained by the logic of that state’s identity to the extent that the grand strategy is not only discursive-structurally enabled and constrained by the identity markers of the prevailing state identity narrative(s) but also more directly generated by the specific identity strategy (of the prevailing narrative) for satisfying the dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem.

I conclude chapter 4 by translating my theoretical argument on the logic of identity into a single theoretical hypothesis. I deliberately state the hypothesis in
terms of the generative dimension of the logic of identity since this is the crux of my theoretical argument. The hypothesis will guide the way I design an empirical plausibility probe of the framework in chapter 5 and the way I formulate a set of *empirical* hypotheses in chapter 9 about the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy.

**HYPOTHESIS:**

Any state’s prevailing narrative conception of state identity is predicated on a particular identity strategy -- for framing the salient in-group/out-group distinction(s) and satisfying the basic dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem -- which at the same time generates the grand strategy of the state in question.
Chapter 5:
Questions of methodology: case design and the study of identity

Using an empirical case study to illustrate the merits of a theoretical framework brings questions of methodology to the fore. Chapter 5 addresses the basic methodological challenges involved in conducting a case study whose overall purpose is fourfold: to demonstrate how the logic of social identity can be studied systematically at the level of state identity; to tease out the specific identity logics that characterize Chinese state identity; to map the patterns of Chinese grand strategy; and to show how the logic of Chinese identity affects Chinese state grand strategy in the 21st century. The chapter consists of two sections, the first of which focuses on the overall purpose, design and type of my case study. Section 5.1 first proposes to design the case study as a plausibility probe of my theoretical framework, which by the end of chapter 4 was boiled down to a theoretical hypothesis about how state identity affects state grand strategy. To this end, I divide the case study into two main sub-cases, which examine Chinese identity and grand strategy in the 21st century on either side of the global financial crisis, as this gives me some variation on both the independent and dependent variable. The section subsequently discusses the extent to which my case study constitutes a crucial case in terms of all those facilitating or impeding con-
ditions that render the underlying theoretical propositions more or less likely in the specific context of the present case study.

Whereas Section 5.1 is concerned with how to study the relationship between identity and grand strategy within a single case study, Section 5.2 concentrates exclusively on Chinese identity, outlining the premises for studying the official discourse on Chinese identity in the following chapters (6-8). Chinese identity may, at least in principle, be studied from four different angles in terms of a distinction between public or private identity conceptions and another between elite or lay conceptions. I will argue, however, that only public elite conceptions constitute a perspective that is both practically accessible and relevant, given my overall focus on the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy. In the light of this, I define my approach to Chinese identity as an “outsider’s perspective” that is well-suited to a theory-driven case study of the official leadership discourse. Finally, I briefly present a three-pronged research strategy for studying Chinese identity, involving a combination of a literature review, a discourse analysis and a content analysis. The more specific methodological issues on how to measure Chinese identity – i.e. selection of sources, coding process, questions of validity and reliability etc. – are dealt with in Chapters 7 and 8 as part of the empirical analysis.

5.1 A plausibility probe: designing a case study of China
The field of IR has in recent years, according to some observers, neglected theory development in favor of a more quantitative-oriented focus on hypothesis testing. As stated more precisely by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “Inter-
national Relations scholars have devoted less effort to creating and refining theories or using theory to guide empirical research. Instead, they increasingly focus on ‘simplistic hypothesis testing’, which emphasizes discovering well-verified empirical regularities.”

Mearsheimer and Walt go on to stress that “the creation and refinement of theory is the most important activity in this enterprise [of social science]. This is especially true in IR, due to the inherent complexity and diversity of the international system and the problematic nature of much of the available data.”

Although I do not share the self-proclaimed positivism of Mearsheimer and Walt, I sympathize with their objective of developing, refining or using theory to guide empirical research. As set out in the introduction, this dissertation aims, first, to build a theoretical framework based on the logic of social identity as a motivational driver of state grand strategy, secondly, to use the framework to map and systematize the narrative logic of Chinese identity and the behavioral patterns of grand strategy, and thirdly, to establish a relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy in the 21st century. In other words, my study of China represents a clear example of a theory-driven case study. Before discussing what type of case study China constitutes, let me first clarify my understanding of a case study and the idea of using one as a plausibility probe.

Following John Gerring, I define a case study as “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units.” What is

306 Mearsheimer and Walt (2013: 427). It should be noted that their conclusions primarily pertain to American IR. Importantly, my own dissertation primarily addresses the same IR-audience.
307 Ibid.: 429; see also Bennett and Elman (2007: 171) for a similar point.
308 Interestingly, although Mearsheimer and Walt define themselves as positivists – like the vast majority of American IR-scholars (2013: 430) – they explicitly ground their perspective in a scientific realist epistemology (ibid.: 432-33), which, on closer inspection, is closely related to critical realism (see Section 2.1). For a critique of the widespread proclivity among American IR-scholars to using the label of positivism, see Bennett (2013: 462).
309 As noted by Bennett and Elman (2007: 170) case studies have traditionally been at least as important to the field of IR as quantitative approaches.
310 Gerring (2004: 342). In a similar vein, Bennett and George (2005: 17-18) define a case as “an instance of a class of events” and a case study as “a well-defined aspect of a historical episode that the investigator selects for analysis”. For an overview of some of the alternative definitions of a case study see Gerring (2004: 342).
central about this relatively narrow definition is the question of representativeness: is the studied phenomenon representative of a larger population of similar phenomena? Yet, given my underlying theoretical ambitions, I prefer Gerring’s definition. Furthermore, as Gerring also points out, the “unit” of a case study “connotes a spatially bounded phenomenon [...] observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time.” In my case, the spatial unit is China – more specifically China’s discourse on its own identity, as well as its overall strategic behavior – while the delimited time period covers the first fifteen years of the 21st century (further specified below).

Taking Gerring’s definition as a point of departure, there seem to be two main routes – one inductive and the other deductive – along which a case study can produce generalizable knowledge. On the one hand, a case study can be explorative and inductive insofar as the researcher analyzes the phenomenon under study without any explicitly formulated theoretical hypotheses about how the phenomenon is generated, constituted, related etc. Potential generalizations are therefore derived in an inductive manner by means of descriptive inferences from the specific instances to a broader class of similar phenomena. An excellent example of such an approach is provided by Clifford Geertz’ classic case study of Balinese cockfights, in which he makes several specific observations about in-group favoritism that he subsequently extends to a far broader social setting (Geertz, 1972: esp. 18).

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311 On the centrality of the criterion of representativeness, see Gerring (2006: 146-147). At the same time, the relative representativeness (or external validity) is one of the main challenges that any case study faces.
312 See e.g. Yin (2013: 3-26).
313 See Bennett and Checkel (2014: 22-23).
314 An excellent example of such an approach is provided by Clifford Geertz’ classic case study of Balinese cockfights, in which he makes several specific observations about in-group favoritism that he subsequently extends to a far broader social setting (Geertz, 1972: esp. 18).
strumental fashion, the main purpose being to assess the relative empirical potential of the theoretical framework.\textsuperscript{315} To be sure, few case studies can be unequivocally designated to either of these ideal-typical categories, as the process usually involves going back and forth between empirical analysis and theoretical development. However, my own approach is clearly far more deductive and theory-driven than inductive and explorative.

As several scholars have argued, a case study is actually particularly well-suited to theory development at an early phase since it enables the researcher to thoroughly establish the main variables, pinpoint their (causal) relationship and probe the empirical plausibility of the suggested theoretical framework.\textsuperscript{316} Harry Eckstein, who has pioneered the idea of using a case study as a plausibility probe, has described its particular merits as follows: “\textit{After hypotheses are formulated, one does not necessarily proceed immediately to test them. A stage of inquiry preliminary to testing sometimes intervenes [...] It involves probing the plausibility of candidate-theories. [...] In essence, plausibility probes involve attempts to determine whether potential validity may reasonably be considered great enough to warrant the pains and costs of testing.}”\textsuperscript{317} I find that the idea of conducting a plausibility probe offers a useful and well-established means of evaluating my theoretical framework and the posited relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy in a preliminary fashion. Rather than staging an outright test, at the present stage of development it makes more sense to delve into a case study in order to tease out the logic of social identity and to show how it affects state grand strategy. My plausibility probe thus examines the internal validity of

\textsuperscript{315} See e.g. Runge Olesen (2012: chapter 3).
\textsuperscript{316} See e.g. Levy (2002: 434-35); George and Bennett (2005: 9); Gerring (2004: 348-349). For a critical view of the potential of a single case study to contribute to the development of theory, see King, Keohane and Verba (1994: 209-211).
\textsuperscript{317} Eckstein (1975: 140-141).
my theoretical hypothesis on the relationship between state identity and grand strategy (proposed in Section 4.3 and empirically specified in Section 9.2). Moreover, the relative external validity of China as a more or less representative state unit determines the extent to which I may potentially extend a positive finding to other similar state-units.318

Research design of the case study

So how should I design my case study to conduct a useful plausibility probe? One of the first challenges to address in any case study that investigates a hypothesized causal relationship is how to keep the studied variables separate from each other. In order to reduce the risk of conflation (cf. Section 2.3), I have from the outset defined the independent and dependent variable in distinct ways (cf. introduction). But my separation of the two variables also has a methodological dimension, since I intend to measure state identity exclusively by means of the official state discourse, whereas state grand strategy is measured largely on the basis of behavioral indicators.319 The operationalization of the identity variable is carried out below in Section 5.2, while the operationalization of the grand strategy variable is left aside until Section 9.3.

The next thing to consider in designing a case study is the number of cases that are necessary to illustrate the relationship between independent and dependent variable. As the number of cases may be increased by introducing additional spatial (state) units or by extending one's observations and dividing them into clearly separated time periods, there are different ways to obtain some cross-

318 On the internal and external validity of case studies, see e.g. Gerring (2006: 43-50).
case variation. My decision to employ only one spatial unit (i.e. China) rests on several premises. Most importantly, the relative complexity of my theoretical framework militates against using more than one state unit. For one thing, it requires a great deal of in-depth exploration to be able to both comprehend and systematize the identity discourse of any given state. What is more, inasmuch as my independent variable (i.e. identity narratives) is not exactly the most clear-cut analytical variable (see Section 5.2) and may assume five different values (cf. figure B), I am probably best served by thoroughly establishing the independent variable in one specific spatial unit. Finally, there is always an inherent trade-off between, on the one hand, including additional state-cases (apart from China) in order to increase representativeness (i.e. external validity) and, on the other hand, one’s ability to control for undesired variance across the cases, which may easily impinge upon the internal validity of any positive findings.

However, even though I confine myself to only one state unit, I still operate with more than one sub-case, since my observations of Chinese identity and grand strategy are divided into three separate time periods of the 21st century (see figure C below): Sub-case 1 [2002-06], sub-case 2 [2007-09] and sub-case 3 [2010-14]. All three sub-cases consist of a comprehensive set of observations, which are used to establish the independent and dependent variables – Chinese identity narratives in Chapters 6-8 and Chinese grand strategy in Chapters 9-11 – and for tracing a link between the two variables. This part of the case study has been designed specifically with a view to gaining some within-case variation in both the independent and dependent variable. Indeed, I expect the empirical analysis of sub-case 1 and 3 to reveal a pattern of co-variation between Chinese identity and Chinese grand strategy, while sub-case 2 primarily covers a transition

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320 King, Keohane and Verba (1994: 218, see also 219-28).
phase, when the world was plunged into the global financial crisis. With respect to the starting point of the observations in sub-case 1, I prefer 2002 as the empirical entry point. This is mainly due to the impact of 9/11, which ushered in the War on Terror, and the power transition in China in 2002, which transferred power to the fourth generation of PRC leaders, the combined effects of which seem to provide a good starting point for an analysis of China’s identity and grand strategy in the 21st century.\[321\]

**Figure C: Overview of case study**

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321 One might say that 2001-02 represented a critical juncture for China, and I will point out the effects of this juncture on China’s grand strategy (in Section 10.2) and on Chinese identity (in Chapter 11).
The critical juncture separating sub-case 1 and 3 is constituted by the global financial crisis beginning in 2007 (with the credit crunch in July) and worsening throughout 2008 (peaking in September with the collapse of Lehman Brothers) until some stabilization was achieved during 2009 (owing largely to the Obama-administration’s $1 trillion federal spending plan in January).\footnote{For a brief overview of the global financial crisis, see the Economist (2013): http://www.economist.com/news/schoolsbrief/21584534-effects-financial-crisis-are-still-being-felt-five-years-article.} Thus, it was not until well into 2009 that the scale of the havoc wreaked by the financial crisis was fully realized by most states, leading some China observers to regard the crisis as just as much of a watershed event for international relations as the terrorist attacks in 2001.\footnote{See e.g. Rozman (2011: 91); Friedberg (2011: xvi); Zhao (2014: 130).} From a Chinese perspective, the global financial crisis first of all brought about a sudden acceleration of the relative rise of China in material terms, which fed into the discourse on China’s identity and its role in the world.\footnote{Rozman (2011: 85, 91); Pei (2014a: 143).} As pointed out in Section 3.2, the relative material gap between a rising low-status state and its salient higher-ranked state(s) is critical for the former’s choice of identity strategy. That is, if the status hierarchy is perceived as being malleable in a material sense – due to markedly uneven growth rates or external shocks – then the low-status state is more likely to embark on an identity strategy of social competition to overturn the status hierarchy. Since China, prior to the financial crisis, was predominantly pursuing an identity strategy of social affiliation, it would constitute an important change of value in the independent variable if China were to settle for an entirely different kind of identity narrative based on a strategy of social competition in the aftermath of the global financial crisis.
The specific division of my case study into two main sub-cases separated by a transitional period (sub-case 2) also reflects the extensive recent debate about whether China’s strategic behavior has taken an assertive (or revisionist) turn since the beginning of 2010. If such a shift can in fact be documented empirically – as I intend to find out in Chapter 10 – it would potentially amount to a changed “value” of the dependent variable, depending of course on its specific operationalization (see Section 9.3). This, in turn, would provide some initial corroboration of the suggested pattern of co-variation between the independent and dependent variables. A more detailed account of the proposed relationship between Chinese identity and Chinese grand strategy is found in Section 9.2. Suffice it simply to indicate the existence of a pattern of co-variation, as this is critical for the way I have designed my empirical analysis.

Admittedly, to identify a pattern of co-variation between independent and dependent variables is in itself never sufficient to validate a causal relationship. This is especially true when it is based on a limited number of cases and when these cases are not even clearly independent of each other. Therefore, an observed pattern of co-variation will need further corroboration to constitute a strong positive finding in my case. What does this entail? Leaving aside the option of expanding the number of cases, which I deem to be beyond the practical limitations of the dissertation, there are at least two strategies to follow. One is to empirically identify via process-tracing how the causal relation operates. In the words of Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, “[w]ith process tracing, causation is established through uncovering traces of a causal mechanism within the con-

325 See e.g. Swaine (2010); Christensen (2011); Yan (2011c); Johnston (2013); Zhao (2013); Jerdén (2014).
326 Again, this concerns a methodological trade-off between independence of cases in order to maximize the external validity potential and similarity of cases for the sake of internal validity.
fines of one or a few cases." The idea is not so much to establish the congruence between independent and dependent variables as to specify how the two variables are causally related. This involves a thorough examination of the hypothesized causal relation (denoted by the arrows in Figure C), comprising different types of empirical sources to shed as much light as possible on the proposed causal link. Here, I use a process tracing-inspired method in Section 11.2 to show how China's grand strategy is formulated and legitimized by central state representatives in terms of (or by explicit reference to) the authoritative narratives of Chinese identity and their specific logics. I pursue this research strategy as far as the available data renders it feasible, but the political system of China poses a number of significant methodological challenges, which will be addressed in the next section.

Another strategy is to display the inadequacy of alternative explanations in accounting for the observed variation in the dependent variable. Section 9.1 offers a comprehensive review of the most prominent (primarily realist, liberalist and constructivist) scholarship on Chinese grand strategy not only to stake out my own constructivist contribution, but also to pinpoint some of the difficulties faced by the existing literature in accounting for Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. Yet, as already noted in the introduction, it makes little sense to insist on the causal omnipotence of the logic of social identity in relation to state grand strategy. Rather, my aim is to show that the logic of social identity clearly affects state grand strategy but not to the exclusion of other causal factors. Crucially, as especially some versions of realism may equally well account for the

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327 Bennett and Elman (2007: 183). As noted by Bennett and Elman (ibid.), process tracing is well-suited to deductive theorizing, where one specifies a priori how the causal mechanism should work in the case under study.

328 For an account of process tracing in International Relations, see Bennett (2010); see also Collier (2011).

329 The sources employed for process tracing are primarily publicly accessible discursive statements, some of which are also used to establish the independent variable in Chapters 7-9 (see Section 5.2).

above proposed shift in the dependent variable, the analytical task becomes one of demonstrating empirically that the logic of social identity is at least as important in explaining Chinese grand strategy as those factors emphasized by realism. One way of doing so harks back to the process tracing strategy where one may be able to identify discursive statements about Chinese grand strategy, which explicitly privilege the logic of social identity over realist logics of power and security. Another possibility is to zoom in on specific behavioral aspects of Chinese grand strategy that directly contradict a realist explanation but are firmly in line with the logic of social identity. To this end, Section 11.3 provides a discussion of how in many cases Chinese grand strategy seems to be driven by status concerns that have the important side-effect of reducing China’s security and/or power potential.

A crucial case study?

The next methodological question addresses the type of case study I am conducting, a key concern being whether it represents a crucial case for my ability to probe the plausibility of the theoretical framework. Simply put, a crucial case may be defined as, “one in which a theory that passes empirical testing is strongly supported and one that fails is strongly impugned.”331 The idea of a crucial case study is closely linked to ‘most likely’ and ‘least likely’ research designs, which tend to maximize the significance of a single-case study (or other small-N stud-

331 George and Bennett (2005: 9). Gerring (2007: 232) defines a crucial case more stringently as one, which “is explained precisely by the theory, no other theories can explain the facts, and the theory is invariable (deterministic)”. I prefer the softer definition given by George and Bennett because there are few deterministic theories in social science, as Gerring himself notes (ibid.: 236).
ies).\textsuperscript{332} In practice, however, few case studies belong to either of these ideal-typical categories, not least because the complexity of most theoretical constructions in social science makes it quite difficult to define and assess all the facilitating or impeding conditions that render the theory’s predictions more or less likely in the context of a specific case study. With respect to the present case study, I shall argue that it cannot quite be designated as a crucial case although it resembles it in important ways. To begin with, however, I should briefly stipulate the overall scope conditions of my theoretical framework as they represent the minimum requirements that need to be fulfilled by the case before assessing its relative likeliness.\textsuperscript{333} Moreover, the scope conditions offer an initial definition of the \textit{population} of states, from which China represents a specific case, and in this way the scope conditions also briefly suggest the external validity of my case study.

Some of these scope conditions may seem quite straightforward: The “theory” holds for \textit{states} that possess the capacity to formulate and conduct an \textit{autonomous foreign and security policy}. As all states face a number of constraints on their foreign and security policies, autonomous here merely refers to whether a given state enjoys \textit{de facto} sovereignty over its external affairs.\textsuperscript{334} Needless to say, major powers like China have greater freedom of action than small states like Denmark.\textsuperscript{335} But provided that the state is (more or less) capable of setting its own policy course, the “theory” invariably assumes that the logic of social

\textsuperscript{332} Specifically, if a case study is \textit{most} likely to fulfill a theoretical prediction, and yet does not, it is strongly disconfirmatory, while a case study that is \textit{least} likely to fulfill the same theoretical prediction is strongly confirmatory if it turns out to yield a positive finding (see Bennett and Elman, 2007: 173-174; Gerring, 2007: 232).

\textsuperscript{333} For a brief discussion of scope conditions, see Gerring (2011: 206-207).

\textsuperscript{334} Formal sovereignty is not necessarily enough if the state is, in reality, controlled by another state (for example by an occupation force).

\textsuperscript{335} In fact, China boasts the largest population (around 1.3 billion inhabitants), the second largest economy (i.e. a GDP of around $9 trillion in nominal prices) and the third largest territory (around 10 million square kilometers) to name some of the indicators of its \textit{potential} for political autonomy.
identity affects the grand strategy of small states and great powers alike. Another scope condition concerns the nature of the state regime, given that extremely repressive regimes (e.g. dictatorships) defy the basic logic of the theory. When ultimately a single individual enjoys free rein in setting the political course of a state, it would appear somewhat far-fetched to probe into the logic of collective identity categories that are discursively structured. Although the Chinese polity displays several authoritarian features (see Section 5.2), it has undergone a major transformation from the Mao-era of nearly absolutist power to the current political system, which has some institutionalized checks on power and a political culture of collective leadership. A final scope condition regards the relative social status of the examined state. Since the logic of social identity has been theorized from the perspective of low-status states, the theory “only” applies to states whose salient out-group consists of higher-ranked state(s). As already argued, despite its immense recent progress China is still, in both a material and normative sense, a low-status country vis-à-vis the United States in particular and the Western liberal order in general.

Turning, then, to the question of the relative likeliness of my case study design, this may be answered from two partly overlapping angles pertaining to the likeliness of the theoretical hypothesis and the empirical case of China respectively. As to the former, by venturing into the realm of state grand strategy, usually considered the “home turf” of IR-realism (see Section 9.1), one may argue that I am taking the logic of social identity to a hard trial. That is, if the logic of state

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336 Hopf (2009: 286). Yet, even a dictator may be fundamentally constrained by a specific set of collective identity structures to the extent that his/her legitimacy rests on heeding these structures.

337 Some of the most important institutionalized checks on political power in China involve age and term limits for political leaders in the Communist Party as well as in the state institutions (see e.g. Li, 2012).

338 In a similar vein, Peter Katzenstein (1996: 11) argues in the introduction to the much cited anthology on The Culture of National Security that its constructivist contributions represent “hard cases”, and if the “case material
identity can be demonstrated to affect state grand strategy in a generative manner, then my case study would lend some initial credence to a bounded constructivist IR-perspective. However, the central question here concerns the empirical case itself: Does China – and Chinese grand strategy – represent a least likely case of being subject to the logic of social identity (compared to other states), thereby enhancing the relative weight of my case study design?

Interestingly, the conventional IR-wisdom on Chinese grand strategy seems overwhelmingly to point in that direction: China is allegedly bound by a realist logic of power and security incentives in its strategic behavior. For instance, China scholars such as Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross have stated that “China acts like a realist power on the world stage”.\(^{339}\) Another prominent IR scholar, Thomas Christensen, has argued that “China may well be the high church of realpolitik in the post-Cold War world.”\(^{340}\) Likewise, in one of the most influential books on the rise of China, Avery Goldstein has observed that “China’s contemporary leaders, like their predecessors in imperial China, prize the practice of realpolitik.” Indeed, “Beijing’s keen sensitivity to the importance of relative capabilities [...] underpins its current approach”.\(^{341}\) Another high-profile realist scholar on China, Robert Kaplan, has more recently dubbed China “an über-realist power”.\(^{342}\) Even a constructivist China scholar like Alastair Johnston ends his much cited book on Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History by acknowledging the “dominant status of a parabellum [i.e. realpolitik-oriented] stra-

\(^{339}\) Nathan and Ross (1997: 4).
\(^{340}\) Christensen (1996: 37)
\(^{341}\) Goldstein (2005: 198).
\(^{342}\) Kaplan (2010: 24).
tegic culture” in Chinese history.\textsuperscript{343} In sum, Beijing seems to be deeply motivated by a realist logic of power and security, which would conversely make China a least likely case of the logic of social identity.\textsuperscript{344}

Even so, there are other arguments that appear to go against the grain of a “least-likely-case” design. For while one may cite the conventional wisdom on “Chinese strategic realism”, there are plenty of China-scholars who have shown, on the other hand, that China is “fraught with identity logics” (cf. Section 3.3; see also Section 9.1). Indeed, as stated in Section 3.3, due to its heightened level of ontological insecurity, its acute sensitivity to questions of social status and its keen historical awareness of itself, China is analytically ripe for a SIT-perspective. Even more importantly, I will argue, and later demonstrate, that China’s resort to confrontational and assertive behavior need not only be caused by power and security logics but can also be driven by the logic of social identity and thus generated by the need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem. Hence, I will confine myself to suggesting that my empirical analysis contains some elements of a crucial case study in that it attempts to challenge well-established realist insights into the strategic behavior of states in general and Chinese grand strategy in particular.

The central methodological points so far have been, first, that my case study of China is designed as a plausibility probe into how the logic of social identity affects grand strategy. Secondly, that the probe will attempt not only to demonstrate the existence of a pattern of co-variation between Chinese identity narra-


\textsuperscript{344} It should be noted that from a Wendtian constructivist perspective (cf. Wendt, 1992; 1999) one could argue that as all states are basically socialized by the prevailing culture of the international system, one would actually expect Chinese behavior to be informed by a “realist” or “realpolitik” logic insofar as the systemic anarchical culture is permeated by the same overall logic.
tives and Chinese grand strategy but also to trace a causal link from the former to the latter while taking alternative explanations into account. Thirdly, that in order to increase the explanatory weight of my case study it has been selected along the lines of a least-likely case design even though it cannot quite be considered a crucial case.

5.2 Mapping Chinese identity narratives: an outsider’s perspective
Social identities are sometimes dismissed as a proper causal variable due to their ephemeral and complex character. Yet, as I argued in Chapter 2, some types of social identities are sufficiently stable and discursively structured to allow one to treat them as objects of analysis and study their identity logics. Moreover, while the complexity of social identities certainly hampers any simple measurement, there are several well-established methods for tapping into the logic of social identities. Indeed, in their important book, *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists*, Rawi Abdelal and his colleagues discuss a number of different methods for studying social identities in a systematic fashion.\(^{345}\) In this section, I formulate a research strategy for measuring the independent variable of my theoretical framework: Chinese identity structures.

To begin with, however, a few observations about my qualifications as a China scholar are in order, as they have a bearing on the way I have designed the case study. Most fundamentally, since I possess no Chinese language skills, I have had to rely instead on whatever sources are available in English. What is more, hav-

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\(^{345}\) Abdelal et al. (2009). Actually, the book was preceded by a journal article, “Identity as a Variable” (Abdelal, Herrera et al., 2006), which has been much cited by identity scholars.
ing so far made no long-term stays in China to thoroughly acquaint myself with the daily life and routines of the Chinese, I can stake no claim to having an insider’s intimate knowledge of my field of study. While some might view these shortcomings as fundamentally impairing my ability to gain access to and fully understand Chinese identity, I shall argue that holding an outsider’s perspective – as I label my own perspective – is actually quite ideal in light of the overall premises of my case study. First of all, as already stated, I have no intentions to conduct an inductive, explorative identity study of China – e.g. by means of open-ended interviews or an examination of relevant Chinese debate forums – to extract and establish the identity categories directly from “the ordinary holders” of Chinese identity. On the contrary, I approach my field of study equipped with a number of theoretically deduced conceptual categories of identity that are imposed on the discourse on Chinese identity in the hope of finding some Chinese empirical equivalents to my theoretical categories.\textsuperscript{346} In other words, I expect Chinese identity to conform more or less accurately to the basic categories developed in Part I of the dissertation and summarized in Figure B (Section 4.3).

Yet, there is another main reason why an outsider’s perspective seems relatively unproblematic in this context, which is that I am only interested in some aspects of Chinese identity, namely those that pertain to Chinese grand strategy. The discourse on Chinese identity, like identity discourses in other countries, is of course very multifaceted with some parts of it mainly concerning domestic societal issues. For instance, in recent years China has been witnessing an extensive identity-related debate about the relative balance between socialism and capi-

\textsuperscript{346} On the methodological trade-offs involved in adopting either an inductive or deductive approach to the study of social identities, see Sylvan and Metskas (2009: 93-96); for a critical view of using a deductive approach, see Hopf (2009: 289).
talism in designing the fundamental institutions of Chinese society.\textsuperscript{347} Crucially, the part of the discourse on Chinese identity that is most relevant to China’s grand strategy is chiefly formulated by key decision-makers or semi-official media outlets with English editions or translations often readily to hand. Hence, in terms of relative discursive authority (cf. Section 4.3) I face no serious limitations in gaining access to both the authoritative and alternative narratives of Chinese identity, which are by far the most relevant layers of discourse for my case study. Even when it comes to so-called radical narratives, which may perhaps exert some pressure on Chinese grand strategy, there are several English-language sources that could potentially provide some insight into these narratives.\textsuperscript{348}

\textit{Sources and methods for measuring Chinese identity}

In attempting to measure social identities, constructivist scholars have a variety of methods at their disposal, including discourse analysis, content analysis, open-ended interviews and surveys, to name some of the most frequently used methods.\textsuperscript{349} When comparing the strengths and weaknesses of each method in providing access to Chinese identity, the first thing to consider is the availability and relevance of potential sources on China’s identity. Broadly speaking, one may divide these sources into four different types of manifestations of Chinese identity. On the one hand, one may categorize different manifestations of identity in terms of whether they are expressed privately (i.e. as individual ideas or in private conversations) or publicly (i.e. as discursive manifestations). On the oth-

\textsuperscript{347} See e.g. Leonard (2012); Fewsmith (2013).

\textsuperscript{348} One example is the nationalist leaning \textit{Global Times}, which is available online via: http://www.globaltimes.cn/index.html. My own discourse analysis does not comprise such sources.

\textsuperscript{349} For a brief introduction to these methods, see Abdelal et al. (2009: 4–9). For an in-depth discussion of the pros and cons of the different methods, see Brady and Kaplan (2009); Sylvan and Metskas (2009).
er hand, one may also make a useful distinction between whether the manifestations of identity constitute elite or lay (popular) conceptions. Here, elite refers to all the representatives of the power-wielding state institutions and party organs in China, often captured by the Chinese metonym *Zhongnanhai*.350 Taken together, these two analytical distinctions yield four possible empirical sources (A, B, C and D) for tapping into Chinese identity, as illustrated by Figure D below.

Critically, only two of the four sources of Chinese identity are both relevant and accessible. *Source D* (private lay conceptions) can be accessed by virtue of interviews, surveys, focus groups etc., but I find this source largely irrelevant for my purposes, since privately held conceptions of Chinese identity among the general population hardly affect China’s grand strategy in any significant way. Of far greater potential relevance is *source B*: private elite conceptions of Chinese identity.351 Provided that such conceptions diverge substantially from those stated publicly – and provided, of course, that Chinese identity conceptions do affect the strategic priorities of *Zhongnanhai*352 – it is not all that difficult to imagine how Chinese leaders could, outside the public spotlight, pursue strategic objectives in line with their private identity conceptions rather than the official formulations of China’s self-understanding. For instance, if Chinese leaders, during meetings of the Politburo’s standing committee, were to express highly nationalist sentiments, this could affect, among other things, the premises of China’s military modernization or its diplomatic bargaining in international organizations, thereby potentially having “a skewing effect” on China’s grand strategy. Howev-

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350 *Zhongnanhai* is the name of an imperial garden in Beijing. It houses the central headquarters of both the CCP and the State Council and is therefore seen as the primary locus of political power in China.

351 To be more specific, what is of relevance here is not so much individual leaders’ private conceptions as non-public conceptions of identity conceptions among leaders. In a similar vein, Sebastian Veg (2014) has pointed out that “the personal convictions of [Chinese] leaders are at best diffuse and changing, and none of them can avoid going through the system of decision by consensus.”

352 As already noted, Chinese decision makers may ultimately be informed by other causal factors than the logic of social identity.
er, notwithstanding the relevance of source B, I disregard it for the simple reason that it is virtually inaccessible.\textsuperscript{353} There is no reliable way of gaining insight into the private conceptions of Chinese leaders or the deliberations among them in the notoriously secretive leadership organs such as the Politburo, the State Council, the Leading Small Groups on foreign policy etc.\textsuperscript{354} Fortunately, as I will argue below when addressing the issue of instrumentalism, this skewing effect is unlikely to prove important in the context of state grand strategy.

**Figure D: Different types of conceptions and sources of China’s identity**

\[\text{A: Public elite conceptions of Chinese identity} \rightarrow \text{CHINESE IDENTITY} \rightarrow \text{CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY}\]

\[\text{B: Private elite conceptions of Chinese identity} \rightarrow \text{CHINESE IDENTITY} \rightarrow \text{CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY}\]

\[\text{C: Public lay conceptions of Chinese identity} \rightarrow \text{CHINESE IDENTITY} \rightarrow \text{CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY}\]

\[\text{D: Private lay conceptions of Chinese identity} \rightarrow \text{CHINESE IDENTITY} \rightarrow \text{CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY}\]

Potential sources of identity:

- A: Accessible and highly relevant source
- B: Inaccessible source
- C: Accessible but less relevant source
- D: Irrelevant source

\textsuperscript{353} Tellingly, it attracted world-wide attention when in June 2011 the Danish newspaper \textit{Information} was able to reveal some classified documents, approved by the Central Commission of the CCP: \url{http://www.information.dk/272093} [accessed 21.08.2014]

\textsuperscript{354} On the difficulties in acquiring knowledge about the workings of the political power-wielding machinery in China, see e.g. Miller (2014).
Having thus excluded in advance two types of identity sources, there are two other options to consider: Public elite and public lay conceptions of Chinese identity. In light of my “outsider’s perspective”, it would seem rather odd to base my empirical analysis upon popular conceptions of identity in the Chinese population (i.e. source C) such as those found in Chinese versions of social microblogging media like Sina Weibo or Tencent Weibo, with hundreds of millions of users.\textsuperscript{355} Yet, there are more substantive reasons, related to the specific character of Chinese politics, for favoring the public elite conceptions of Chinese identity instead (i.e. source A). Notwithstanding the relatively free exercise of private enterprise, the massive expansion in the number of traditional as well as social media, the emergence of a far better educated population and an increasingly pluralist Chinese civil society, China is still essentially a top-down-oriented country in a political sense. After all, today’s China displays many of the central characteristics of an authoritarian regime such as no separation of powers, a restricted judiciary, a toothless parliament, a zealously guarded monopolization of political mobilization within the Communist Party, a powerful and intrusive censorship system to control the media and a massive police and security apparatus to quell dissenting voices.\textsuperscript{356} What all of this amounts to is the observation that it makes more sense to investigate Zhongnanhai’s rendering of the Chinese self – i.e. the narratives created or reconstituted by Chinese state representatives – than to explore how China’s identity is understood among the general population.\textsuperscript{357}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{355} For a recent (2014) overview of social media in China, see e.g. http://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/social-media-fast-facts-china.
\item \textsuperscript{356} Fukuyama (2012); Lawrence and Martin (2012); Nathan (2015).
\item \textsuperscript{357} For the opposite point of view, see e.g. Callahan (2013: 2).
\end{itemize}
To be sure, questions of Chinese identity and China’s role in the world are fervently debated among the general Chinese population, not least in the social media, and Xi Jinping’s campaign about the China Dream has actually been engaging the public more directly than earlier attempts by the Communist leadership to promulgate identity-related visions of China. Moreover, Chinese popular nationalism periodically erupts in large-scale public demonstrations, which put pressure on Zhongnanhai. Consequently, the top-down orientation of Chinese politics should not be overstated as there are some (primarily constraining) bottom-up effects at play as well. Nevertheless, I will argue that it is sufficient in this explanatory context to study the elite conceptions of Chinese identity (source A). This is not only because the overall flow of Chinese politics is top-down oriented — that is, at the end of the day it is Zhongnanhai who narrate Chinese identity and formulate China’s grand strategy — but also because the elite conceptions of Chinese identity are, at any rate, likely to incorporate the most prominent popular conceptions.

So where does this leave my case study in terms of the different methods of gaining access to Chinese identity (listed at the beginning of the sub-section)? First, considering my rejection of source D-manifestations of identity, there is little point in conducting experimental studies or use focus groups to observe how ordinary Chinese citizens convey their private sense of Chineseness. As

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358 Tong and Lei (2013). Tong and Lei claim that despite government censorship, the universe of Chinese microblogging is increasingly hosting counter-hegemonic discourses.
359 See e.g. The Economist (2013b); Lee (2014).
360 The bottom-up effect has mostly been demonstrated in studies of Chinese nationalism, e.g. Gries (2004: 20, 121-124); Hughes (2011: 610); see also Billioud (2012: 226) with respect to the revival of Confucianism. Yet, as Robert Ross points out (2009: 165), Chinese nationalism is generally viewed as reactive (constraining) rather than proactive (initiating), thereby somewhat diminishing its policy effect.
361 As stated by sinologist Wang Zheng (2012: 124): “The leaders of the ruling party make decisions on foreign policy without parliamentary hearings or public canvassing. Despite increased attention to public opinion, Beijing has not made any fundamental change in its decision-making process in the last two or three decades.”
362 For an example of how experimental studies have been used to probe into cognitive categories of Chinese (or rather Asian) identity constitution, see Nisbett (2004).
to the use of surveys to systematically uncover public opinion in the Chinese population about their identity conceptions, this is not the most direct and reliable method inasmuch as Chinese politics operates primarily in the described top-down oriented fashion.\textsuperscript{363} To the extent that popular conceptions \textit{do} feed into elite conceptions, surveys could provide some insights into a potential source of change in \textit{Zhongnanhai}'s discourse on Chinese identity, but that is not a primary concern here. With respect to the use of open-ended interviews, it might provide a rich source of relevant data if one could gain access to people who are affiliated with \textit{Zhongnanhai}.\textsuperscript{364} However, the analytical value of such interviews ultimately depends on one's \textit{guanxi}, that is, how well connected one is. Boasting no special \textit{guanxi}, I doubt that undertaking interviews in my case would furnish very reliable data on Chinese elite conceptions of identity. At any rate, such data seems to be more easily and systematically obtained by other less strenuous means, to which I shall now turn.

In order to gain access to elite conceptions of Chinese identity this dissertation employs discourse and content analysis. These methods rely on interpreting and coding texts in order to tease out the identities that are represented within them.\textsuperscript{365} While discourse analysis is well suited to identify the specific categories of Chinese identity, content analysis can serve to order and hierarchize these categories once they have been established.\textsuperscript{366} Both methods are found in several versions, some of which are highly specialized with content analysis, for instance, often being conducted by computer-assisted text analysis (CATA) draw-

\textsuperscript{363} For an example of the use of survey data in the study of Chinese identity, see e.g. Gries et al. (2011).

\textsuperscript{364} There are a number of recent academic contributions on the rise of China, which are based on interviews with prominent Chinese intellectuals or centrally positioned (usually anonymous) representatives of the Chinese regime (see e.g. Leonard, 2008; Shirk, 2008; Hachigian, 2013; Kristensen and Nielsen, 2013; Shambaugh, 2013).

\textsuperscript{365} Sylvan and Metskas (2009: 85).

ing on pre-given “dictionaries”. In my case, I employ these methods in a fairly simple fashion assisted by the coding program NVivo to help systematize the large number of primary sources. Furthermore, since discourse and content analysis exclusively target publicly accessible discourse, the methods are only as strong as the data material allows for. Given the top-down-oriented leadership style in China, where public statements by Chinese leaders almost always take place within well-choreographed settings that leave little room for real debate, or critical questions, Zhongnanhai’s discourse on Chinese identity is rather restricted in some respects. This is particularly the case if one only accepts as valid either discursive statements made directly by top leaders (i.e. public speeches and comments during press conferences) or discursive statements that are at least indirectly attributable to the political leadership such as government white papers, communiques or other types of official announcements. It therefore makes sense to expand the sources of China’s elite identity discourse somewhat by including editorials or similar key articles from leading government-affiliated newspapers in order to gain access to a broader base of relevant discursive statements (see next sub-section).

By narrowing down the data of the independent variable to elite discursive statements on Chinese identity, I should address the issue of instrumentality in the formulation of Chinese identity. That is, how do we know that the identity discourse is not merely windows dressing fabricated to conceal a more controversial policy course from the national and/or international audience? As John

368 See also Shambaugh (2013: 216-38).
369 In this context, the Chinese political leadership includes, as a minimum, the members of the Politburo, the foreign minister as well as other ministers that deal with questions of identity, the state councilor for foreign policy and the various spokespersons for these leaders.
Mearsheimer states bluntly with specific reference to the Chinese leadership: “Talk is cheap and leaders have been known to lie”. The initial answer is simply to repeat that we cannot know what the private motivations of Chinese leaders are or whether they are engaged in a rhetorical game of duplicity. Fortunately, being ignorant of the privately held conceptions and deliberations within the Chinese leadership is less problematic than it might appear.

First of all, given that state grand strategy is about the overall line of foreign policy and the positioning of the state in the prevailing international order, it seems reasonable to assume that China’s grand strategy is shaped by public identity discourse rather than private elite identity conceptions (if it is affected by the logic of social identity at all!). Next, as I point out in Section 7.7, some parts of China’s public identity discourse are indeed characterized by instrumentalism, albeit not in the sense of a charade to cover up a controversial policy course – something which is hardly feasible at the level of state grand strategy. Chinese leaders are certainly using rhetorical strategies to gloss over or even manipulate inconvenient facts – they do so, for instance, with respect to human rights violations – but I contend that such rhetorical instrumentality does not fundamentally distort or skew the public identity discourse. As I argue in Chapter 7, when it comes to the official Chinese government discourse on China’s identity, it seems to be formulated in a rather deliberate and consistent manner, thus indirectly inviting us to take it seriously as an empirical source. After all, even a semi-authoritarian regime like China needs discursively to account for and justify its overall policy line to its own population as well as to the outside world.

371 Mearsheimer (2010: 383). See also Mearsheimer (2011) for a broad introduction to the use of strategic lies by state leaders. Other realists have specifically emphasized the instrumental character of China’s “Peaceful Development”-narrative, see Ross (2011: 48); Wang (2013: 196-197).

Outline of a discourse and content analysis of Chinese identity

How, more specifically, do I study and measure the elite conceptions of Chinese identity, which are publicly manifested primarily in the form of discursively structured narratives? As I have already suggested, I use a theory-guided approach that derives the ideal-typical categories of identity from the theoretical framework, imposing them in a primarily deductive fashion on the case study and subsequently attempting to “validate” the categories against the empirical reality of China’s identity discourse. Let me briefly outline the different phases of mapping China’s identity narratives, which will be carried out in Chapters 6-8. The specific methodological challenges pertaining to the selection, reliability and validity of empirical sources as well as the coding process itself are all thoroughly dealt with in later chapters.

In the first phase (Chapter 6), I conduct a literature review of the secondary academic literature on Chinese identity. In line with the periodic demarcation of my case study, the literature review focuses only on representations of Chinese identity in the 21st century. The purpose of the review is to provide an initial mapping of both the 2nd and 3rd structural layers of the discursive formation of Chinese identity (as conceptualized in Section 4.2). To begin with, I trawl through the secondary literature to find the discursive building blocks (at the 2nd layer of the formation), which constrain and enable representatives of Zhongnanhai in their construction of narratives about Chinese identity. The main challenge here is to discern, from the variegated literature on Chinese identity, a limited number of discrete building blocks that constitute the discursive raw material for narrative construction. Subsequently, I attempt to identify the range of
distinct identity categories found in the secondary literature on Chinese state identity. The idea is not to depict the full complexity of partially cross-cutting identity categories, but rather to present a somewhat more condensed overview by lumping together those categories that in reality overlap and by discarding others that are not directly relevant for explaining Chinese grand strategy. I will then use this condensed scholarly overview as a background list for translating the five theoretically derived, ideal-typical identity categories (cf. Figure B) into five specifically Chinese narratives about China’s identity as a state community (at the 3rd layer of the discursive formation). By providing some initial empirical grounding of my theoretical framework, the literature review will thus assist me in constructing the central narrative categories that guide my discourse and content analysis in the following chapters.

In the second phase (Chapter 7), I employ a sort of inverted discourse analysis in order to probe the empirical validity and to tease out the discursive logics of the five “Sinicized” narrative categories constructed in the first phase. This requires a careful reading of the official government discourse to identify the prevailing Chinese identity narratives and thereby gauge the extent to which they conform to my pre-established categories. The discursive material is based exclusively on primary sources of Chinese identity formulated directly by representatives of Zhongnanhai to ensure a high degree of reliability in identifying the discursive logic of each narrative. The sources consist of government white papers, speeches, five-yearly party reports and other types of public statements by representatives of Zhongnanhai (see Section 7.1 for a detailed overview). In the process of examining these texts I develop a conceptual cluster of discursive logics and in-

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373 Given that discourse analysis is usually characterized as an inductive method for generating meaning structures out of texts (e.g. Doty, 1993: 305-309; Hopf, 2009: 289), one may question whether my “inverted” approach should even be labeled discourse analysis. Alternatively, it can simply be termed textual analysis.
dicative key terms for each identity narrative. More specifically, I analyze how each narrative establishes the distinction and relations between the Chinese in-group and its salient out-group(s); whether the basic identity markers are universalistic or particularistic, extrovert or introvert; how the narrative attempts to satisfy the basic dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem; and the extent to which the narrative draws upon a set of underlying constraining and enabling discursive building blocks. One key challenge in any empirical examination of an identity discourse is that the narrative categories may to some extent evolve discursively over time, in effect complicating the use of specific key terms to identify a specific narrative. However, one of the main advantages of using a deductive discourse analytical approach is that it primarily focuses on identifying the underlying discursive logic of each narrative and only secondarily on specific key terms. As a result, my approach is less sensitive to conceptual variations that, on closer inspection, turn out to reflect the same underlying identity categories.

In the third phase (Chapter 8), I attempt to trace the discursive evolution of the five main narratives in the 21st century by means of a content analysis that measures the relative discursive strength of each narrative during specific time intervals. Having used the official Zhongnanhai discourse (in the second phase) to demonstrate the empirical existence of the five Sinicized identity narratives, I subsequently need to establish some sort of hierarchy among these narratives. Otherwise, if my independent identity variable contains too much discursive variation, it may turn out to be compatible with just about any type of grand strategy, making the logic of social identity uninteresting as a source of

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While the official government discourse is well suited to identifying the narratives of Chinese identity and teasing out their discursive logics, it is far too heterogeneous as data material to be entirely reliable for the purposes of conducting a content analysis. Instead, I will use a somewhat less primary source of data for the content analysis by investigating China’s only weekly newsmagazine in English, *Beijing Review*, often described as a de facto mouthpiece of the Chinese political leadership. Still, to avoid compromising the validity of the analysis I only examine the content of the weekly editorial, which quite clearly reflects the official views of *Zhongnanhai* (see Section 8.1). Furthermore, in undertaking the content analysis, I will be manually assisted by the coding list that I developed as part of the discourse analysis in Chapter 7. Notwithstanding its subjective character, the content analysis seeks to systematically assess the relative prominence of each of the identity narratives not merely by counting the number of times each identity narrative is represented in the editorials, but also by weighing each instance according to how affirmative (or dismissive) its articulation of the narrative is.

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375 A similar discussion is found in Kowert and Legro (1996: 486-88).
376 Yet, despite its heterogeneity, I will nevertheless attempt in Chapter 8 to also use the official government discourse to make a preliminary assessment of the relative strength of the examined narratives. This preliminary assessment will thus be supplemented by a more systematic content analysis.
377 On the use of content analysis, see Neuendorf and Skalski (2009).
Chapter 6: A discursive formation of Chinese identity

One of the leading western sinologists, David Shambaugh, has recently observed that “China is experiencing something of an identity crisis” [as] “it possesses a number of competing international identities. [As a consequence], China’s foreign policy exhibits diverse – sometimes conflicting, sometimes complementary – emphases and orientations.” Indeed, one may easily become overwhelmed by the plethora of identity categories ascribed to China in the scholarly debate. As demonstrated in Section 6.2, one may discern at least twelve more or less separate identity categories that allegedly all represent important discursive components of China’s identity as a state community. Yet, rather than exploring the seemingly amorphous and indeterminate character of China’s state identity, Section 5.2 devised a strategy for ordering and hierarchizing the narratives of Chinese state identity in the 21st century. Guided by the ideal-typical identity categories, this chapter aims to bring some order to the heterogeneous academic debate on China’s identity before attempting first (in Chapter 7) to identify the proposed categories of identity narratives in the official discourse on China’s identity, and then (in Chapter 8) to measure their relative discursive strength as distinct narratives of Chinese identity.

Chapter 6 consists of two main sections, both of which draw on the secondary literature on Chinese identity. While the first attempts to identify the discursive building blocks of Chinese identity, the second organizes the multitude of identity conceptions according to the proposed ideal-typical categories of identity narratives. More specifically, Section 6.1 singles out four discursive building blocks of Chinese identity:
blocks that reflect China’s historical consciousness or collective memory about itself at the beginning of the 21st century: ‘Sino-civilization’, ‘Confucianism’, ‘the Century of Humiliation’ and ‘the Communist March’. The central discursive components of each of these building blocks are delineated, inasmuch as they constitute a constraining and enabling structural effect on the construction of Chinese identity narratives. In Section 6.2, I attempt to identify the more specific narratives of Chinese identity in the 21st century. The section first presents a review of the secondary literature on Chinese identity, which yields twelve more or less separate Chinese identity narratives that are briefly described. To order and systematize this wide range of variegated Chinese identity narratives, I reintroduce the five ideal-typical narrative categories from the theoretical framework, each of which provides a separate set of identity-generated logics on how China may satisfy its basic need for distinctiveness and positive self-esteem.

6.1 Discursive building blocks of Chinese identity

Any attempt to map Chinese identity needs to take China’s rich history into consideration. In the words of Peter Hays Gries, “It is certainly undeniable that in China the past lives in the present to a degree unmatched in most other countries.”

Lucian Pye has expressed it even more bluntly: “The most pervasive underlying Chinese emotion is a profound, unquestioned, generally unshakable identification with historical greatness. Merely to be Chinese is to be a part of the greatest phenomenon of history.” Likewise, William Callahan points out that “The party-state’s campaigns are so successful because they draw on ideas that

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preceded the state – civilization and barbarism, national pride and national humiliation – that resonate with popular feelings.”^381 Furthermore, Wang Gungwu has addressed the significance of Chinese history as follows: “...the power of history lies in its rich offerings to myth-making, and the Chinese are particularly noted for their use of traditions in the present.”^382 In short, the centrality of Chinese history for contemporary identity construction seems unquestionable.^383

Yet, as already indicated, Chinese history is certainly no objective straightjacket, dictating the contents of Chinese identity narration. As then-Chinese President Jiang Zemin stated in a high-profile speech in 2001: “With regard to the rich cultural legacies left over from China’s history of several thousand years, we should discard the dross, keep the essence, and carry forward and develop it in the spirit of the times in order to make the past serve the present.”^384 While the quotation nicely captures the instrumentalist narrative role that representatives of Zhongnanhai enjoy in the discursive construction of Chinese identity, I will argue here that, once history has been interpreted and categorized into a relatively entrenched (structural) discursive form, the potential for reformulations and arbitrary instrumental constructions is reduced markedly. As noted in Section 4.2, Chinese history can be perceived as a set of fairly entrenched discursive structures that have both a constraining and an enabling effect on identity construction. Such discursive structures were conceptualized as ‘building blocks’, located in the second structural layer of the hierarchical discursive formation representing ‘the Chinese self’ (see Figure A). As the discursive raw material for narrative

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^381 Callahan (2010: 25).
^383 It should be stressed that the Chinese are certainly not unique in attaching great value to their history as a source of understanding themselves (notwithstanding the fact that some of the above quotations could indicate as much).
^384 Jiang (2001a; see appendix B+). For a similar statement, see also Hu Jintao’s 17th report to the National Congress of CCP (Hu, 2007: section VII, see appendix B+).
construction, building blocks constitute rather abstract collective conceptions of identity – such as formative periods, critical junctures, essential values or defining characteristics – which come to assume a fact-like status about the fundamental character of Chineseness. In this view, discursive building blocks reflect China’s historical consciousness or collective memory about itself, always open to changing discursive representations but periodically rather stable and constrained (though certainly not determined) by the material facts of Chinese history.

To be more specific, the current configuration of China’s discursive building blocks, as depicted below, has been fairly stable for a couple of decades, being a gradual product of the fundamental societal transformations that reshaped China following the demise of Chairman Mao in 1976, and which were later consolidated by the end of the ideological confrontations of the Cold War.385 What is more, any state’s collective memory of itself is, of course, selective, and the current configuration of China’s discursive building blocks deliberately ignores or downplays certain aspects of Chinese history (e.g. the Taiping Rebellion, the Cultural Revolution, the Tiananmen incident) that sit uncomfortably with the political agenda of Zhongnanhai.386 Still, the building blocks all have a solid, if selective grounding in Chinese history as should become clear from the account below.

My intention in this section, it should be stressed, is not to explain why certain building blocks won out at the expense of others, but instead to single out and systematize those that currently hold sway.

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385 As pointed out by John Keay (2009: 3-4), during the twentieth century China went through several societal revolutions, which changed the discursive pillars of Chinese self-understanding: From a feudal-dynastic societal order at the beginning of the century via a republican-nationalist order in the 1910s-40s to a revolutionary-communist order during Mao’s reign, and finally to a post-revolutionary order after Deng’s take-over in the late 1970s (more on this below).

386 Critical scholars such as William Callahan (e.g. 2010) and Wang Zheng (2012) have pinpointed many of the omissions in China’s collective memory.
How many discursive building blocks of Chinese identity are there, and how are they to be separated from each other? To be sure, any attempt to identify and order the discursive building blocks of Chinese state identity represents a specific reading that may be contested. That is, some of the suggested building blocks could perhaps be further divided into smaller blocks, while others might be lumped together into even larger blocks. Moreover, some building blocks, which have enjoyed a central discursive position for long stretches of Chinese history, may be largely irrelevant for authoritative narrative construction in today’s China insofar as their representations of Chineseness are predicated on notions that are currently deemed illegitimate in public discourse. The most obvious example is the identity category of Han ethnicity, centered on the conception of China as a rather homogenous ethnic (or even racial) group of Han Chinese, bound together by a shared belief in common descent (or bloodlines) and practiced through, among other things, the ritualized honoring of Chinese forefathers reaching all the way back to the mythological “Yellow Emperor” (allegedly born in 2704 BC). However, as the current Chinese regime officially celebrates the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of Chinese society – encompassing 55 different ethnic minorities – the Han Chinese category plays a limited role in the authoritative identity discourse, not least in this specific context of relating Chinese identity to China’s grand strategy.

387 More than 90% of the Chinese are officially labeled – and also define themselves – as Han Chinese (Leibold, 2010: 541-542).

388 For a discussion of Han-ethnicity as an identity category, see e.g. Dikötter (1992); Duara (1993); Jacques (2009: chapter 8); Leibold (2010); Callahan (2013: chapter 4). The more racial version of the Han-Chinese identity category also rests on a popular assumption that the so-called “Peking man” (discovered in 1929) is the ancestor of a specific mongoloid Chinese race.

389 The officially stated multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of Chinese society is on display in whitepapers such as “China’s Ethnic Policy and Common Prosperity and Development of All Ethnic Groups” (e.g. SCIO, 2005a; 2009b; see Appendix B+).
The main purpose of this section is to offer a relatively crude, if useful overview of the range of building blocks that constrain and enable representatives of Zhongnanhai in their narrative construction. I will thus not be able to describe each building block in detail, nor the scholarly dissent surrounding its specific content and stature. Specifically, I argue that representatives of Zhongnanhai at the beginning of the 21st century could largely draw on four more or less distinct discursive building blocks in their narrative construction of Chinese identity. I also argue that the four building blocks can be treated as separate sets of discursive structures. This analytical separation is warranted inasmuch as the building blocks are largely derived from different periods of Chinese history and involve quite discrete discursive logics. In a semi-chronological order, the proposed building blocks encompass `Sino-civilization´, `Confucianism´, `the Century of Humiliation´ and `the Communist March´. Towards the end of Section 6.1, the four building blocks and their discrete discursive-structural components are graphically summarized.

Before I begin the mapping of the discursive building blocks of Chinese identity, I should account for my use of sources. While Chapter 7 provides plenty of illustrative examples (taken directly from the official government discourse) of how each of the dominant Chinese identity narratives is discursively rooted in a specific set of building blocks, I derive the four building blocks in the first place from the existing secondary literature on Chinese identity. Hence, I tap into the massive pile of scholarship that has directly investigated the discursive foundations of Chinese identity narration by studying various types of primary sources of Chinese identity such as speeches, reports, white papers, school curricula, TV series, museum exhibitions, public relations campaigns, bestsellers and geographic maps. A few observations on my use of these secondary sources are in
order. First, in line with my overall theoretical framework, I am only interested in depicting those discursive building blocks that pertain to China as a state community and that treat basically the whole of China as an “in-group” constituted in relation to salient “out-groups” in the outside world. This reading omits, among others, identity-related conceptions of how to build a prosperous and equitable Chinese society or sub-state identity conceptions along domestic (e.g. regional, ethnic and social) dividing lines. Secondly, my objective is not to explicitly review, introduce or debate the existing literature, but rather to draw upon it indirectly as I describe and systematize the building blocks of Chinese state identity. Finally, I only reference English language literature, while generally seeking to include the most authoritative sources in terms of citations.

**Building block 1: ‘Sino-civilization’**

China is not just another nation-state in the family of nations. China is a civilization pretending to be a state.\(^{390}\) The widespread tendency to refer to China as a “civilization”, rather than merely a nation-state, derives from the country’s specific developmental path.\(^{391}\) First of all, China is able not only to trace its historical roots further back than most other states – boasting a civilization at least five millennia old – but also to identify strong and distinct lines of cultural continuity throughout its history.\(^{392}\) Furthermore, for centuries dynastic China exerted an enormous cultural influence on the Asian continent that extended far beyond the shifting territorial boundaries of the ‘Middle Kingdom’. But perhaps most importantly, the nation-state category was in reality imposed on China by western


\(^{391}\) Scholars who seek to explain Chinese society as well as China’s external behavior in terms of the country’s civilizational roots include Pye (1992); Ng-Quinn (1993); Jacques (2009); Qin (2010a; 2012); Yan et al. (2011a).

\(^{392}\) See e.g. Ng-Quinn (1993: 40-61); Mahbubani (2008: 146-149).
powers as part of “the opening up” of China in the nineteenth century, eventually leading China to adapt to the Westphalian order after a `Century of Humiliation´ (see below). What, then, is Chinese civilization? To capture its narrative potential as a discursive building block of identity a good starting point is to emphasize the distinctiveness, longevity, greatness and otherness of Chinese civilization.

China’s civilizational distinctiveness rests on several elements that together form a particular Chinese heritage. One of its most important elements, Confucianism, is treated separately below as a discrete building block, while other less significant but still distinctive elements – such as the Chinese calendar, China’s architectural style, its classical literature or its dynastic dress code – are deemed not to be prominent enough to require individual treatment in this brief overview. What is left, then, are at least four central elements that epitomizes China’s civilizational distinctiveness. First, there is the Chinese language, one of the world’s oldest written languages, dating back more than three thousand years and comprising all the various Sinitic dialects by means of a standardized idiographic writing system, which was also widely used by China’s neighboring states.\(^{393}\) Secondly, there is a geographical element, captured by the notion of the `Middle Kingdom´ (zhongguo) and traditionally defined as the north-eastern central plains around the Yangtze and the Yellow river systems that formed the cradle of an advanced agrarian civilization, which over the centuries spread outwards to absorb the surrounding southern and western territories through migration, cultural assimilation or outright conquest.\(^{394}\) Thirdly, there is the dynastic herit-

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\(^{393}\) On the distinctiveness and importance of the Chinese language for China’s identity, see e.g. Ho (1976). Although there are several oral Chinese dialects, the vast majority of the Chinese speak Mandarin (more than 850 million people) and all Chinese use the same idiographic written language.

\(^{394}\) As John Keay points out (2009: 25-32), in recent years Chinese archeologists have revealed that Chinese civilization had several co-existing birthplaces, some of which are found outside of the central plains.
age, reflecting the fact that Chinese history is customarily folded out as the (discontinuous) succession of renowned ruling dynasties, purportedly commencing the dynastic line with the Shang dynasty (1600-1046 BC) and definitively terminating it with the fall of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).³⁹⁵ Fourthly, there is the holistic philosophy of Taoism – usually associated with the writings of Laozi³⁹⁶ – that foster a variegated spiritual tradition, which can be said to comprise elements such as the ritualized worship of ancestors as well as a broad range of guidelines for how to live in harmony with nature.³⁹⁷

Apart from its distinctiveness, the potential of the Sinitic civilization as a discursive building block also rests on its longevity and relative stability as a frame of reference for ‘the Chinese self’.³⁹⁸ Hence, the very idea of constituting the ‘Middle Kingdom’ has been there throughout the evolution of Chinese civilization, providing the Chinese with a stable sense of self.³⁹⁹ In a more general sense, Wang Gungwu has observed that “what is quintessentially Chinese is the remarkable sense of continuity that seems to have made the civilization increasingly distinctive over the centuries.”⁴⁰⁰ Crucially, this civilizational continuity hinged on China’s dominant position in East Asia and its virtual isolation from peer civilizational rivals, which allowed it to follow a distinct developmental path.⁴⁰¹ To be sure, the ‘Middle Kingdom’ did face mighty military rivals like the Mongols and the Manchus – and was at times defeated by them and subjected to their rule – but since the latter did not possess a competitive civilization of their own the

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³⁹⁵ On the dynastic heritage, see Keay (2008: 15-20). According to some sources (such as ancient Chinese historical chronicles), the Xia dynasty (2100-1600 BC) was the first Chinese dynasty, but the archeological evidence is at best inconclusive (Keay, 2008: 28-29).
³⁹⁶ Laozi is generally considered a legendary figure, whose origin can be traced back to the sixth century BC.
³⁹⁷ On Taoism, see e.g. Gascoigne (2003: 42-43); Keay (2008: 195-98).
conquerors instead ended up being *Sinicized*, instituting dynasties (the Yuan and Qing dynasties respectively) modeled on Chinese civilization.\(^4\) Moreover, despite the fact that for long stretches of recorded history even the civilizational core area of China—notably during the Warring States period (481-221 BC)\(^3\)—was fragmented into rival kingdoms and dynasties, the competing power centers generally adhered to the same underlying civilizational values and cherished the same goal of a unified Chinese empire.\(^4\) Finally, Chinese civilization did to some extent incorporate “foreign” elements, Buddhism being a case in point, but over time such elements were either marginalized or came to assume a distinctively Chinese character.\(^4\) Consequently, dynastic China was able to gradually develop its own civilizational fabric, which was not seriously challenged until the middle of the nineteenth century with the advent of Western imperialism.

More importantly, however, the potential of `Sino-civilization` as a discursive building block stems from its indisputable historical greatness; after all, distinctiveness is not an asset if accompanied by backwardness.\(^4\) Even the briefest of glimpses into China’s dynastic past brings ample evidence of its civilizational greatness: Major inventions such as paper, gun powder, the wheel barrow, the compass, the spinning machine and wood-block printing are all of Chinese origin, and for centuries the Chinese were the most literate and numerate people in the world, displaying scientific and practical excellence in many fields, especially during the Tang, Sui and Song dynasties.\(^4\) Other testimonies of China’s

\(^3\) Evelyn Rawski (2010) identifies at least two other long periods of Chinese history (3\(^{rd}\)-7\(^{th}\) century and 10\(^{th}\)-13\(^{th}\) century AD) when the Chinese heartland was fragmented into competing centers of power.
\(^4\) Ng-Quinn (1993: 44); Kang (2010: 29).
\(^4\) The late Tang dynasty’s approach to Buddhism (618-907 AD) vividly illustrates this double process of marginalization and Sinification (Gascogne, 2003: 103-111; Dellios and Ferguson, 2013: 52-56).
\(^4\) Lucian Pye (1992: 52) goes so far as to claim that “The Chinese sense of greatness is of a different order and magnitude from that of all other cultural traditions.”
civilizational greatness were, on the one hand, its engineering wonders such as the Great Wall, the Grand Canal or the magnificent imperial palaces of the ruling dynasties, and on the other hand, its awe-inspiring ability to project military power far from home, with the colossal expeditionary fleet led by the Zheng He (a Ming dynasty general) of the early fifteenth century standing out in the eyes of later generations.408 Furthermore, beginning with the first imperial dynasty, the Qin dynasty, 221-206 BC, the administrative and power wielding capacities of the state were not only vastly expanded, they also became increasingly sophisticated (with for instance the establishment of a public examination system), thereby enabling the imperial state to exert control and create political unity to a degree that was unparalleled in the rest of the world for a long time. Yet, perhaps the greatest attraction of Chinese civilization was the incredible wealth and much-coveted products it generated. For instance, the famous ancient Silk Route (linking dynastic China to foreign markets as far away as Europe) was given its name precisely because the outside world desired the skillful craftsmanship of China’s silk production. Tellingly, the tributary system, which placed outside states and peoples in a position of more or less formalized allegiance to the Chinese emperor, in no small part rested on access to Chinese products and goods, which required the payment of tribute to the emperor.409

The final defining characteristic of ‘Sino-civilization’ is derived from its counter-image: the barbarians. As argued by William Callahan, “...the civilization/barbarism distinction developed to be a central concept of imperial governance across China’s many kingdoms and dynasties.” Callahan furthermore points out that “Civilization can engage with barbarism in one of two ways: conquest or

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409 See e.g. Kang (2007: 36); Rawsky (2010: 67). Apart from silk, especially Chinese porcelain, tea and books were at a premium.
conversion. [...] Either way, different peoples were not allowed to coexist with Chinese civilization on their own terms." More specifically, the `Middle Kingdom´ depicted the world as a series of concentric circles with an imperial center surrounded by Chinese provinces constituting the inner circle, tributary states located in the next circle, and barbarian tribes being relegated to the margins of the Sinitic world. Foreign states and peoples were affiliated to the `Middle Kingdom´ by, at the very least, recognizing the supremacy of the Chinese emperor, but it was by adopting (parts of) the Chinese culture that they became more closely associated as tributary states (e.g. Korea, Japan and Vietnam), thus enjoying trade privileges and generally shielding themselves from Chinese incursions in their own internal affairs. In contrast, those states and peoples that rejected the Sino-centric world image – primarily the Mongol tribes in the north and west – were regarded by the Chinese as outright barbarians and treated accordingly. That is, whenever a Chinese dynasty was strong enough to project military power to the margins of the Sinitic world, it would seek to eradicate the barbarians or drive them further away from the imperial center. During weaker periods, on the other hand, the Chinese would resort to defensive strategies such as wall-building or even paying tribute to keep the barbarians at bay. It was therefore in the existential encounter with the barbarians that the `Middle Kingdom´ drew its most radicalized distinction between in-group and out-group in defining the cultural, political and territorial borders of Chinese civilization.

410 Callahan (2010: 22). Whereas Callahan in reality reduces Chinese civilization to the fundamental distinction between civilization and barbarism, distancing himself from the idea of any civilizational core, I see the distinction as only one of several essential components, which constitute `Sino-civilization´ as a discursive building block.

411 Callahan (2010: 95-98, 132-133); Esherick (2010: 20-21). Tributary states themselves differed in status depending on the degree to which they had adopted Chinese civilization with Korea, Japan and Vietnam being the closest tributaries.


413 Wang Y. (2013: 181-183). As noted by several China-scholars (e.g. Zhang and Buzan 2012: 33-34), even though the Chinese were at times incapable of exercising their role as superiors, the Sino-centric tributary system and its underlying notion of Tianxia (see below) proved sufficiently resilient until the nineteenth century due to the lack of any competing societal model for East Asia.
Following the demise of dynastic China at the beginning of the twentieth century, China’s civilizational past was largely superseded by ideological beliefs as it initiated its modernization process with Chairman Mao in the driving seat. Yet, in tandem with the ideological dilution of communism, ‘Sino-civilization’ has gradually experienced a revival, which has been particularly pronounced in the 21st century. This revival has taken many forms, including a surge of interest in Confucianism (see below), the public glorification of China’s civilizational roots (as witnessed during the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics), a reintroduction of China’s classical literature in schools and among the general population, a craze for historical shows and series about dynastic China in the film- and TV-industry and a renewed enthusiasm for traditional costumes, rituals, ceremonies etc. In sum, the distinctiveness, longevity, greatness and barbarian counter-image of ‘Sino-civilization’ together provide Chinese identity narrators with a strong discursive building block for identity construction.

**Building block 2: ‘Confucianism’**

“Working to ensure social harmony among the common people […] this might be called wisdom”. As the prevailing moral philosophy of dynastic China, Confucianism has left a deep imprint on Chinese thinking, leading some to dub it “China’s civil religion”. Although the 20th century generally saw a profound backlash for Confucianism, it has recently – alongside with the revival of ‘Sino-

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civilization´ – regained some of its discursive potential as a building block for Chinese identity construction. Conceived by Confucius (Kǒng Fūzǐ, 551-479 BC) during “the Warring States Period”, Confucianism was from its very inception a deliberate praise of societal order and harmony in response to the political fragmentation and rivalry, which pervaded the `Middle Kingdom´ at the time. It was Emperor Han Wudi, who first adopted and institutionalized Confucianism as a state ideology during the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), thereby shaping its legacy as the dominant philosophical tradition throughout China’s dynastic history.419 The original ideas of Confucius and his foremost interpreter Mencius (372-289 BC) still remain influential, but Confucianism has over the years evolved into a composite mode of thinking, incorporating elements from various other philosophies. However, it seems relatively uncontroversial to emphasize the following four moral-philosophical tenets or components of Confucianism to describe its identity constitutional potential as a discursive building block.420

First of all, human nature is considered to be malleable, and for that reason human beings are teachable and improvable through personal and societal endeavor.421 Indeed, every human being should strive for moral virtue – such as deference, righteousness, benevolence – and constantly seek to educate, discipline and cultivate him- or herself to the greater benefit of society. Adapting the individual to the roles and institutions of society thus becomes the overriding concern within Confucianism.

419 Zhang (2001: 51).
421 See e.g. Nuyens (2003: 82).
Secondly, it is the collective unit that is given precedence within Confucianism. Rather than focusing on individuality or individual interests, Confucianism situates the individual in the context of its social relations. The family constitutes the basic collective unit, and the primary socialization of individuals takes place within a paternalistic family structure centered on filial piety as a primary virtue. Society is modeled as a hierarchical and organic extension of the family with its rulers – traditionally embodied by the emperor – being accountable to the people not in terms of representativeness but in terms of the ability and moral obligation to ensure the well-being and social cohesion of society. The state itself – ideally a strong centralized one – has always been part and parcel of Confucianism’s collectivistic creed, as the civil service and administrative apparatus of the state becomes crucial for promulgating and upholding the core values of Confucianism.

A third key component of Confucianism is social harmony and order. At the individual level, differences of age, sex and status can be managed by virtue of a complex system of rituals and moral precepts for how to behave properly within social relationships such as those between husband and wife, elder and younger, ruler and subject. At the societal level, harmony can be realized not only by everyone knowing their place in the social order, but also by the capacity of the state to embrace and “harmonize” the various differences and factions of society. While respect for – if not outright deference to – authorities is an intrinsic order-preserving feature of the Confucian philosophy, it is important to stress that such respect at the same time presupposes a morally informed rule by the au-

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422 See e.g. Bell (2010: 10-11).
423 See e.g. Zhang (2001: 56).
Finally, Confucianism can, somewhat more controversially, be seen as a universalistic philosophy given not only its insistence on a relatively open, meritocratic education and examination system but also its recruitment policies, granting people with diverse social backgrounds an opportunity to serve in the civil administration. Moreover, provided that people embraced the social roles and rituals ordained by Confucianism, no one was in advance excluded from taking part in society. Crucially, this universalism extended beyond the civilizational core of the Chinese empire, implying that non-Chinese states or groups could become affiliated or even assimilated into the Confucian family if they, as noted above, recognized the supremacy of the Chinese emperor and accepted their lot in the imperial societal hierarchy.

In combining these four essential components – moral virtue, collectivism, harmonious social order and universalism – one arrives at a Confucian worldview, which is encapsulated in the dynastic Chinese notion of Tianxia. Literally, Tianxia means “all-under-heaven”, referring to all the lands of the (Chinese) world divinely appointed to the Chinese emperor by a “mandate of heaven”. In other words, Tianxia represents a harmonious cosmic-social order, a sort of world family, held together as long as its rulers, ultimately embodied by the Chinese

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424 Fukuyama (2012: 19). In fact, it was the only measure of accountability in dynastic China as Fukuyama notes.
425 Gascoigne (2003: 32). For a discussion of Confucianism’s universalist dimension, see e.g Rozman (2002); Nuyen (2003). In short, Rozman (2002: 16) describes Confucianism as a “system of particularistic social relations punctuated by major elements of universalism.”
427 As stated in the Book of Odes (one of “the five classics” of Chinese literature, allegedly compiled by Confucius), “under the wide heaven, all is the king’s land; within the sea-boundaries of the land, all are the king’s subjects.” Cited in Esherick (2010: 20).
emperor, abide by moral virtue [or ren].

According to Qin Yaqing, one of several Chinese IR-scholars who have sought to resuscitate the term of Tianxia, “anarchy does not exist in the Tianxia system. Order is always intrinsic [...] structure is hierarchical [...] The ideal mode of Tianxia is harmony and great unity as well as a harmonious relationship with the world.”

Even though the Tianxia is predicated on hierarchy, order and unity, the proponents of Tianxia take pains to stress how its imperial design allows for differences among the constituent units, as captured by the notion of “harmony-with-differences”. Furthermore, as already indicated, peacefulness is another feature generally associated with a Confucian system of Tianxia. Whereas the Chinese civilization as such is far from being pacifist (see above), few would dispute that the philosophy of Confucianism itself disparages the use of force. As stated by the late Harvard sinologist, John King Fairbank, “The resort to warfare (wu) was an admission of bankruptcy in the pursuit of wen [civility or culture]. Consequently, it should be a last resort [...] Herein lies the pacifist bias of the Chinese tradition.”

On this background, some China-scholars have suggested that a “Confucian Peace” existed during much of China’s dynastic past, covering those East Asian states like China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam that were part of “the Confucian family”.

For more than two thousand years, Confucianism formed the backbone of Chinese moral philosophy, largely subsuming competing schools of thought (except

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428 Qin (2010b: 251-252).
430 Qin (2010a: 138-141); see also Li (2008: 298-300).
432 In a famous passage from the Analects, Confucius (2003: 16.1) reasoned that “if those who are distant will not submit, simply refine your culture and virtue in order to attract them”.
433 Quoted in Wang Y. (2013: 15). Wang Y. (ibid.: 14) furthermore points out that there existed several other Chinese schools of thought (e.g. Taoism and Mohism) that were pacifist, but these were absorbed into the dominant philosophy of Confucianism.
434 See especially Kang (2010); Kelly (2012).
for Taoism\(^ {435}\) and leaving little room for the established religions such as Buddhism. As Confucianism eventually came to be seen as a token of backwardness – its feudal customs and dynastic bureaucracy allegedly an obstacle to China’s modernization – the Communist regime under Mao actively distanced itself from China’s Confucian heritage and even directly attacked its cultural manifestations during the “Cultural Revolution” (1966-76).\(^ {436}\) However, following Deng’s take-over in 1978, Confucianism has gradually experienced a revival that is not merely symbolic.\(^ {437}\) Confucian monuments, museums and schools are being established all over China,\(^ {438}\) Confucius’ birthday is now again being officially commemorated, two million Chinese have been recognized by the authorities as descendants of Confucius,\(^ {439}\) the Chinese professor Yo Dan’s self-help book on *The Analects of Confucius* has sold over 10 million copies,\(^ {440}\) more than 300 Confucian institutes have been set up abroad to disseminate knowledge about China’s cultural heritage,\(^ {441}\) and Communist leaders are openly paraphrasing Confucian classics or actively employing a Confucian terminology in order to create resonance for CCP-policies. In sum, with its emphasis on moral virtue, hierarchical order, a collectivistic creed with universalistic elements and a *Tianxia*-inspired view of the world as a peaceful and harmonious whole, Confucianism constitutes an important discursive building block for identity narration in present-day China.

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\(^{435}\) For an introduction to the co-existence of Confucianism and Taoism, see Gascoigne (2003: 39-44).


\(^ {437}\) Guo (2004: chapter 4); Bell (2010: 3-18); Dotson (2011); Billioud (2012); Dellios and Ferguson (2013: chapter 5).


\(^ {440}\) Bell (2010: 11).

\(^ {441}\) Shambaugh (2013: 245-247).
Building block 3: ‘The century of humiliation’

“Modern historical consciousness in China is powerfully influenced by the ‘century of humiliation’. [The] Chinese remember this period as a time when China was attacked, bullied and torn asunder by imperialists.”442 The “long” century of humiliations started during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) with The First Opium War against the British in 1839-42 and is generally said to have lasted until 1949 when the communists finally emerged victorious from the civil war and established The People’s Republic of China.443 During ‘the century of humiliation’ China lost control with about a third of its territory, its millennia-old dynastic, imperial system was abolished permanently and the country was torn apart by invading forces, massive internal revolts and finally full-scale civil war. As argued by Alison Kaufman, “The impact of these experiences on China’s self-image cannot be overestimated. The Opium War and all that followed were viewed, then and now, as marking an irrevocable break in China’s historical trajectory.”444

Back in the 18th and 19th centuries, Chinese goods such as silk and tea were in high demand in Europe, but as the largely self-sufficient and highly trade-regulated Chinese market only accepted cash (gold and silver) in return, the European powers and especially Great Britain grew increasingly frustrated. Further complicating relations between the Qing dynasty and the British in the lead-up to the First Opium War was the Chinese insistence on treating all foreign representatives as subjects to the Chinese emperor in line with their Sino-centric worldview of Tianxia.445 While the British for some time resorted to a strategy of smuggling opium to the Chinese consumers to fix the trade imbalance, they

443 Yet, other endings have been suggested. For instance, the return of Hong Kong in 1997 was officially celebrated by the PRC in public slogans as an end to ‘the century of humiliation’ (Gries, 2004: 52).
444 Kaufman (2011: 5).
eventually forced open the Chinese market with gun boats. The defeat by the British in the First Opium War was a humiliating shock to the Qing dynasty, not only because numerically superior Chinese troops were defenseless against modern British military technology, but also because the British subsequently imposed the Treaty of Nanjing on China in 1842, compelling the Qing dynasty to acquiesce to British demands and de facto superiority. The principal blow to Chinese identity, however, came from the irreparable loss of status that Qing dynasty China gradually suffered in the following decades as the European great powers and even Japan dismantled the Chinese tributary system, enforced a series of so-called “unequal treaties”, encroached into Chinese territories and thereby reduced it to an enfeebled second rate power.\textsuperscript{446} In order to unpack the discursive potential of `the century of humiliation´ \textsuperscript{[bainian guochi]} as a building block for Chinese identity construction today it seems useful to highlight three elements that were to have an enormous impact on Chinese self-understanding: inequality, trauma and weakness.

There is little doubt that \textit{inequality} came to be a defining characteristic of China’s `century of humiliation´.\textsuperscript{447} Although China was never turned into an outright colony like most parts of Southeast Asia, it was forced to concede sovereignty rights to so many outside powers (and even small states like Denmark\textsuperscript{448}) that it barely could limp along on its own.\textsuperscript{449} After the Treaty of Nanjing, Qing dynasty China lost every war it fought in the following decades and was as a result subjected to a long range of what was later termed “the unequal treaties”.\textsuperscript{450}

\textsuperscript{446} Kaufman (2011: 1-5).
\textsuperscript{447} The fact that the Qing dynasty itself at the same time subjected some of its remaining tributaries to systematic inequality has been written out of China’s collective memory (see e.g. Larsen, 2013).
\textsuperscript{448} Wang Z. (2012: 61).
\textsuperscript{449} Scott (2008: 2). Kaufman (2011: 5) describes China’s status during this period as semi-colonial.
\textsuperscript{450} It was Chinese nationalists in the 1920-30s who labeled them the “unequal treaties” in order to rally support for their cause (Scott, 2008: 221-22).
Inequality was codified in the treaties in several ways. Firstly, the treaties stipulated outright territorial annexation (for instance, Hong Kong in 1842 and Taiwan in 1895) as well as different kinds of sovereignty concessions by setting up Treaty Ports administered by foreign powers, by carving out special zones of influence for the foreign powers, by recognizing their right to station troops on Chinese soil etc.\textsuperscript{451} Secondly, foreign citizens (e.g. merchants, missionaries and soldiers) were granted extraterritoriality, which meant that they were under foreign consular jurisdiction and could therefore not be prosecuted by the Chinese legal system. As the interior of China was gradually “opened up” by the imperial powers, extraterritoriality impinged ever more on the Chinese and their sense of righteousness, generating a deep resentment that eventually set off the Boxer Rebellion against foreigners in 1900.\textsuperscript{452} Thirdly, the imperial powers acquired “most-favored nation” status on the Chinese market (but not reciprocally offered China on the European markets) and gained an increasing level of control over important revenue sources for the Chinese state by administering the customs system (later also the postal service, part of the tax collection and salt distribution).\textsuperscript{453} While all these treaty stipulations worked to institutionalize inequality between the Chinese and the foreigners, the sense of inequality instilled in the Chinese population was as much a result of the overall tendency to treat Chinese as second rate citizens in their encounters with Westerners and later also the Japanese.\textsuperscript{454}

\textit{Trauma} is another key element of `the century of humiliation`. As noted by William Callahan, \textit{`Modern history (1840-1949) for China is not the story of the tri-}

\textsuperscript{451} Scott (2008: 25-27).
\textsuperscript{452} Scott (2008: 28); Esherick (2010: 27-28). As noted by Esherick, such provisions of extraterritoriality were not granted to Chinese citizens in Europe.
\textsuperscript{453} Esherick (2010: 27).
\textsuperscript{454} Scott (2008: 58-75). This was particularly pronounced in the way Chinese migrants were subject to discrimination in the United States and elsewhere.
umph of development and progress; it is the painful record of defeat and loss.”

During the first half of ‘the century of humiliation’, the Chinese suffered at the hands of Western imperialists as treaty-stipulated war indemnities and territorial encroachments took their toll on the Chinese population. Especially the pillage and destruction of the imperial Summer Palace in 1860 by British and French soldiers (towards the end of the Second Opium War) and the invasion and plunder of Beijing in 1900 by eight imperial powers (to terminate the Boxer Rebellion) are often portrayed as traumatic events in China’s modern history. However, it was Japan, China’s traditional (Confucian) “little brother”, who inflicted the greatest trauma on the Chinese self. Having itself succeeded in transforming a feudal society into an industrialized state, Meiji-Japan saw its chance to wrest loose China’s closest tributary state, Korea, by launching the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894. The war resulted in a decisive Japanese victory in 1895, and the ensuing Treaty of Shimonoseki furthermore transferred territorial control over Taiwan to Japan. In China, the defeat was viewed as a moral outrage, sowing the seeds for a popular rise against the Qing-dynasty, which was finally felled in 1911 and replaced by the short-lived Republic of China (1912-49). If the First Sino-Japanese War was traumatic because of the humiliating shock of being defeated by a “little brother”, the Second Sino-Japanese War proved traumatizing in terms of the enormous human and material costs wreaked on the Chinese population by invading Japanese troops. Beginning with the invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the 1930s saw an imperialistic Japanese regime exerting mounting pressure on China to realize its aggressive policy of dominating China and securing access to its vast economic and natural re-

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455 Callahan (2010: 38).
458 For the view that the defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War represents one of the darkest chapters of Chinese history, see e.g. Gries (2004: 70); Wang Z (2012: 74).
sources. Full scale war eventually erupted in 1937, resulting in millions of Chinese casualties until the Japanese surrender in 1945,\footnote{As noted by Gries (2004: 80) the official number of Chinese casualties has been raised several times since the end of WWII, but the current official figure is 35 million dead and wounded civilians and soldiers.} including the massacre (i.e. mass murder and mass rape) on civilians in Nanjing during the early stages of the war. Of all its traumas, “the rape of Nanking” (as it is often called in China) is often singled out as the most painful event in China’s `century of humiliation`.\footnote{On the discursive representation (as well as silenced aspects) of the Nanjing massacre in China’s educational system, see Callahan (2010: 169-78). On the discursive battle over the number of casualties from the massacre, see Gries (2004: 81-82).}

The third discursive core element of China’s `century of humiliation` is weakness. At the same time as China was gradually being subdued by imperialist powers, it found itself crippled by internal revolts against the increasingly unpopular Qing dynasty, starting with the immensely bloody “Taiping Rebellion” (1850-64) and culminating with the “Xinhai-revolution” of 1911, which ended China’s dynastic era. It was during this period that China was seen as “the sick man of the east”, a hopelessly backward state unfit for self-governance and unable to compete internationally.\footnote{Scott (2008: 3, 183); Wang Z. (150-152).} Following the Xinhai-revolution, China’s new republican leaders, led by Sun Yat-sen, sought to modernize China, but their efforts were soon thwarted as the new republic fragmented into a patchwork of warlord-controlled territories. Even worse, the fundamental weakness of the Republic of China indirectly invited the peripheral areas of China to become more self-assertive, leading independence movements in Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang, backed by foreign powers, to set up new independent states, thereby further reducing China’s territory.\footnote{Kaufman (2011: 2).} Another highly symbolic sign of Chinese weakness, which spawned the influential “May Fourth Movement” in 1919, was the West-
ern powers’ decision (as part of the Versailles peace settlement for World War I) to award Germany’s territorial rights in the Chinese Shandong province to Japan in direct violation of earlier promises and despite massive contributions of Chinese labor troops to the British forces during the war. Crucially, the inability (and even unwillingness\(^4\)) of the Republic of China to stand up against the Western powers fostered an anti-traditionalist and anti-imperialist radicalization of the Chinese population, first manifested by the May Fourth Movement and three years later subsumed under the banners of China’s Communist Party.\(^4\)

As a discursive building block for Chinese identity construction ‘the century of humiliation’ pivots on the inequality, trauma and fundamental weakness that China experienced at the hands of imperialist powers. From these negative experiences, China generated an inferiority complex, which is epitomized in the popular Chinese phrase *Wuwang guochi* [Never forget national humiliation].\(^4\)

However, as pointed out by William Callahan, it was not until the 1990s that the CCP started to revive ‘the century of humiliation’ as a discursive building block for Chinese identity narration in a deliberate attempt to cultivate the victimhood of China.\(^4\) Since then, the CCP has sought to institutionalize ‘the century of humiliation’ as a cornerstone in Chinese history by virtue of the educational system (in particular history textbooks), the cultural institutions (in particular museums and newly established monuments), the state-controlled media and even the more or less official commemoration days of critical anniversaries related to

\(^4\) It turned out that the Chinese government delegation at Versailles was well aware of the secret arrangement between the Western powers and Japan.


\(^4\) Kaufman (2010: 5); Callahan (2010: 9).

\(^4\) Gries (2004: 48); Callahan (2010: 26); Wang Z. (2012: 86-87). As pointed out by these scholars, the humiliating past was out of tune with especially Mao’s vision of history as driven by class struggle and of a victorious communist China mobilizing the masses.
‘the century of humiliation’.\textsuperscript{468} In sum, ‘the century of humiliation’ casts a long shadow over Chinese history, reminding the Chinese that weakness is accompanied by tragedy and that today’s sovereignty has come at a heavy price.

**Building block 4: ‘The communist march’**

"Every struggle that the Chinese people fought during the one hundred years from the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} to the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century was for the sake of achieving independence of our country and liberation of our nation and putting an end to the history of the century of humiliation once and for all. This great historic case has already been accomplished. All endeavors by the Chinese people from the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} to the mid-21\textsuperscript{st} century are for the purpose of making our motherland strong, the people prosperous, and the nation immensely rejuvenated. Our Party has led the entire Chinese people in carrying forward this historic cause for fifty years and made tremendous progress".\textsuperscript{469} The indispensable accomplishments of the CCP pervaded the speech given by Jiang Zemin, general secretary of the CCP and president of the PRC, at the 80\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the founding of China’s Communist Party in 2001. Emerging victorious from the civil war in 1949, it was the CCP who could finally reunite China, establish the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and thereby put an end to ‘the century of humiliation’. As a discursive building block for narrative construction, communism has certainly undergone fundamental changes over the years as the revolutionary ideological fervor of the Mao-era has given way to a far more pragmatic attitude centered on the party itself and its “long march” to modernize and redeem China. Beginning in the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping initiated the de-ideologization of the CCP, which was even further acceler-

\textsuperscript{468} For an elaborate overview, see Callahan (2010: chapter 2 and 3); Wang Z. (2012: chapter 4).

\textsuperscript{469} Jiang Zemin (2001: section IV, see appendix B+).
ated by Jiang Zemin and the third generation of communist leaders in response to the end of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{470} Despite these changes, communism still constitutes one of the basic discursive building blocks for narrative construction in today’s PRC, not as a source of ideological inspiration but as a discourse on ‘the communist march’ towards national rejuvenation \textit{[fuxing]}.\textsuperscript{471} In order to elucidate its identity-constitutional potential for Chinese narrative construction one may emphasize the following three discursive components of `the communist march´: sovereignty, modernization and “socialism with Chinese characteristics”\textsuperscript{472}.

The first discursive component of `the communist march´, \textit{sovereignty}, has been critical to Chinese self-understanding in the communist era, as illustrated by the constant concern for reunification and anti-imperialism. Although China regained its territorial sovereignty in 1945 with the unconditional Japanese surrender in World War II, it took another four years of immensely bloody civil war before Chairman Mao was able to defeat Chiang Kai-shek’s nationalist \textit{Kuomintang}-forces and officially proclaim the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. On the one hand, the reunification of mainland China after `the century of humiliation´ was decisive in lending legitimacy to the CCP as a ruling party; yet it also sowed the seeds for maintaining the sovereignty theme at the top of CCP’s political agenda as long as the remnants of Chiang’s \textit{Kuomintang}-forces were able to entrench themselves on Taiwan and hold on to their Republic of China\textsuperscript{473}.

As witnessed during the much-celebrated “return of Hong Kong and Macau” (in


\textsuperscript{471} Almost needless to say, ‘the Communist March’ plays on one of the founding moments of the CCP, “The Long March”, when Mao’s Red Army back in 1934-35 undertook a series of marches to evade the nationalist \textit{Kuomintang}-forces led by Chiang Kai-shek.

\textsuperscript{472} Let me stress that some scholars (Holbig and Gilley, 2010; Holbig, 2013) emphasize how communist ideology still plays an indispensable role for regime legitimacy in China, if not quite as a discursive source for the construction of identity narratives.

1997 and 1999 respectively), the reunification theme strikes a powerful chord in the Chinese population inasmuch as it is about righting the wrongs of the humiliating past and restoring China’s full sovereignty.\textsuperscript{474} What is more, soon after its “red rebirth” in 1949 China found itself fully absorbed into an existential battle against encircling “neo-imperialist” powers, led by the United States, as the Cold War polarized international politics. The history of the PRC is therefore significantly shaped by the CCP’s commitment to stand up against – and the self-proclaimed victories over – its neo-imperialist enemies, whether on the battleground in Korea against an American led UN-coalition (1950-53), in the military confrontations against a U.S.-backed Taiwan (1954, 1958, 1996), as part of the (primarily rhetorical) clash with the so-called “revisionist Soviet traitors” following the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s or in the halls of the UN General Assembly during the 1960s and early 1970s when China strove to obtain diplomatic recognition in the UN system in the face of American opposition.\textsuperscript{475} Hence, anti-imperialism – or anti-hegemonism as it is usually referred to in official Chinese statements – became a discursive cornerstone in China’s self-understanding, fostering the highly venerated “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” and creating ties of solidarity with other developing countries familiar with the yoke of imperialism.\textsuperscript{476}

The second discursive component of `the communist march´, \textit{modernization}, has been equally central to China’s self-understanding in the communist era. Given that `the century of humiliation´ was inextricably linked to China’s backwardness during the late Qing-dynasty, both the May Fourth Movement and its heir

\textsuperscript{474} Meisner (1999: 527-28); Gries (2004: 52).
\textsuperscript{475} See especially Gries (2004: chapter 4).
\textsuperscript{476} See Rozman (2011: 89); Alden and Alvez (2008: 52). “The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” are a set of Chinese principles for inter-state relations formally codified as part of a treaty between China and India in 1954. The principles state the centrality of “mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; peaceful coexistence”.

188
apparent, the CCP, were founded in response to a dire need for modernization and development, requiring a radical break with China’s feudal past. While the Mao-era did indeed see some radical policies to achieve progress, including the catastrophically backfiring “Great Leap Forward” of enforced agricultural collectivization (1958-61), those policies have been largely eclipsed in China’s official collective memory by the modernization achievements, realized by Deng Xiaoping. Deng’s “Reform and Opening Up-program”, officially authorized at the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th CCP-Congress in December 1978, introduced market reforms and opened China up for foreign investments, thereby laying the foundation for China’s spectacular economic growth rates over the next three and a half decades. Crucially, the march towards modernization has been accompanied by two discursive strands, which are important for narrative construction. One is the belief that China is by now an integral part of the global economy, no longer able to revert to the isolationist excesses of the Mao-era or the untenable aloofness of late dynastic China. The other is the widespread notion of being “on the rise”, not merely as a developing country aspiring to join the ranks of the developed countries but increasingly also as a rising great power on its way to resume its historical position at the top of the heap.

The third main discursive component of `the communist march´, “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, refers to the official label for China’s political developmental path. Whereas communism during the Mao-era inspired an ideologically informed class struggle to revolutionize the world, uniting the international proletariat under the vanguard party leadership of the CCP (after the Sino-Soviet split), Deng’s pragmatist rein ushered in a gradual dilution of communism as an

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478 See e.g. Qin (2012: 45-46).
479 Qin (2012: 45-46).
ideological lodestar. Instead, the progressive adoption of capitalist measures – if not their underlying principles – has produced official oxymoronic phrases such as “planned commodity economy” and “socialist market economy” to describe the political landscape of post-revolutionary China. Moreover, the universalistic pretentions of communism have been consigned to virtual oblivion as a more particularistic version, “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, has assumed the status of orthodoxy ever since it was introduced by Deng at the Twelfth Party Congress of the CCP in 1982. Notwithstanding occasional references to communist ideals, it is this entirely pragmatic Sinification of socialism, often directly associated with the national pursuit of wealth and power, which has come to define the discursive realities of China’s communist march. If there is any substantive feature to “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, it is perhaps the insistence that it constitutes China’s own unique developmental path.

Communism has managed to retain some ideological legitimacy in China’s domestic political debates about how to build a prosperous and equitable society, as witnessed by the far from negligible support for the New Left. But as a discursive building block for Chinese narrative construction in relation to the outside world, communism is now largely associated with the continuing fight for reunification and anti-imperialism, the ongoing struggle for modernization and

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481 Deng’s pragmatism is often encapsulated in his famous slogan: “It does not matter if it is a yellow cat or a black cat, as long as it catches mice” (see Deng, 1962).
482 Meisner (1999: 518); Holbig (2013: 68).
483 Dirlik (2005: 231). As pointed out by several scholars (Kim and Dittmer, 1993: 253-254; Holbig, 2013: 65), the Sinification of communism was initiated even earlier by Mao first in response to the need for mobilizing the Chinese population by playing on nationalist sentiments in the 1930s and later as part of the ideological dissent with the Soviet Union in the 1960s.
484 Meisner (1999: 525). For the ongoing use of ideological phrases in official Chinese political discourse, see Holbig (2013).
485 The New Left can be described as a diverse group of intellectuals who are critical of both Marxist orthodoxy and Western liberalism (Fewsmith, 2008: 13). For an introduction to the New Left in Chinese politics see e.g. Fewsmith (2008: chapter 4).
development and the unique development path of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”. Under the enlightened guidance of the CCP, China has left behind ‘the century of humiliation’ and embarked on a march towards national rejuvenation [fuxing]. By way of conclusion, it may once again be worth citing former PRC-president and CCP-general secretary Jiang Zemin, who pioneered ‘the communist march’: “Our conclusion drawn from the great changes over the past century is as follows: Only the Communist Party of China can lead the Chinese people in achieving victories of national independence, the people’s liberation and socialism, pioneering the road of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, rejuvenating the nation, making the country prosperous and strong and improving the people’s well-being.”

486 Jiang (2001a: see appendix B+), "Speech at the Meeting Celebrating the 80th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China".

Figure B:
Typology of four discursive building blocks of Chinese state identity in the 21st century

- **Sino-civilization**
  - Distinctiveness
  - Longevity
  - Greatness
  - Barbarian counter-image [Zhongguo: Middle Kingdom]

- **Confucianism**
  - Moral virtue
  - Collectivism
  - Harmonious social order
  - Universalism [Tianxia: All-under-heaven]

- **Century of Humiliation**
  - Inequality
  - Trauma
  - Weakness
  - Imperialism [Guochi: National humiliation]

- **The Communist March**
  - Sovereignty
  - Modernization
  - “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” [Fuxing: Rejuvenation]
6.2 Constructing the narrative categories of Chinese identity

Having accounted for the most prominent building blocks of Chinese identity construction, this section proceeds by identifying the range of narratives that articulate Chinese state identity in the 21st century. While the building blocks constitute the discursive raw material for narrative construction, the narratives represent more specific – i.e. bounded and coherent – versions of Chinese state identity. As pointed out in Section 4.2, discursive building blocks exert an enabling and constraining structural effect on identity narratives, an effect which is graphically illustrated towards the end of Section 6.2 and empirically traced in Chapter 7 as part of my examination of the official discourse on Chinese state identity. In this section, I first present an overview of the wide range of narrative categories found in the secondary literature on Chinese state identity. Subsequently, I reintroduce the theoretically derived ideal-typical identity categories (from Chapter 4 and 5) in order to systematize the range of narrative categories found in the academic debate on Chinese state identity.

My review of the existing literature on Chinese identity in the 21st century basically serves two purposes. One is to identify the discursive variation involved in constructing state narratives about ‘the Chinese self’, while the second purpose is to gauge the extent to which these narratives fit into the ideal-typical categories employed below. A few initial observations about my review of the secondary literature are in order. First, below I have singled out twelve relatively distinct identity categories, but one could easily discern additional categories if one were interested in depicting the full conceptual complexity found in the second-
ary literature on Chinese state identity. Yet, it suffices here to present a condensed overview of the range of identity categories, which comprises all the main categories, hopefully only leaving out conceptual variations. Second, while several of the reviewed China-scholars explicitly employ the narrative concept, others prefer to use the concept of discourse (or self-image or related concepts) to capture Chinese state identity. Such conceptual variations are irrelevant here since I am only undertaking the review to introduce the various identity categories. For practical reasons, I will therefore refer to them all as narratives of Chinese state identity. Third, the names given to these narratives and their brief accompanying descriptions, though obviously based on the referenced scholars, ultimately represent my own rendering of the scholarly debate. Fourth, some of the identified narrative categories are more or less overlapping insofar as they draw on the same underlying discursive building blocks. Finally, I attempt to pin down the narratives temporally by associating each of them with the reign of one or several of the three Chinese leaders in the 21st century: Jiang Zemin (3rd generation: \( \rightarrow \) 2002/2004\(^{488}\)), Hu Jintao (4th generation: 2002/2004 \( \rightarrow \) 2012) or Xi Jinping (5th generation: 2012 \( \rightarrow \)). If several leaders are listed, they are hierarchically ordered to indicate the primary linkage.

\(^{487}\) For instance, what I refer to as the ‘Sino-centric’ identity narrative (see below) has been portrayed in the secondary literature under more or less similar discursive categories such as “exceptionalist China”, “Civilizational China”, “Middle Kingdom China” or “Tianxia-China”.

\(^{488}\) The power transition between the 3rd and 4th generation of Chinese leaders was not entirely smooth as Jiang Zemin maintained some positions of power until 2004 even though Hu Jintao became general secretary of the CCP in November 2002, then president of the PRC in March 2003 and finally chairman of the Central Military Commission in September 2004 (see Lee, 2010).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NARRATIVES</th>
<th>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>LEADERSHIP SIGNATURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Westernizing China</em></td>
<td>“China does not claim to be unique in any way; in order to modernize China needs to emulate the West and eventually adopt the universalistic political institutions of liberal democracy.”</td>
<td>Pre-21st century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sovereign China</em></td>
<td>“China is a sovereign member of international society; China maintains that all states should respect the equality, integrity, independence and diversity of other sovereign states.”</td>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Xi Jinping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Civilizing China</em></td>
<td>“China is a unified state comprising different ethnic groups; China must undertake a civilizing mission towards its peripheral groups while striking hard against separatism, fundamentalism and terrorism.”</td>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Xi Jinping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Socialist China</em></td>
<td>“China is a modern socialist republic; China needs to stick to its own developmental path of `Socialism with Chinese characteristics’ to promote modernization, provide welfare and ensure national rejuvenation.”</td>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Xi Jinping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Developing China</em></td>
<td>“China is the largest developing country in the world; China should concentrate on its overall developmental goals and on cultivating its ties of solidarity with other developing countries and emerging powers.”</td>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Humiliated China</em></td>
<td>“China is marked by its `century of humiliation’; China should vigorously counter all kinds of “neo-imperialist” agendas by the West or Japan in order to redeem China from past humiliations.”</td>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Xi Jinping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rejuvenating China</em></td>
<td>“China is on the rise; China was once a wealthy and awe-inspiring great power and is now on its way – under the informed leadership of the CCP – to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”</td>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Hu Jintao</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Xi Jinping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Globalist</em></td>
<td>“China is an integral part of a global state community;”</td>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

489 For analytical reasons, I have chosen to include 'Westernizing China' even though it has not been officially promoted by Chinese leaders in the 21st century.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>China’</th>
<th>to continue its modernization China needs to adapt to economic globalization and to be a responsible member of the prevailing international order.</th>
<th>Hu Jintao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful China’</td>
<td>“China’s rise is no threat to the outside world; China denounces all shades of hegemonic practices and adheres to a peaceful foreign policy as enshrined in The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.”</td>
<td>Hu Jintao, Jiang Zemin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonious China’</td>
<td>“China’s Confucian background makes it inherently peaceful; China will institute a harmonious societal order both at home and abroad, based on inclusiveness and respects for differences.”</td>
<td>Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-centric China’</td>
<td>“China has a unique civilizational heritage; China should uphold its unique character in the face of Western norms and values and even attempt to promote Chinese culture abroad.”</td>
<td>Xi Jinping, Hu Jintao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreaming China’</td>
<td>“China is emerging as a great power; China dreams of the great revival of the Chinese nation, bringing about a prosperous, strong and harmonious China that elicits admiration and respect from the outside world.”</td>
<td>Xi Jinping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let me add a bit more background context for each of the twelve state identity narratives found in the secondary literature:

1. `Westernizing China´ was actually a mainstream identity narrative in the 1980s (especially among intellectuals), but it lost most of its appeal to Zhongnanhai following the harsh Western critique of the 1989 Tiananmen-incident and the confrontations with the U.S. in the 1990s (see Section 9.1).\(^{490}\) Notably, both the anti-Western diatribes by the New Left against the neo-liberal paradigm and later also the Sino-centric culturalists’ criticism of liberal democracy have served to weaken this narrative. Yet, although Chinese leaders no longer evoke Westernization as a development path, the universalistic ideals of liberalism and democ-

racy still finds some prominent supporters.\textsuperscript{491}

2. `Sovereign China´ is probably the most enduring prominent identity narrative, still drawing much of its discursive legitimacy from the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (1954).\textsuperscript{492} At the same time, this narrative represents a consistently universalistic, discursive element in China’s self-understanding, given its insistence on the equality of all sovereign states, the indiscriminate non-interference into the domestic affairs of other states, the reciprocal respect for each state’s territorial integrity and the mutual toleration of inter-state differences or diverse paths of development.\textsuperscript{493} Although the narrative of `Sovereign China´ has witnessed some discursive adjustments – away from an absolutist rendering of state sovereignty – in order for China to accommodate itself to international society in the 1990s and 2000s,\textsuperscript{494} `Sovereign China´ seems recently to have reverted to its default position, once again mostly stressing the inviolable principle of state sovereignty in the political realm.\textsuperscript{495}

3. `Civilizing China´ is a narrative about the relations between China’s political, economic and cultural center and the more peripheral regions usually inhabited by ethnic minority groups. As China is progressing rapidly the Chinese state has an obligation to “civilize” and thereby better integrate its ethnic minorities by virtue of programs of economic development as well as measures of positive discrimination.\textsuperscript{496} At the same time, the narrative proclaims that those, who re-

\begin{footnotesize}
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\textsuperscript{491} For example, former Chinese premier Wen Jiabao has often aired such views (see e.g. Zakaria, 2008). \\
\textsuperscript{492} Admittedly, many China-scholars treat China’s adherence to sovereignty as a discursive principle rather than an outright narrative, but that is not important for my present purposes in this overview. \\
\textsuperscript{493} Shan (2008: 53-59); Gill (2010: 104-108). \\
\textsuperscript{494} For an exploration of China’s evolving narrative of sovereignty, see e.g. Carlson (2006; 2011); Gill (2007: chapter 4); Wenhua (2008). \\
\textsuperscript{495} Swaine (2012a). It should be stressed that since Deng’s take-over `Sovereign China´ has primarily concerned the realm of international politics, not economic issues. \\
\textsuperscript{496} On the civilizing mission, see e.g. Kung (2006: 378-379); Tobin (2011: 11). \\
\end{tabular}
\end{footnotesize}
sist the “civilizing mission” and resort to “The Three Evils” of terrorism, separatism and religious extremism, will be singled out and excluded from the Chinese community as part of the so-called “Strike Hard” campaigns.  

While ‘Civilizing China’ was almost exclusively an inward-looking narrative before the 21st century, 9/11 has added an international dimension insofar as China has attempted to link domestic incidents of ethnic unrest – notably among the Uighurs in the Xinjiang province but also among the Tibetans – to the Global War on Terror as well as to outside agitators of separatism.

4. ‘Socialist China’ is no longer a narrative about China’s revolutionary ideological identity, but it lives on in the 21st century as a far more particularistic vision of a specifically Chinese model for societal development, that is “Socialism with Chinese characteristics”. Despite the fact that several China-scholars have depicted China’s developmental path as an alternative societal model for developing countries (typically labeled “the Beijing Consensus”), Chinese leaders have so far refrained from portraying ‘Socialist China’ as a new universalistic project. Rather, in its current form, ‘Socialist China’ is mostly the story about how Deng’s modernization program – and the intellectual add-ons from subsequent generations of Chinese leaders – has placed China firmly on a specific path towards national rejuvenation, thereby reinvigorating China as a sovereign, strong and prosperous “modern socialist state”.

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497 Chung (2006: 76-78); Tobin (2011: 12); Barbour and Jones (2013: 106-108). For an overview of China’s Strike Hard campaigns, see e.g. Trevaskes (2010).  
499 Dirlik (2005: chapter 10); see also Holbig (2013). As argued by Fewsmit (2013: 2-3), Xi Jinping has explicitly positioned himself as an heir of Deng’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.  
501 Wang Z. (2012: 129-32); see also Dingding (2009). As suggested by many China-observers, the rise and recent fall of Bo Xilai (former “red” Politburo-member and Chongqing governor) in Chinese politics seems to demon-
5. ‘Developing China’ was a powerful narrative back in the 1960s when China portrayed itself as a revolutionary socialist leader of the Third World, but it gradually lost some of its traction as Deng’s “Reform and Opening up-program” took out the ideological sting of the CCP. However, the narrative has been adapted to China’s changing international role and is still present in China’s official identity discourse in the 21st century. Only, now in a far more status quo-oriented version, where China accentuates its status as a developing country primarily to fraternize other developing countries, to avoid shouldering the same burdens as the developed countries and to rally the emerging powers (the BRICS) behind the call for revising specific international institutions of the prevailing international order.

6. ‘Humiliated China’ has been a very influential narrative in the 1990s and 2000s and shows no clear signs of being discarded by Xi Jinping despite his more muscular rhetoric (cf. ‘Dreaming China’). This narrative cultivates China’s ‘century of humiliation’ and the wreckage wrought upon the Chinese at the hands of imperialist powers in order for China to assume the moral high ground, in effect not only admonishing Japan or the West about its past wrongdoings and present responsibilities but also cautioning the Chinese against the neo-imperialist agendas of especially Japan and the United States. Hence, ‘Humiliated China’ is about a cautious, agonized and self-centered China that wants to redeem itself and that strongly opposes any foreign encroachments on Chinese sovereignty or

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504 Fewsmith (2013: 3-4).
505 On the ‘Humiliated China’ narrative, see Cohen (2003: 166-184); Gries (2004); Callahan (2010); Wang Z. (2012); Chong (2012: 4-6).
interference in China’s internal affairs.

7. `Rejuvenating China´ was introduced by Jiang Zemin in the 1990s as a narrative that directly rekindles in the Chinese population the memory of China as a historical great power once again on the rise. Indeed, under the informed leadership of the CCP ‘Rejuvenating China´ promises a restoration of past glory and thereby a definitive end to “the Century of Humiliation”. During Hu Jintao’s reign, ‘Rejuvenating China´ even became one of the most widely and consistently used narratives in official governmental discourse – being further fueled in 2007 by the immensely popular CCTV-series about China’s “Road to Rejuvenation” and so far Xi Jinping seems intent on sustaining the narrative, albeit as part of his ‘Dreaming China´ (see below).

8. `Globalist China´ emerged as a prominent narrative in the 1990s as China accelerated its integration into both the institutional framework of international society and the global capitalist economy, culminating with China’s admission into the WTO in 2001. While ‘Globalist China´ entails no direct admiration for the West or desire to imitate it, this narrative is nevertheless profoundly universalistic and status quo-oriented in its vision of China as a responsible great power and an integral part of a cooperative international society predicated on multilateral institutions. Apparently, ‘Globalist China´ has fallen more or less silent in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, but there has been little sys-

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507 See Chong (2012: 23). CCTV is the predominant state television broadcaster in mainland China.
510 The call in 2005 from Robert Zoellick (2005), US Deputy Secretary of State, for China to “become a responsible stakeholder of the international community” further prompted the debate in China about China’s global role and responsibility (see e.g. Scott, 2010).
511 E.g. Shambaugh (2011: 23).
tematic inquiry into the `Globalist China´ narrative in recent years.

9. `Peaceful China´ can trace its discursive roots back to the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” as well as the formulation of the so-called New Security Concept in the second half of the 1990s. But as a relatively distinct identity narrative `Peaceful China´ gained a solid footing in the mid-2000s during the early phase of Hu Jintao’s reign with the formulation of “China’s Peaceful Rise”, later officially rephrased as “China’s Peaceful Development” in an influential government white paper. According to the `Peaceful China´ narrative, China will not and cannot repeat the history of traditional revisionist great powers, not only because it is inherently peaceful but also because it pursues a development strategy that is oriented towards domestic challenges. Most China-scholars consider `Peaceful China´ to be a strategic narrative adopted by Zhongnanhai for the sake of dispelling the mounting fears in the West about China’s rise.

10. `Harmonious China´ is closely associated with Hu Jintao’s twin concepts of “Harmonious Society/Harmonious World”, ceremoniously launched by Hu in 2005 at the 60th anniversary meeting of the UN where he envisioned a harmonious – that is, peaceful and prosperous – domestic and international society. The narrative shares many of the discursive features found in `Peaceful China´ but is a more comprehensive and self-centered attempt to root China’s

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512 Gill (2010: 4-7); Guo and Blanchard (2008: 6). On the New Security Concept, see Gill (2007: 4-5). See also Wang H. (2005: 93-94) for an overview of how the image of `Peaceful China´ has been projected in official rhetoric over the course of PRC’s history.


societal visions in its civilizational past, notably its Confucian heritage. While 'Harmonious China' accentuates the need for fostering a non-divisive domestic society and a UN-based world order of equality, peacefulness, multilateral cooperation and inter-civilizational dialogue, most scholars have singled out its Confucian overtones of seeking “harmony without suppressing differences”, which are seen as symptomatic for the broader trend of reviving China's civilizational past.

11. 'Sino-centric China' is also a narrative from the mid-2000s that cultivates China's civilizational roots but one that is far more self-centered in its visions of international order and concrete in its endeavor to renew China's dynastic heritage. Apart from the Confucian term for harmony [He], traditional phrases such as “the Middle Kingdom” [Zhongguo] and “All-under-heaven” [Tianxia] have been resuscitated by a wide range of public intellectuals in China as part of a variegated narrative that seeks to envision what a Sino-centric international order will look like. As long as Hu Jintao presided over Zhongnanhai, this narrative stressed the inherently benign, pacifist and harmonious character of a Sino-centric world, but since Xi’s ascent to power the narrative seems to have somewhat more non-Western in its tone, targeting the shortcomings of liberal democracy.

12. 'Dreaming China' is the most recent narrative of Chinese identity introduced in November 2012 by Xi Jinping at the National Museum in the midst

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519 For an overview of the 'Sino-centric' narrative, see e.g. Feng (2013); Callahan (2012); see also Forsby (2011).
520 Scholars in China who take part in this “Sino-centric” project include, among others, Yan (2011a); Bai (2012); Qin (2012); Zhang (2012); Zhao (2012). Some Western-based scholars are also more or less directly contributing to the Sino-centric identity project (e.g. Kang, 2007; Jacques, 2009; Kang, 2010; Kissinger, 2011; Dellios and Ferguson, 2013).
of an exhibition called “Road to Revival”. Although the so-called “China Dream” has so far not been spelled out in any great detail by Xi, its main discursive theme about the great revival of the Chinese nation places it firmly in line with ‘Rejuvenating China’. Yet, China-scholars have also noted three other discursive strands of ‘Dreaming China’ that, in combination with the rejuvenation theme, may come to define a discrete narrative: The emphasis on building a militarily strong China, the appeal to China’s civilizational distinctiveness and the fundamental differences of political regime between China and the United States that “the China Dream” – as opposed to “the American Dream – inevitably evokes.

In addition to these twelve state identity narratives one might also have included a ‘Nationalist China’ narrative. As pointed out by several scholars, nationalist rhetoric has to some extent found its way into the official Zhongnanhai-discourse in the 21st century, especially as part of China’s recurrent confrontations with Japan. However, although one may certainly discern a ‘Nationalist China’ narrative in the secondary literature on Chinese state identity, I prefer not to include it as a separate narrative here for several reasons. First of all, most of the nationalist rhetoric is already accounted for by some of the other narratives (i.e. ‘Humiliated China’, ‘Rejuvenating China’ and ‘Dreaming China’). Moreover, Chinese nationalism predominantly appears to be a popular phenomenon, driven by non-elite manifestations in the streets or in the social media, and

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521 The Economist (2013b), “Xi Jinping and the Chinese Dream”.
523 Cohen (2012: single-page article); Jin (2014: single-page article); Lee J. (2014: single-page article). It has been noted by several scholars (e.g. Callahan, 2013: 15-16) that Xi by using the phrase of “the China Dream” placed his new narrative in direct extension of a widely discussed book with the same title by senior PLA-general, Liu Mingfu, who in his book calls for an extensive military modernization to match the United States.
524 See e.g. Ross (2011); Hughes (2011); Zhao (2013); Bislev and Li (2014). For a comprehensive introduction to Chinese nationalism in the post-Cold War era, see especially Gries (2004) and Hughes (2006).
this militates against rendering `Nationalist China` as an official Chinese state identity narrative.

**Introducing five ideal-typical narrative categories of Chinese identity**

My review of the literature on Chinese state identity in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century represents, as already noted, a conceptual distillation of the wide range of identity categories found in the secondary literature. What I propose in the following is a further reduction of the twelve narrative categories listed above. Only, this time in the form of a theoretically guided condensation and re-ordering of the twelve state identity narratives so that they become modeled on the five ideal-typical identity categories, which were introduced in Chapter 3 and systematized in Chapter 4. By reducing the conceptual complexity even further I seek to arrive at a level of abstraction where a discursive shift from one narrative category to another will be significant in terms of the differing underlying identity strategies (deduced from Social Identity Theory). Moreover, by organizing the Chinese state identity discourse according to the ideal-typical categories I gain five Chinese identity narratives that are sufficiently distinct from each other as to yield discrete behavioral guidelines for Chinese grand strategy (see Section 9.2). While such a simplification of the Chinese state identity discourse certainly neglects some of the nuances and complexities, I argue that this is a price worth paying. Not only for the sake of my explanatory agenda but also, more importantly, because the five proposed identity categories actually seem to capture most of the discursive variance in Zhongnanhai’s official identity discourse (more on this in Section 7.7).
How do I more specifically arrive at the five reductive categories of Chinese state identity? Basically (as set out in Section 5.2), I construct the five main narrative categories deductively by translating the ideal-typical logics of identity into the specific context of Chinese state identity constitution. This “construction exercise” involves going back and forth between the theoretical ideal-types and the twelve Chinese state identity narratives listed above in order to create five “Sinicized” main narrative categories that covers as much of the conceptual variance as possible while keeping the main narrative categories as distinct from each other as possible. Below, figure F provides a graphical illustration of how the twelve different identity narratives from the secondary literature are reduced to the five narrative categories of Chinese state identity. It is not pertinent to my analytical agenda to further specify how I construct the five Sinicized narrative categories; suffice here is to briefly make the following observations: First, the content of each of the five main narratives of Chinese state identity can be traced back to a specific combination of three or four narratives from the literature review. Second, as some of the twelve identity narratives from the review are linked to more than one of the five Sinicized narrative categories, I use full- and dotted-lined links to indicate the primary and secondary connections respectively. Third, I have been unable to link two of the twelve narratives to any of the five main narrative categories (more on this below).

525 While three of the five main narratives are named directly after their primary source of narrative influence (from the review), I prefer to rename the last two of the main narratives (for no substantive reasons).
Figure F: Constructing the main narrative categories of Chinese state identity
Figure F presents what I consider to be the five main narrative categories of Chinese state identity, constructed at the intersection of theoretically derived ideal-types and condensed empirically rooted categories of Chinese identity. For the sake of further establishing the five main narrative categories I will tentatively specify the distinct logic of social identity behind each main narrative below. To this end, I employ the key conceptual distinctions from my theoretical framework (revisit figure B for an overview). Specifically, I describe how each narrative is based on a particular identity strategy for satisfying the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem, how each narrative articulates the distinction between the Chinese in-group and its salient out-group state(s) and how each narrative can be categorized in terms of a specific set of identity markers (extrovert/introvert, universalistic/particularistic) as well as political guidelines. My objective here is merely to suggest how each of the five main narrative categories is predicated on a distinct logic of social identity, and the following description is therefore preliminary (i.e. guided by the different logics of identity and the reviewed secondary sources). An elaborate account follows in the next chapter as I explore the empirical validity of the main narrative categories.

`Globalist China` [based on an identity strategy of social affiliation]: As seen through the perspective of this narrative, China’s identity as a state community is inextricably linked to a wider international society of states, of which China should strive to become a fully integrated and widely respected member. The in-group of `Globalist China` therefore extends far beyond China itself, potentially encompassing all nation-states that take an active and constructive part in building a cooperative international society. The out-group of `Globalist China`, on the other hand, is constituted by any salient (higher-ranked) state(s) of internation-
al society – i.e. the Western “gate-keepers” of international society – who has the authority to question China’s membership status. According to the ‘Globalist China’ narrative, China should tone down its political, cultural and developmental distinctiveness in order to facilitate its integration into international society. Instead, China may enhance its self-esteem by seeking recognition (from the West) as a peer member of international society; not necessarily by directly adopting the liberal-democratic norms and values of the West, but by proving itself to be a responsible, cooperative, peaceful stakeholder of the prevailing international order.\textsuperscript{526} Hence, ‘Globalist China’ is a strongly extrovert narrative, not only comparing China directly to its salient out-group(s), but envisioning an actively engaged role for China in international society. It is also a universalistic narrative, perceiving China to be fundamentally compatible with the existing institutions of international society and viewing all states as potential partners of a global state community. Against this backdrop, the overall mission (or guidelines) of ‘Globalist China’ becomes to position China as a central, peaceful and active member of international society.

‘Sovereign China’ [based on an identity strategy of moral high-grounding (social creativity)]: According to this narrative, China is a sovereign member of an international society of states, which should be founded on the independence, equality and diversity of its state members. Although the in-group of ‘Sovereign China’ in some sense comprises the entire international society of sovereign states, it is the sovereign Chinese state community itself that constitutes the principal in-group of identification. With respect to the salient out-group of this narrative, it primarily consists of those states that threaten the sovereignty and equality of China, that is, first of all the United States and Japan. Furthermore,\textsuperscript{526} As I will later argue, after the demise of the ‘Westernizing China’ narrative the official identity discourse in China no longer contains a narrative that is unequivocally modelled as a strategy of social affiliation.

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\textsuperscript{526} As I will later argue, after the demise of the ‘Westernizing China’ narrative the official identity discourse in China no longer contains a narrative that is unequivocally modelled as a strategy of social affiliation.
the narrative holds that China should generally guard its sovereign statehood zealously, avoid becoming too deeply engaged in international society and thereby safeguard China’s distinctiveness as a state community. At the same time, China can raise its self-esteem by deliberately and systematically assuming the moral high ground vis-à-vis salient out-group states with clashing views of state sovereignty in general (e.g. the United States) and Chinese sovereignty in particular (e.g. Japan) and by targeting them as neo-imperialistic states that pose a threat to international equality, stability and peace. On this background, ‘Sovereign China’ can be categorized as an introvert narrative, not relying directly on outside respect and recognition from salient out-group states and moreover placing firm limits on the role that China should play in international society. Even so, ‘Sovereign China’ is simultaneously a universalistic narrative because of its grounding in the universalistic principle of sovereignty and its insistence on the fundamental equality of all sovereign states. The overall mission of ‘Sovereign China’ thus becomes to vigorously uphold China’s sovereign status and rights in the society of states and to vehemently castigate potential violators as dangerous, depraved or even barbarian.

‘Unified China’ [based on an identity strategy of downward retargeting (social creativity)]: From the viewpoint of this narrative, China is a unified state community, incorporating various ethnic and religious groups around the common cause of realizing a modern socialist republic. The in-group of ‘Unified China’ generally comprises all the 56 officially designated ethnic and religious groups of the PRC. Conversely, the out-group is defined as those fractions of specific ethnic and religious minorities who oppose the unifying vision of the Chinese state and its harmonious, civilizing state-building project. ‘Unified China’ thus seeks to establish China’s distinctiveness as a state community not in relation to
the outside world but to radicalized domestic out-groups who place themselves on the outside by resorting to terrorism, separatism or extremism. By differentiating the Chinese in-group from radicalized and developmentally inferior domestic out-groups, the `Unified China´ narrative at the same time raises the self-esteem of the Chinese state community. Accordingly, `Unified China´ represents a clear example of an introvert narrative, centered on the distinction between domestic in- and out-groups. Furthermore, `Unified China´ is basically modeled as a universalistic narrative, insofar as none of China’s minority groups are in advance prevented from taking part in the Chinese state community by reference to their specific ethnic or religious background as long as these minority groups downplay their own distinctiveness and accept the unifying, civilizing state-building project of the majority. In light of this, the overall mission of `Unified China´ becomes to preserve the unity of China by building an all-encompassing modern, prosperous and harmonious socialist republic and by firmly combatting those who oppose this civilizing project.

`Sino-centric China´ [based on an identity strategy of self-cultivation (social creativity)]: As seen from the perspective of this narrative, China can pride itself of a unique, deep-seated civilizational heritage, which sets China apart from the outside world. Although the in-group of `Sino-centric China´ is first of all constituted by China itself, it may in principle be extended to all those Sinitic peoples steeped in Chinese civilization (such as overseas Chinese communities, Taiwan and Singapore). The salient out-group, on the other hand, is composed of the Western great powers given their advocacy of an allegedly universalistic societal model of liberal democracy. Instead of subscribing to the universality of liberal democracy, `Sino-centric China´ seeks to cultivate China’s own distinctiveness as manifested in its unique and deep-seated civilizational roots as well as its dis-
crete societal model of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”. Hence, by cult-
vivating China’s own distinctiveness, rather than actively oppose liberal democ-
acy, the narrative seeks to enhance China’s self-esteem in a more positive and self-
absorbed manner. In this sense, ‘Sino-centric China’ is first of all an introvert
narrative, which nurtures Chinese uniqueness without translating it into a more
activist international agenda. Moreover, ‘Sino-centric China’ is a clear example
of a particularistic narrative, even if China is merely framed as different from –
rather than incompatible with – its salient out-group states. Against this back-
drop, the overall mission of ‘Sino-centric China’ becomes to revive, cultivate and
positively reframe China’s unique cultural and civilizational heritage in the face
of the universalistic liberal-democratic societal model of the West.

‘Rising China’ [based on an identity strategy of social competition]: According to
this narrative, China’s rapid rise is currently restoring China to its historical po-
sition and role as a great power, being increasingly able and willing to assert it-
self on the international stage. The in-group of ‘Rising China’ is constituted by
the PRC who managed – under the leadership of the CCP – to rise from the ruins
of “the Century of Humiliation” and redeem China. Conversely, the salient out-
group of ‘Rising China’ first of all comprises the United States and Japan who
stand out as China’s main competitors, even rivals, in its struggle to regain its
historical great power status. Accordingly, ‘Rising China’ frames China’s distinct-
tiveness in terms of its historical and emergent great power status, which re-
quires that China asserts itself and proves itself to be competitive in spite of op-
position from other great powers. Furthermore, by proving competitive and as-
serting itself internationally China should generate respect from the outside
world, in effect enhancing China’s self-esteem as a rising power. In light of this,
‘Rising China’ can be categorized as an extrovert narrative, not only comparing
China directly to its salient out-groups but also envisioning a prominent role for China on the international stage. At the same time, `Rising China´ can be described as a particularistic narrative inasmuch as its identity markers are rooted not in a set of universal norms or ideals but rather in the specific, historically motivated, struggle for China’s revival. The overall mission of `Rising China´ thus becomes to ensure that China is capable of continuing its great revival and of asserting its emerging position and status as a great power in the face of competition from other great powers.

**Bringing it all together**

Do the proposed five Sinicized ideal-types of identity narratives constitute a valid, if highly reductionist, representation of the discourse on Chinese state identity? A tentative, indirectly affirmative answer was provided graphically by figure F insofar as the five main narrative categories seem to account for the bulk of the discursive variance found in the secondary literature on Chinese identity. The only exceptions concern `the Westernizing China´ and `Developing China´ narratives, which are at any rate not very prominent in the 21st century as noted above, and which may instead be viewed as separate cases of the ideal-typical logics of identity. In that sense, my review of the secondary literature in this section lends some initial credence to the validity of the Sinicized narrative ideal-types as analytical categories for capturing and ordering the discourse on China’s state identity. However, Chapter 7 will answer the question (about the validity of the suggested ideal-types) in a far more thorough manner by con-

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527 That is, one could make the claim (with no reason to fold out the underlying argument here) that `Westernizing China´ is a narrative equivalent of `Globalist China´, articulating a distinct version of an identity strategy of social affiliation, while `Developing China´ is a narrative equivalent of `Sovereign China´, articulating a distinct version of an identity strategy of moral high-grounding.
fronting the Sinicized ideal-types to the discursive reality of Zhongnanhai’s official statements on Chinese state identity.

Chapter 6 has tapped into the secondary literature to provide an initial mapping of Chinese state identity, using the existing scholarly debate to get an overview of the conceptual landscape and, most importantly, to establish the various empirical categories of Chinese state identity and thereby, in a preliminary fashion, furnish my theoretical framework with some empirical content. This mapping has covered what I referred to in Chapter 4 as the second and third structural layers of the hierarchical discursive formation of Chinese state identity at the beginning of the 21st century. Specifically, I was able to identify four discursive building blocks that constitute fairly stable and distinct nodal points in China’s collective memory about itself, having an enabling and constraining effect on the construction of Chinese state identity narratives. Furthermore, the literature review elucidated and systematized the narrative complexity of Chinese identity, pinpointing twelve more or less discrete narrative categories that were finally reduced to five separate narratives about Chinese state identity, modeled on the ideal-typical categories from my theoretical framework. These Sinicized narrative categories have thus been constructed at the intersection of theoretical deduction and (secondary) empirical induction. It should be kept in mind that as each of the five main Chinese narratives is predicated on a separate identity strategy, it articulates a specific logic of state identity, which affects Chinese grand strategy in a distinct way according to my underlying theoretical hypothesis (cf. end of Chapter 4).

Having proposed the main empirical categories at the second and third structural layers of the discursive formation of Chinese state identity, it finally raises the
question of how to deal with the first (deepest) layer of the formation, conceptualized in Section 4.2 as the referent object of the state. In some sense, the notion of constituting a state community has been pivotal for Chinese identity formation over the course of at least two millennia (as suggested in Section 2.2). In fact, several China-scholars have pointed out that even during those, sometimes long, stretches of Chinese history when there was no effective dynastic state to embody and administer a state community, the very idea of forming a centralized state unit struck a powerful chord among the Chinese population in general and the Confucianists in particular. Yet, in another sense, the referent object of China as a state community has undergone significant changes as the internally driven aspirations of the dynastic-civilizational state was confronted — over the Century of Humiliations — with the external reality of a Western imperialistic order, eventually resulting in a revised mainly sovereignty-based conception of China as a state community. Given that I have indirectly incorporated most of these changing conceptions of legitimate statehood into the second structural layer of the discursive formation of Chinese state identity (as part of the discursive building blocks), there is little need for elaborating further on the first layer of the discursive formation in this analytical context. As such, the structural effects of the referent object of China as a state community merely implies here that identity conceptions about China should to be framed in a state-centric manner in order to be legitimate.

Below, figure G presents a graphical illustration of the hierarchical discursive formation of Chinese state identity in the 21st century. Deeper structural layers exert a constraining and enabling effect on the less basic layers of Chinese state identity. Even though this discursive-structural effect is not a primary concern

528 The powerful and ancient Chinese conception of constituting a centralized state community has been explored by Hunt (1993); see also Zhang Y. (2001: 50-51); Keay (2009: 66); Kang (2010: 29-33).
for my overall explanatory agenda – of explaining Chinese grand strategy – I will show how the four discursive building blocks enable and constrain Zhongnaihai’s narrative construction in the course of Chapter 7.

Figure G:
A hierarchical discursive formation of China’s identity as a state community

Note: Arrows indicate structural relations of a constraining/enabling nature
Chapter 7:
Identifying the official narratives of Chinese identity

How well do the five Sinicized narrative ideal-types, proposed in Chapter 6, capture the empirical reality of the official leadership discourse on China’s identity as a state community? While Chapter 6 offered a preliminary answer based on a review of the secondary literature, this chapter aims to provide a far more solid and extensive empirical grounding of the suggested narrative categories (as well as their underlying discursive building blocks). By virtue of a systematic exploration of a wide array of primary sources of Zhongnanhai’s discourse on Chinese state identity the chapter seeks to demonstrate that the five main narratives – despite being reductively modeled on theoretical ideal-types – do indeed constitute a set of relevant, valid and more or less exhaustive empirical categories, useful for systematizing the discourse on Chinese state identity in the 21st century. Although my main objective therefore is to corroborate the proposed narrative categories, I also keep an eye open to the presence of narrative positions that do not easily fit into my pre-established categories.

More specifically, Chapter 7 is divided into seven sections, five of which concentrate on how the five main narratives – ‘Globalist China’, ‘Sovereign China’, ‘Unified China’, ‘Sino-centric China’ and ‘Rising China’ – are manifested in Zhongnanhai’s official discourse at the beginning of the 21st century. Each of these five sections proceeds in a similar manner, using the theoretically derived terminology – i.e. the in-group/out-group distinction, the need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem and the identity markers/guidelines – to capture and describe the articulation in the official government discourse of the five narratives and their distinct logics of Chinese state identity. I furthermore seek to
demonstrate how each narrative is embedded in an underlying set of discursive building blocks and whether the narrative is clearly present throughout the examined period (i.e. at either side of the global financial crisis in line with the case design in Section 5.1). The final section of Chapter 7 first provides a critical perspective on my theoretically guided ordering of Zhongnanhai’s identity discourse to address a number of reductionist issues and then sums up Chapter 7 by presenting its key findings. Before I embark on the examination of the five identity narratives, however, the first section of Chapter 7 elucidates the selection of primary discursive sources on Chinese state identity and the way I have organized the discursive data material.

7.1 Data material: primary sources on Chinese identity
The first set of issues that need to be addressed concern the availability and selection of relevant sources, the audience targeted by these sources and my use of the coding program NVivo to organize the data material. I will start from behind by briefly accounting for my use of NVivo, a software program for computer-assisted analysis of qualitative data. NVivo is well-suited for organizing and analyzing a large set of unstructured data such as the heterogeneous collection of primary sources of Chinese identity constitution that I intend to examine. Specifically, I use NVivo firstly to store and systematize my primary sources of relevant discursive material; secondly to code the selected sources on the basis of a number of theoretically deduced analytical categories (a sort of coding list); and thirdly to acquire an overview of the data material in terms of the various analytical categories. In other words, I utilize some of the basic functions of NVivo to
systematize the multifaceted Zhongnanhai-discourse on China’s self-
understanding and to analyze it in a reliable manner.

The coding process itself requires some elaboration. From the five Sinicized ide-
al-typical narrative categories – constructed in Chapter 6 – I derive a sort of cod-
ing list, consisting of a set of identity logics and discursive key terms that pertain
to each of the five narratives (see appendix A). I then use this coding list to ex-
amine the discursive sources, looking for passages that reflect one (or some-
times several) of the narratives in order to assign these text passages to their
respective narrative categories (designated as nodes in NVivo). In a similar vein,
I seek to identify and categorize the discursive building blocks of Chinese identi-
ity constitution on the basis of a somewhat more rudimentary coding list of dis-
cursive key concepts, which is taken from the conceptual summary of Section 6.1
as summarized in figure E. Of particular interest are those discursive passages
that contain a direct discursive linkage between a specific building block and an
identity narrative. As I read through all the primary sources, I gradually create a
cluster of nodes (i.e. narrative categories), which eventually provides me with an
overview of the official discourse on Chinese identity. That is, an overview is
achieved by gauging the relative frequency of specific nodes, the relative distri-
bution of nodes throughout the different discursive sources as well as the way
different nodes are interconnected (i.e. how certain narratives operate together
or how a specific narrative appears together with a specific building block). Fur-
thermore, I should stress that even though I approach my data material with a
pre-structured coding list, the coding process is far from completely deductive.
Not only have I gradually adjusted my coding list in the course of the reading
and coding process to better reflect the empirical reality of how the various nar-
ratives are articulated discursively; I have also allowed for alternative narratives
that did not fit into my pre-given analytical categories (e.g. ‘Developing China’, see Section 7.7). Finally, it should be noted that in order to increase the reliability of the analysis, I have coded far more texts than those explicitly referenced in the course of Section 7.2-7.6.

Turning, then, to the discursive sources that are being coded, I will deal with the availability and selection of the data material at more length. As pointed out in Section 5.2, there are mainly three types of primary sources on public elite conceptions of Chinese identity, which are relevant, accessible and directly attributable to representatives of Zhongnanhai: Government white papers, speeches by Chinese leaders and political status reports delivered at the national party congresses of the CCP. Apart from these main sources, Zhongnanhai’s conceptions of Chinese identity may also be studied via other types of primary sources such as communiqués, articles and interviews involving leadership representatives.529 Although my discourse analysis includes various types of primary sources, by far the majority of the referenced material is drawn from one of the three main sources. In order to ensure the reliability of the analysis I will therefore account for my use of these main sources in a systematic manner, whereas the other sources are utilized on an ad hoc-basis. At a first glance of the three main sources, there seems to be an abundance of relevant material to tap into with, for instance, the State Council’s Information Office (SCIO530) having published no less than 73 government white papers in the 21st century.531 Yet, one quickly realizes that it is far from all of these potential sources that actually address Chinese identity in any substantial way; and of those that do, some carries greater

529 For a full bibliographical overview of all the primary sources used in Chapter 7, see appendix B+.
530 SCIO is a key institutional player when it comes to narrating, coordinating and publishing China’s communication with the outside world; for an introduction to SCIO, see Shambaugh (2013: 221-23).
531 That is, from 2000 through 2014. For an overview, see http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/.
weight than others. Let me deal with each of the three main discursive sources in turn.

The Chinese government (i.e. SCIO) has issued white papers since the end of the Cold War with an annual average publication rate of about 5 white papers in the 21st century. From the 73 white papers available in the designated time period, I have selected 26 – after trawling through all the white papers – which are deemed germane from an identity-perspective. Appendix B presents an overview of the selected government white papers along with the coding results for each of them. In general, the white papers take a single topic under discussion – e.g. China’s defense, the Xinjiang province, human rights or the legal system – which is dealt with in a rather schematic fashion: First comes a foreword/preface followed by an opening section that usually runs through the history of the specific topic or situates it within its wider context. The bulk of the white paper consists of a number (typically 3-5) of more substantive and quite detailed sections accounting for China’s policies and specific measures undertaken within the area under consideration. Finally, a concluding section most times brings home the overall message conveyed by the white paper. What is important to observe about these white papers – as a source of official government discourse on Chinese identity – is firstly that the same topic is often dealt with more than once (and sometimes repeatedly) over the years, thus giving the analyst a chance to detect potential changes in the discourse by comparing “same-topic” white papers from different years. Secondly, that the white papers, in their capacity as issue-specific treatments, mostly enunciate a selective

532 I have excluded some of the same-topic white papers, which largely repeat earlier versions. For instance, there are three white papers on Tibet in the second period (in 2009, 2011 and 2013 respectively), of which I only analyze the most recent one.

533 For instance, SCIO has issued eight white papers on its national defense since 1998, the first seven of which followed a biannual publication rate.
understanding of Chinese identity related to one or two narratives (e.g. ‘Globalist China’ or ‘Sovereign China’), but that there are a few white papers, which adopt a more comprehensive perspective. And thirdly, that the white papers almost exclusively target an international audience, generally from a somewhat lopsided and self-righteous perspective.

Against this backdrop, my use of white papers as a primary source of Chinese identity mainly serves two purposes. One is that they are often useful in mapping a specific narrative given that the level of “discursive noise” from competing narratives is more manageable in the white papers compared to the reports (and many of the speeches), which adopt a far more comprehensive scope. The other merit is that the “same-topic-different-years” type of white papers are particularly useful for tracing whether a specific identity narrative has been subject to any substantial discursive changes in the course of the analyzed time period. Conversely, the main drawback of analyzing white papers is that they tend to be the most strategically formulated form of government discourse narrowly targeting the outside world. As I would like to ensure that any of the five main narratives have a deeper and broader discursive anchoring – than what is articulated in the white papers – I take pains not to rely too heavily on white papers as a discursive source in the mapping of each narrative.

**Speeches** constitute another important primary source of the discourse on Chinese identity. On the face of it, there is certainly no shortage of available speeches in English on identity-related subjects held by representatives of

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534 These are first and foremost “China’s Peaceful Development Road” (SCIO, 2005e) and “China’s Peaceful Development” (SCIO, 2011a), both of which are often emphasized by China-scholars as significant official documents from the Chinese government.

535 Here, I (somewhat arbitrarily) treat as a speech any orally presented, monologic statement that covers more than 1000 words (with shorter monologues being treated as mere statements).
Zhongnanhai. For instance in the year of 2014 alone, an examination of the official list of government speeches in combination with a google search query – to trace additional speeches that have not been made publicly available by the Chinese government – yield no less than 50 speeches, of which 15 were delivered by Xi Jinping. Yet, the vast majority of these speeches are not very useful as a discursive source for several reasons. One reason is that several of the speeches are held in economic and/or regional forums where identity-related topics are barely touched upon. A second reason is that another substantial proportion of the speeches are held during bilateral state-meetings with relatively insignificant partners, thereby indirectly reducing the discursive weight of the respective speeches given my underlying explanatory agenda of linking China’s identity to its grand strategy. Most importantly, however, many of the speeches that actually do address identity-related questions in substantial forums tend to do so in a rather repetitive and schematic manner. While such consistency is good from a reliability perspective, it also renders a lot of the speeches tediously redundant insofar as they merely echo well-established discursive patterns.

In light of these reservations I have selected and coded a relatively limited number of speeches (see appendix B for an overview) from the vast pool of available speeches. This “sample” of speeches has been compiled by systematically (manually) scanning publicly available speeches in search of the most relevant ones. Relevance here is based primarily on four ranked criteria apart from the

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536 The main source of Zhongnanhai’s speeches is the website of the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/.  
537 Another 15 of these speeches were held by Premier Li Keqiang, while the remaining 20 speeches were given by a handful of other foreign policy actors such as the foreign minister, vice foreign ministers and the state councilor.  
538 As I am only interested in English version speeches, I have used the following three access points to find relevant speeches: 1) The official Chinese ministry of foreign affairs website [accessed via: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/]; 2) Google’s search engine; 3) the LexisNexis database [accessed via: http://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/products/lexisnexis-academic.page].
obvious one that a given speech addresses identity-related questions in a substantive manner: Firstly, the seniority of the speaker, that is, I prefer speeches delivered by the president of the PRC/general secretary of the CCP; secondly, the setting of the speech, that is, I privilege speeches held in central forums (such as the UN), in significant bilateral contexts (like Sino-American summits) or as part of important anniversaries (say the 80th anniversary of the CCP) since I assume such settings to be more conducive to general reflections on China’s identity (which, in turn, can be related to the grand strategy level); thirdly, the distinctiveness of the speech, that is, I favor speeches that add to the variance of the discourse by not merely being restatements of well-known discursive points; and fourthly, the contemporaneity of the speech, that is, I prioritize, to some extent, the most recent speeches (held during 2013-14), because I later want to be able to assess whether Xi Jinping’s reign in itself has prompted a change in the discursive patterns. Relevance, however, is not the only criterion that has guided the selection process given that inaccessibility has unfortunately also played a role. The main challenge in gaining full access to potentially relevant speeches has been the fact that there are few publically available English-version speeches prior to 2007 when the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs started their practice of publicizing all the speeches held by high-ranking Chinese officials in English. As a result, most of the coded speeches are from after 2007, which of course somewhat weakens the reliability of my discourse analy-

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539 Apart from the president/general secretary, I include speeches delivered by one of the other top Zhongnanhai representatives that shape China’s foreign affairs: the prime minister, the foreign minister and the state councilor.

540 As a large proportion of the speeches contain little substantive variance, it becomes important to also include speeches that follow a different template.
sis of the first part of the examined period (i.e. sub-case 1, cf. Section 5.1), since I have to rely more heavily on white papers and a few reports from this period.\textsuperscript{541}

Just like the white papers, the bulk of the examined speeches target an international audience, being about how China sees itself and its relations to the outside world.\textsuperscript{542} Yet, unlike the white papers, the speeches generally adopt a more comprehensive approach, focusing on the overall characteristics of China’s identity and foreign policy rather than on issue-specific agendas. It means that the speeches are particularly useful for three purposes. Firstly, to get an impression of how particular narratives are linked to particular discursive building blocks (see the sub-sections of Section 7.2-7.6); secondly, to trace how discrete narrative elements are coupled together discursively (see Section 7.7); and thirdly, to detect an emerging narrative as it finds its way into the established discursive patterns (see esp. Section 7.6). In addition to these specific purposes, the speeches are also useful for the mapping of each narrative.

The third type of discursive source that is being coded in a systematic fashion is the five-yearly report to the National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (subsequently abbreviated NCCCP), which is held by the general secretary of the party in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in front of a numerous audience of carefully selected party delegates.\textsuperscript{543} Since my discourse analysis covers the period 2000-14, I have only been able to include the 16\textsuperscript{th}, 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} reports to the NCCCP delivered in 2002, 2007 and 2012 respectively. The reports are by far

\textsuperscript{541} The pre-2007 speeches I have managed to retrieve stem from two sources: 1) A private database provided by courtesy of Huiyun Feng; 2) Selected works of Jiang Zemin, volume III (available only on print, thereby complicating the coding process significantly).

\textsuperscript{542} A handful of the speeches instead predominantly target a national audience, which makes these speeches – just like the reports discussed below – useful for checking the consistency of the discourse (further discussed below).

\textsuperscript{543} At the most recent NCCCP in November 2012, the number of party delegates amounted to no less than 2270.
the most extensive piece of discursive material included in the analysis, exceeding 20,000 words in total and consisting of 10 or more sections. Yet, the main part of each report concerns domestic and party-related matters that – even though they also touch upon identity-related questions – are not directly relevant in this context. Compared to the other two primary sources of China’s official identity discourse, the main benefit of analyzing the reports to the NCCCP is twofold.

First of all, the reports are directed at a national rather than international audience, thereby enabling me to perform a sort of consistency check of my discursive sources. That is, insofar as I were to find a markedly different distribution of narratives and building blocks in the reports – as set against the white papers and speeches – it would raise some questions about the validity of my discursive material. Such a marked difference would indicate that Zhongnanhai customizes its identity image depending on the audience addressed, thus potentially weakening the validity of either the speeches/white papers or the reports as a discursive source. Fortunately, I have not been able to detect any significant (or for that matter systematic) variance between the two categories of sources although the distribution of narratives/building blocks across different sources does vary somewhat. The other main benefit of analyzing the NCCCP-reports is that they are composed in a quite schematic fashion, which means that any major discursive divergence from one report to the next becomes a sort of barometer of narrative change.

From an overall perspective, the use of these three main primary sources to uncover China’s official identity discourse seems warranted not only because they happen to be the best available discursive access points (in English) but also be-
cause of their specific discursive form. My examination of the primary sources thus shows that the official identity discourse is, above all, carefully formulated with a relatively high degree of consistency between different sources and over time, which lends some credence to the reliability of the data material.\textsuperscript{544} One may, of course, see such a strategically articulated identity discourse as an aspect of Zhongnanhai’s public diplomacy, aimed at presenting a certain image of China to the international (as well as national) audience. Even so, there are good reasons, as argued in Section 5.2, to take this identity discourse seriously as a source of how China understands itself and its place in the world. In the following five sections, I tap into the official Chinese identity discourse to demonstrate how it can be arranged into five relatively discrete identity narratives, modeled on the Sinicized Five.

\section*{7.2 \textquoteleft Globalist China\textquoteright}\textsuperscript{545}

“\textit{Peace, opening-up, cooperation, harmony and win-win are our policy, our idea, our principle and our pursuit. To take the road of peaceful development is to unify domestic development with opening to the outside world, linking the development of China with that of the rest of the world, and combining the fundamental interests of the Chinese people with the common interests of all peoples throughout the world.}”\textsuperscript{546} The white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development Road”, from which the opening quotation is derived, is probably the discursive source that most

\textsuperscript{544} I am not able to support my claim of consistency between different sources directly by virtue of an NVivo-based report of the discursive source material.

\textsuperscript{545} All the primary sources, which are referenced in Sections 7.2-7.7, are listed in bibliographical order in appendix B+.

\textsuperscript{546} SCIO (2005e: section I), “China’s Peaceful Development Road” (for the full reference, see appendix B+).
clearly and consistently enunciates the `Globalist China` narrative. In fact, apart from a few somewhat diluted references to `Sovereign China` the white paper systematically espouses the conception of China as an integral part of a global state community. In this sense, “China’s Peaceful Development Road” can be seen as the narrative culmination of a period when Zhongnanhai increasingly relied on an identity strategy of social affiliation in its official discourse.

Basically, the `Globalist China` narrative tells the story about a new era of international peace and prosperity where China has opened itself up to the outside world, successfully embraced economic globalization and in the process become an integral part of international society. As argued in the white paper on China’s Peaceful Development Road, “there are more opportunities than challenges, and as long as all countries work together we can gradually attain the goal of building a harmonious world of sustained peace and common prosperity.” In a similar vein, Hu Jintao stated in an important speech at the UN in 2005 that “Our common goals have put us all in the same boat, and the common challenges that we face require that we get united. Let us join hands and work together to build a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity.” Hence, China’s destiny is inextricably intertwined with that of a global community, generating a virtually all-encompassing in-group, which is ultimately coterminous with “mankind” (as stated above) but mostly described less comprehensively in the texts as a global community of states (i.e. international society).

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547 The main contents of `Globalist China` has also been formulated in some central speeches, which primarily include Hu Jintao’s speech to the UN (2005).

548 The document is moreover one of only two white papers that adopt a comprehensive – rather than issue-specific – perspective on China and its position in international society. The other white paper is “China’s Peaceful Development” (SCIO, 2011a), which is discussed later in the sub-section.


Given the extensive nature of the in-group of ‘Globalist China’, the narrative is predicated on the least salient out-group of the five main narratives. In one sense, one might argue that the out-group of ‘Globalist China’ comprises various types of non-state actors (such as terrorist groups, pirates, international crime etc.), which are framed as threats to the stability of international society. Yet, one may at the same time discern a more salient out-group of ‘Globalist China’ even if it is rarely directly spelled out, namely those higher-ranked Western state(s) of international society, who has the authority to question the legitimacy of China’s membership status. In that sense, the out-group can be defined as the Western “gatekeepers” of international society, setting the criteria for legitimate statehood in the society of states. For instance, in a second white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development”, these (unnamed!) gatekeepers are addressed in the concluding paragraphs, leading to the final appeal that “the international community will have confidence in the Chinese people’s sincerity and determination to achieve peaceful development, and support rather than obstruct China’s pursuit of peaceful development.”

In enunciating China’s affiliation to the international society of states, ‘Globalist China’ is deliberately toning down China’s own distinctiveness in several ways. Instead of highlighting China’s cultural or civilizational background, the narrative elaborates on how China is becoming increasingly interdependent and how it has opened itself up to the outside world to seek full integration into the global economy and the international society of states. Thus, “China has learned from its development course that it cannot develop itself with its door closed. [...] Countries are becoming increasingly interdependent. [...] Therefore, China unswervingly fol-

551 See especially SCIO (2005e: section V), “China’s Peaceful Development Road”. Some of the threats to international society are elaborated in contemporary white papers on China’s defense (see SCIO, 2004, section I) and on arms control (see SCIO, 2005c: section I).
laws of opening-up and mutual benefit. […] China’s development since New China was founded in 1949 and particularly since the reform and opening-up policies were introduced in 1978 shows that China is an important member of international society.”553 Yet, although ‘Globalist China’ goes to great lengths to stress China’s fundamental compatibility with a wider society of states, the narrative does not propose any deeper political, ideological or normative affinity between China and international society or any willingness to adopt the prevailing liberal-democratic norms and values of the Western great powers (out-group states). Thus, ‘Globalist China’ does not contain any element of “out group-favoritism” (cf. Section 3.1) as in the case of ‘Westernizing China’ (see Section 6.2). Indeed, in an illustrating passage from a white paper on democracy, preceding the one on “China’s Peaceful Development Road”, Zhongnanhai first evokes a globalist mindset: “Democracy is an outcome of the political civilization of mankind. It is also the desire of people all over the world.”554 But in the next lines it is added that “Because situations differ from one country to another, the paths the people of different countries take to win and develop democracy are different.”555 In sum, while ‘Globalist China’ does not implicate any normative or ideological imitation of the outside world, the narrative certainly entails a purposeful “dilution” of China’s own distinctiveness to facilitate China’s integration into international society.

In positioning China as an integral part of international society the ‘Globalist China’ narrative relies primarily on outside recognition as a source of positive

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555 SCIO (Ibid.). Similarly, a contemporary white paper on human rights (SCIO, 2005b) acknowledges the concept of human rights but applies it differently than from a Western perspective, thus privileging the rights to subsistence and development (see section I) rather than to civil and political rights as in a Western understanding of human rights (ibid., section II). Such a perspective is even more pronounced in later editions of the white paper on human rights (e.g. SCIO, 2012a, section I).
self-esteem (in line with an identity strategy of social affiliation). That is, China needs outside respect and acknowledgement of its status as a peer member of international society, which implies that China proves itself to be and is accordingly seen – especially by the West – as a responsible, cooperative, peaceful and status-quo oriented stakeholder of the prevailing international order. The `Globalist China´ narrative therefore takes great pains to emphasize how China “abides by its international obligations and commitments, actively participates in international systems and world affairs, and endeavors to play a constructive and locomotive role; and gets along with all other countries equally and develops friendly relations with them”.556 In fact, the white paper on China’s peaceful development marshals a long array of examples of how China is contributing constructively to international society and shouldering its share of global responsibility.557 Similar examples – of how international acknowledgment is critical for raising the self-esteem of `Globalist China´ – abound in the speeches by Chinese generation leaders: “[China] has taken an active part in international and regional affairs and earnestly fulfilled its international obligations. In recent years, it has played an important role on such issues as counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, the Iranian nuclear issue and so on. China is the largest contributor of peacekeeping personnel among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.”558 More generally, Zhongnanhai have published a large number of white papers on, among other things, China’s foreign aid, climate change, rare earth minerals and weapons control, the overriding purpose of which is to demonstrate China’s willingness to play a positive and

557 SCIO (2005e: section II), “China’s Peaceful Development Road”. For some more recent examples along the same lines, see e.g. Yang (2008); Yang (2011c); Wang (2013b).
558 Yang (2008). See also e.g. Hu (2010); Yang (2011a).
constructive role in international society.\textsuperscript{559} Taken together, the `Globalist China´ narrative seeks outside recognition of China's contribution to international order, peace and prosperity for the sake of raising China's self-esteem.

Against this backdrop, it should be quite clear that `Globalist China´, by seeking respect and recognition from the outside world and by envisioning an actively engaged role in international society, can be categorized as an extrovert narrative. `Globalist China´ is moreover a universalistic narrative not only because China is seen as fundamentally compatible with and closely affiliated with international society but also because the narrative more generally places emphasis on the all-encompassing character of the society of states. The extrovert and universalistic character of `Globalist China´ is concisely captured by Hu Jintao in his report to the 17\textsuperscript{th} NCCCP: “China cannot develop in isolation from the rest of the world, nor can the world enjoy prosperity and stability without China.”\textsuperscript{560} Finally, in line with its underlying identity strategy of social affiliation, one may define the overall mission (or guidelines) of the `Globalist China´ narrative as a desire to position China as a central and widely respected partner of international society.

\textit{Building blocks and narrative evolution of `Globalist China´}

As a narrative based on an identity strategy of social affiliation, `Globalist China´ differs from the other four narratives in toning down China's own distinctiveness and in grounding the narrative in arguments about increasing interdepend-


\textsuperscript{560} Hu (2007: section XI).
ence and globalization rather than in a set of underlying discursive building blocks of Chineseness. Yet, one may also find some attempts to link `Globalist China’ to China’s own civilizational heritage in general and to Confucianism in particular. For instance, the first of the two central white papers on China’s Peaceful Development declares in its opening section that “It is an inevitable choice based on China’s historical and cultural tradition that China persists unswervingly on taking the road of peaceful development.”\footnote{SCIO (2005e: section I), “China’s Peaceful Development Road”.} This is followed by a few lines about the famous Ming general Zheng He’s Seven Voyages, which brought peace and (Sino-) civilization to the outside world. Somewhat more elaborately, the second white paper devotes several paragraphs to accounting for “how the world has been believed to be a harmonious whole in the Chinese culture ever since the ancient times.”\footnote{SCIO (2011a: section IV), “China’s Peaceful Development”.} This Confucian notion – and its impact on China’s relations with the outside world – is subsequently unpacked in some detail: “The Chinese have always cherished a world view of `unity without uniformity’, `harmony between man and nature´ and `harmony is invaluable’. This belief calls for the fostering of harmonious family bond, neighboring harmony and good interpersonal relationships. Under the influence of the culture of harmony, peace-loving has been deeply ingrained in the Chinese character. The world-renowned Silk Road, for example, was a road of trade, cultural exchanges and peace, which testifies to the pursuit of friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation with other peoples by the ancient Chinese.”\footnote{SCIO (2011a: section IV), “China’s Peaceful Development”. A shorter version of the same historic argument may also be found in some of the speeches such as foreign minister Wang Yi’s speech in the UN in 2013 (Wang, 2013b).} Nevertheless, apart from this Confucian inspiration the `Globalist China´ narrative does not draw on the prevailing discursive building blocks of Chinese identity, preferring instead to cite rationalist or functionalist arguments about the desirability or necessity of China’s deepening en-
gement with the international society of states. In that sense, the identity logic of the ‘Globalist China’ narrative may be perceived as less deeply rooted than in the case of the other four main narratives.

This brings me to the question of how the ‘Globalist China’ narrative has evolved over the course of the examined period. In this section, I have primarily used the white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development Path” to spell out the discursive logic of ‘Globalist China’, but the narrative is clearly discernible in most of the discursive statements published during Hu Jintao’s reign. Although some of the discursive key terms of ‘Globalist China’ can even be traced back to the Jiang-era, the proper narrative and its underlying identity logic (of social affiliation) does not really appear until after Jiang’s retirement.564 More important for my present purposes is the question of whether ‘Globalist China’ is still clearly enunciated in China’s official identity discourse after the global financial crisis. On the face of it, the updated 2011-version of the white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development” suggests that ‘Globalist China’ still holds sway over government discourse. For instance, the new version uses much the same language as its predecessor when it proclaims that “Countries are becoming increasingly interdependent. [...] China unswervingly follows a strategy of opening-up and mutual benefit. It pursues both its own interests and the common interests of mankind and works to ensure that its own development and the development of other countries are mutually reinforcing, thus promoting the common development of all countries.”565 However, on closer inspection the new version of the white paper is far from an unequivocal restatement of ‘Globalist China’. Tellingly, in the opening

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564 One may encounter Jiang-statements such as “In today’s world, a country can hardly develop in isolation. The Chinese government will unswervingly implement the opening-up policy” (2001c) and “the pursuit of peace and development is the common aspiration of people the world over and also the theme of the times” (2000c). But they are isolated statements, not embedded in a coherent narrative of China and its position in the world.

paragraphs of the preface it is declared “

*that peaceful development is a strategic choice made by China to realize modernization, make itself strong and prosperous, and make more contribution to the progress of human civilization.*”  

Indeed, the first section of the white paper professes a more reserved commitment to ‘Globalist China´ than in the first section of the 2005-version. Furthermore, while the new white paper is still littered with references to ‘Globalist China´, it also contains some prominent articulations of other narratives such as ‘Sovereign China´ and ‘Sino-centric China´, thereby producing a less clear-cut identity representation.  

Even so, in taking stock of the evolution of ‘Globalist China´ it is at the same time important to point out that Chinese leaders in their public speeches consistently reaffirm their pledge to the path of peaceful development as well as pride themselves on China’s constructive and responsible approach to international challenges.  

All in all, the ‘Globalist China´ narrative has certainly not been abandoned by Zhongnanhai, but an initial assessment from the primary sources suggests that it does not hold quite the same sway in public discourse as a decade ago.

7.3 ‘Sovereign China´

“All countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community and have the right to take part in and manage world affairs. Matters that fall within the scope of a country’s sovereignty can only be managed by the government and people of that country, and world affairs can only be dealt with by the governments and peoples of all countries through consulta-
These sentences epitomize most of the discursive logic underlying the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative. While the quotation is taken from Jiang Zemin’s important speech at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, similarly phrased statements can be found in much of the analyzed discursive material. In fact, ‘Sovereign China’ represents the most widely dispersed coding of a specific narrative category throughout the texts (see appendix C). I will argue here – and demonstrate below – that the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative rests on an identity strategy of social creativity, more specifically a strategy of moral high-grounding, which imbues much of the narrative’s discursive logic.

Essentially, the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative tells the story about a diversified world of sovereign states where all states, regardless of their specific characteristics, enjoy an equal status as well as the right to independently manage their own affairs. As stated repeatedly in the narrative of ‘Sovereign China’, international relations should be guided by the charter of the United Nations as well as the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” (the latter of which were formally adopted by China and India in 1954). In his important speech on the 80th anniversary of the CCP, Jiang Zemin thus argues that “We have carried out friendly exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries and treated one another as equals on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in a ceaseless effort to advance the cause of human progress. The Chinese Communist Party will, under the principles of independence, complete equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, conduct extensive exchanges and strengthen cooperation with all political parties and organizations in the world and further promote friendship between the peoples and development of re-

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569 Jiang (2000c).
570 For instance, one can find a very similar phrasing in the white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development” more than a decade later (SCIO, 2011a: section III).
lations between states.” Likewise, in a recent speech at the 60th anniversary of the “Five Principles”, Xi Jinping delivered an elaborate reaffirmation of China’s commitment to sovereignty as the cornerstone of China’s engagement with the outside world: “Sovereignty is the most important feature of any independent state. [...] All countries, regardless of their size, strength or level of development, are equal members of the international community”.

The basic in-group of ‘Sovereign China’ is first of all the sovereign Chinese state community itself even though the narrative is predicated on principles that extend to the entire international society of states. The in-group of ‘Sovereign China’ is most explicitly enunciated in the context of outstanding territorial issues such as the question of Taiwan’s territorial status. In his report to the 16th NCCCP, Jiang Zemin solemnly declared that “There is but one China in the world, and both the mainland and Taiwan belong to China. China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity brook no division. [...] We Chinese people will safeguard our state sovereignty and territorial integrity with firm resolve. We will never allow anyone to separate China from Taiwan in any way.” Conversely, the salient out-group of ‘Sovereign China’ specifically comprises those states that (are perceived to) pose a threat to the territorial integrity or political independence of China. Generally, out-group states are somewhat vaguely referred to as actors who resort to hegemonic practices, power politics or neo-imperialist projects. For instance, “No country should be allowed to impose social system or ideology on others, nor should it be allowed to make irresponsible remarks on other countries’ internal affairs.” Another frequently used formulation states that China “is opposed to

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571 Jiang (2001a: section IV). See also the UN-speeches by Jiang (2000c), Hu (2005) and Wang (2013b) for some detailed examples of the role envisioned for the UN in the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative.
572 Xi (2014c).
574  Jiang (2000b).
the practices of the big bullying the small and the strong oppressing the weak, and to hegemonism and power politics.” Yet, occasionally the out-group states are directly named and targeted especially when China feels compelled to condemn gross violations of its (perceived) territorial sovereignty: “China is firmly opposed to Japan’s violation of China’s sovereignty over Diaoyu Dao in whatever form and has taken resolute measures to curb any such act.” While Japan is most frequently singled out as an irreconcilable out-group state, the United States is also ascribed a prominent position as an out-group state of ‘Sovereign China’, although most of the time without being directly named.

According to ‘Sovereign China’, the distinctiveness of China can only be effectively preserved by zealously guarding China’s territorial and political sovereignty in the face of potential violators. On the one hand, the persistent articulations of territorial “issues” in Zhongnanhai’s official discourse – be it the issue of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau until the late 1990s or Diaoyu Dao more recently – imbue the Chinese community with a strong sense of distinctiveness as long as these issues remain unresolved, that is, as long as national reunification has not yet been fully achieved. In the 2012-white paper on Diaoyu Dao, the territorial distinctiveness of China becomes a strong frame of reference for mobilizing the patriotic sentiments of all Chinese: “The Chinese nation has the strong resolve to uphold state sovereignty and territorial integrity. The compatriots across the Taiwan Straits stand firmly together on matters of principle to the nation and in the efforts to uphold national interests and dignity. The compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan and the overseas Chinese have all carried out various forms of

577 For example, in a recent white paper on China’s military defense (SCIO, 2013a: section I) the United States is referred to indirectly as “Some country has strengthened its military alliances, expanded its military presence in the region, and frequently makes the situation there tenser.”
activities to safeguard China’s territorial sovereignty over Diaoyu Dao”.

On the other hand, the narrative also cherishes sovereignty as a guarantee for international diversity and thus as a fundamental right to be distinctive in a political sense. That is, ‘Sovereign China’ maintains China’s right to pursue its own development path of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” despite the prevailing liberal-democratic norms of the current international order. As argued in the white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development”, “The Chinese people adhere to the social system and path of development chosen by themselves and will never allow any external forces to interfere in China’s internal affairs.”

Whereas ‘Globalist China’ derives positive self-esteem from outside recognition of China’s status as a responsible peer member of international society, ‘Sovereign China’ adopts a far more self-reliant and self-righteous approach (in line with an identity strategy of moral high-grounding). It means that rather than seeking recognition from its salient out-group states, China actively distances itself from them by shielding itself behind its territorial and political sovereignty. This involves a discursive strategy of deliberately and systematically assuming moral authority over salient out-group states with clashing views of state sovereignty in general (notably the United States) and Chinese sovereignty in particular (notably Japan), thereby bolstering China’s self-esteem. Most of the time, this moral high-grounding is expressed in an indirect manner as when Hu Jintao in his report to the NCCCP states that “China opposes hegemonism and power politics in all their forms, does not interfere in other countries’ internal affairs and will never seek hegemony” without directly naming those (read the United States) who are blameworthy of such an approach.

In a similar vein,

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the United States is indirectly targeted when Jiang Zemin in a speech declares that China “has abided by its solemn commitments not to join military blocks, not to establish a sphere of influence and never to seek hegemony”. Yet, one may also find far more overt examples of moral high-grounding especially in relation to (perceived) encroachments on China’s territorial integrity. One recent example stems from the white paper on Diaoyu Dao, which contains a section entitled “Backroom Deals between the United States and Japan Concerning Diaoyu Dao Are Illegal and Invalid”. The final paragraph of the white paper reads “China strongly urges Japan to respect history and international law and immediately stop all actions that undermine China’s territorial sovereignty.” One of the most explicit and negative instances of such moral high-grounding is found in a white paper on the United States from 2002: “The United States ranks first in the world in wantonly infringing upon the sovereignty of, and human rights in, other countries. [...] We urge the United States to change its ways, give up its hegemonic practice of creating confrontation and interfering in the internal affairs of others by exploiting the human rights issue”. In sum, the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative employs a negative strategy of moral high-grounding centered on state sovereignty to provide China itself with positive self-esteem.

Against this backdrop, ‘Sovereign China’ can be described as an introvert narrative given the limited role envisioned for international society and the recurrent

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581 Jiang (2002b). Another example can be taken from the white paper on “China’s peaceful development (SCIO, 2011a: section III), in which it is stated that China “does not form alliance with any other country or group of countries, nor does it use its social system or ideology as a yardstick to determine what relations it should have with other countries. China respects the right of the people of other countries to independently choose their own social system and path of development”.


583 SCIO (2012b: conclusion), “Diaoyu Dao, an Inherent Territory of China”. An even stronger denunciation was made by China’s foreign minister Wang Yi in a recent article (Wang, 2014a): “Japan remains unwilling to face up to its past of aggression and its leader has gone as far as to pay homage to the Yasukuni shrine where 14 Class A war criminals of World War II are honored”.

584 SCIO (2002: section VI).
pronouncement that China itself will exercise restraint in its dealings with the outside world: “We will never interfere in the internal affairs of other countries or impose our own will on them.” More fundamentally, ‘Sovereign China’ is an introvert narrative as it derives positive self-esteem from moral self-righteousness rather than outside recognition. At the same time, ‘Sovereign China’ can – perhaps somewhat paradoxically – be categorized as a universalistic narrative as its identity logic is predicated on a principled belief in the universal equality of sovereign states, not in any inherently Chinese traits or features. Finally, the overall mission of ‘Sovereign China’ is to vigorously uphold China’s sovereign (territorial as well as political) rights and to vehemently castigate (potential) violators of China’s sovereignty as morally depraved as well as dangerous to international stability and peace. This mission finds its strongest expression in the invocation of national reunification as a discursive theme. One prominent example can be taken from Jiang Zemin’s report to the 16th NCCCP, in which he declared that “To safeguard national unity bears on the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation. We Chinese people will safeguard our state sovereignty and territorial integrity with firm resolve. We will never allow anyone to separate Taiwan from China in any way. China will be reunified, and the Chinese nation will be rejuvenated.

Building blocks and narrative evolution of ‘Sovereign China’

The narrative of ‘Sovereign China’ is discursively embedded in China’s more recent history. The strong adherence to the institution of state sovereignty is, of

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585 Hu (2007: section XI). This phrasing can be found in numerous variations throughout the discourse.
586 Of course, this only appears paradoxical if one – in the context of collective identities – assumes a correlation between universalism (a belief in the generalizability of certain values, norms or principles) and extroversion (a desire to directly engage salient out-group states in the form of social affiliation or competition).
course, a corollary of China’s `century of humiliation´ and the hard-won recovery of sovereignty. Hence, the insistence on the sovereign right of China to manage its own affairs and choose its own path taps into a well-established discursive understanding of China’s recent humiliating past as demonstrated by the following passage from a recent speech by Xi Jinping in Brugge: “After a hundred years of persistent and unyielding struggle, the Chinese people, sacrificing the loss of tens of millions of lives, ultimately took their destiny back into their own hands. Nevertheless, the memory of foreign invasion and bullying has never been erased from the minds of the Chinese people, and that explains why we cherish so dear the life we lead today. The Chinese people want peace; we do not want war. This is the reason why China follows an independent foreign policy of peace. China is committed to non-interference in other countries’ internal affairs, and China will not allow others to interfere in its own affairs. This is the position we have upheld in the past. It is what we will continue to uphold in the future.” After an even more elaborate account of the `century of humiliation´ and the accompanying struggle for Chinese independence Jiang Zemin, in his speech at the 80th anniversary of the CCP, proclaimed in 2001 that, “We have put an end once for all to the history of diplomacy of humiliation in modern China and effectively safeguarded state sovereignty, security and national dignity.” Despite the definitive and conclusive character of Jiang’s announcement, `the century of humiliation´ still constitutes an important discursive building block for the articulation of `Sovereign China´.

The `Sovereign China´ narrative also to some extent draws on `the communist march´ as a discursive building block. This discursive connection is most explicit

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588 Xi (2014e).  
590 Indeed, apart from the above-quoted white paper, there are several recent white papers and speeches that make a discursive connection between the `century of humiliation´ and `Sovereign China´ (see e.g Xi, 2014b).
in relation to the territorial aspect of Chinese sovereignty, that is, the quest for national reunification, which over the years has been pivotal to the legitimacy of the CCP (cf. Section 6.1). In their reports to the five-yearly NCCCP, both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao stressed the communists’ “historical task” of gaining independence and achieving national unification. Again, the key speech by Jiang Zemin at the 80th anniversary of the CCP provides one of the best articulations of the discursive link: “Since New China came into being, the Chinese Communists of several generations have all made unremitting efforts toward the complete reunification of our motherland. Under the principle of ‘peaceful reunification and one country, two systems’, we have successfully resolved the questions of Hong Kong and Macao, both left over from history, and are working hard to seek an early solution to the question of Taiwan and to accomplish the great cause of national reunification. The status of Taiwan as a part of China shall in no way be allowed to change. The Chinese Communists are rock firm in their resolve to safeguard state sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

Turning, lastly, to the evolution of the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative my initial assessment based on Zhongnanhai’s discourse suggests that the narrative enjoys a central position in the formulation of China’s self-understanding throughout the period under investigation. Its ubiquity in the analyzed discourse (cf. appendix C) surely warrants treating ‘Sovereign China’ as a key narrative of Chinese identity. However, this preliminary observation comes with the important qualification that the impact of the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative on China’s identity discourse has been receding somewhat over the years. If one compares especially the speeches of Jiang Zemin with those of Xi Jinping, one observes that even though ‘Sovereign China’ is discernible in most of Xi’s speeches the narrative

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mostly plays a secondary role here.\textsuperscript{593} In contrast, `Sovereign China´ pervades many of the speeches by Jiang who dwells on, among other things, the centrality of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the democratization of international relations based on a UN-centered global order of sovereign and thereby equal states.\textsuperscript{594} That is, with a few exceptions (pertaining to issue-specific public statements\textsuperscript{595}) the `Sovereign China narrative no longer holds a manifest discursive sway but is certainly still present in the examined texts from the second half of the examined period.

\textbf{7.4 \textit{`Unified China´}}

``China is a unified multi-ethnic country jointly created by the people of all its ethnic groups. In the long course of historical evolution people of all ethnic groups in China have maintained close contacts, developed interdependently, communicated and fused with one another, and stood together through weal and woe, forming today’s unified multi-ethnic Chinese nation, and promoting the development of the nation and social progress.’’\textsuperscript{596} This quotation is taken from one of several government white papers that discuss the issue of China’s ethnic minorities on the basis of the identity narrative of `Unified China´.\textsuperscript{597} While the narrative is also clearly present in the reports to the NCCC and other speeches directed primari-

\textsuperscript{593} Of the seven major speeches by Xi Jinping in 2014 (which I have coded), all except one (Xi, 2014a) included references to ‘Sovereign China’, but in only one of the speeches (Xi, 2014c) was it the most referenced narrative.\textsuperscript{594} In fact, ‘Sovereign China is the favored narrative reference in Jiang’s speeches; illustrative examples include Jiang (2000b, 2000c, 2001d).\textsuperscript{595} See for example the white paper on Diaoyu Dao (SCIO, 2012b) or Xi Jinping’s speech on the anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Xi, 2014c).\textsuperscript{596} SCIO (2009b: preface), “China’s Ethnic Policy and Common Prosperity and Development of All Ethnic Groups.”\textsuperscript{597} Since 2000, SCIO has published 12 white papers on the subject with 3 papers on China’s ethnic minorities in general, 2 papers more specifically on the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and 7 papers targeting the Tibetan Autonomous Region.
ly at a domestic audience, ‘Unified China’ is not easily discernible in *Zhongnánhai*s speeches given abroad since the narrative does not address China’s relationship with the outside world. Rather, the narrative is preoccupied with how to forge unity domestically given the presence of ethnic minorities. I will argue that since ‘Unified China’ locates the basic in-group/out-group distinction within the PRC itself, the narrative can be seen as an identity strategy of downward retargeting (i.e. social creativity) where the in-group, in order to raise self-esteem, deliberately targets some lower-ranked out-group instead of the more salient, higher-ranked ones.

In essence, the ‘Unified China’ narrative tells the story about the big Chinese family, whose members feel solidarity with one another and are bound together by a shared history as well as common future aspirations regardless of ethnic dividing lines. The narrative furthermore identifies the communist party and the centralized state institutions as the great unifying and civilizing forces, bringing development and prosperity to all parts of China. The unifying role allotted to state and party is clearly enunciated in several passages. For instance, “*In a big country like China, with such a large population and where things are complicated, if there had not been a strong political core and if there had not been a lofty goal that can unite the people of all ethnic groups in their common struggle, the country would have disintegrated easily, and it would have been impossible for China to develop and make progress.***” Similarly, in another white paper it is argued that “*the long-standing existence of a united, multi-ethnic state in Chinese history greatly enhanced the political, economic and cultural exchanges among different ethnic groups, and constantly promoted the identification of all ethnic groups with*

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598 Like the speeches given abroad, the white papers are generally targeting an international audience; yet those white papers that contain references to ‘Unified China’ are first of all dealing with domestic issues that have attracted outside attention.

599 SCIO (2005d: section II, my own underlining), "Building of Political Democracy in China"
the central government, and their allegiance to it.” 600 In other words, the narrative is expressly downplaying ethnicity as an identity marker of Chineseness in favor of a multiethnic state community ideal that draws its strength from envisioning a common path of development.

What this means in terms of the in-group of `Unified China´ is that it encompasses all the 56 different ethnic groups of China, as illustrated by the ritual compliments extended by Chinese presidents in their five-yearly report to the NCCCP: “Here, on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, I wish to express our heartfelt thanks to the people of all ethnic groups in China.” 601 The narrative does mention the dominant position of the Han Chinese as an ethnic group – i.e. its approximately 90 % share of the total population – but the narrative at the same time stresses the inseparable link between all ethnic groups: “The Han Chinese cannot live without the minority groups, the minority groups cannot live without the Han Chinese and no one minority group can live without other minority groups.” 602 So where does that leave the `Unified China´ narrative when it comes to identifying an out-group, from which the narrative can derive its notion of Chinese distinctiveness? Given that `Unified China´ is based on an identity strategy of downward retargeting, the narrative can be seen as a deliberate attempt to substitute a salient external out-group with a less prominent but inferior out-group located in the domestic (or regional) context. 603 Although most of the discourse on `Unified China´ paints a rosy picture of ethnic unity in China, the narrative’s out-group can be discerned in the govern-

603 As mentioned in section 3.2, a strategy of downward retargeting shifts the salient out-group frame of reference and comparison to an inferior out-group, which in a state-centric context may be located either domestically or in the immediate neighborhood.
ment white papers on specific ethnic minorities such as the Tibetans and the Uighurs in the Xinjiang province.

More specifically, the **out-group** is defined as those *fractions* of ethnic minorities which not only oppose the unifying vision of the Chinese state and its ongoing “civilizing” state-building project but also resort to radicalized measures against it such as terrorism, separatism and religious extremism (the so-called “Three Evils”). To take an example from the white paper on Xinjiang: “The ’East Turkestan’ forces in China’s Xinjiang [i.e. the Uighurs separatist movement] and relevant countries plotted and organized a number of bloody incidents of terror and violence, including explosions, assassinations, arsons, poisonings and assaults, seriously jeopardizing the lives, property and security of the Chinese people of various ethnic groups, and social stability in Xinjiang”.604 Likewise, a white paper on Tibet declares that “The 14th Dalai Lama and his clique in exile are conducting separatist activities for a long time to sabotage the development and stability of Tibet.”605 What is important to underline about the delineation of the out-group of ‘Unified China’ is firstly that the narrative is careful in singling out and stigmatizing only (what is perceived as) the radicalized elements of the ethnic minorities while leaving a door open to those who are willing to recognize the central authority of the government and the indivisibility of the Chinese state. Secondly, that despite the narrative’s introvert focus, one notes in the discourse a tendency to depict the radicalized ethnic minorities (the out-group) as orchestrated or at least supported by external actors (cf. the above two quotations).606

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605 SCIO (2013: conclusion), “Development and Progress of Tibet”.
606 In fact, the discursive linking of “East Turkestan forces” to international terrorism is articulated in all the white papers on Xinjiang (e.g. SCIO, 2009a: section VII).
In light of this, the `Unified China` narrative articulates the distinctiveness of China as a state community in relation to specific domestic out-groups. As such, Chinese distinctiveness follows somewhat indirectly from the domestic marginalization of radicalized ethnic minorities who place themselves outside the civilized and harmonious order of the centralized state community. That is, in enunciating the orderly and prosperous ideal of a modern socialist republic, the narrative derives a certain sense of distinctiveness by means of comparison with those groups who, by rejecting the unifying state project, are allegedly trapped in a state of backwardness and barbarism. This line of thinking pervades certain sections of the white papers on Xinjiang, as illustrated by key sentences such as “The `East Turkestan` forces pose a severe threat to the development and stability of Xinjiang” or “The `East Turkestan` forces have seriously violated the basic human rights to life and development of all the peoples of Xinjiang”. Likewise, a whole section in a recent white paper on Tibet is devoted to describing the abominable conditions that prevailed in “old Tibet” before its so-called “peaceful liberation” by the communists in the wake of the civil war in 1949. Here it reads, for instance, that “For centuries Tibetan society was mired in stagnation due to its backward serfdom” and “From the following excerpts one can glimpse at the darkness and backwardness of old Tibet.” In this way, modernity, prosperity and harmony can be articulated as a distinctive hallmark of a `Unified China`.

It is against this backdrop (of “downward retargeting” some of China’s ethnic minority groups) that the `Unified China` narrative raises the Chinese in-group’s self-esteem. Metaphorically speaking, the narrative paints a self-aggrandizing picture of a civilized and modernized Chinese core area that constitutes a beacon of light for the peripheral provinces, generously guiding them out of their

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gloomy state of underdevelopment. As one recent white paper on Tibet puts it, “Tibet has made the dramatic change from a place of poverty and backwardness to one of prosperity and civilization. Tibet would not have this development and progress without the support of the Central Government and the assistance of the rest of the country. The superiority of China’s state system and the fine tradition of mutual help of the Chinese nation have given a strong impetus to the development of Tibet.” At the same time, the narrative also enhances the in-group’s sense of positive self-esteem by playing on the contrast between a radicalized minority and a harmonious majority: “For years, the "East Turkistan" forces in and outside Xinjiang, without any regard for the wellbeing of the diverse peoples of Xinjiang, have been trumpeting national separatism, and plotted and organized a number of bloody incidents of terror and violence, seriously jeopardizing national unification, social stability and ethnic unity, thus seriously disrupting Xinjiang’s development and progress.”

Furthermore, while it would certainly accentuate the distinctiveness of ‘Unified China’, if the narrative were to directly play the ethnicity card by explicitly coupling modernity and social harmony to the Han Chinese majority, the narrative – at least in the official government discourse – strives to be as inclusive and universalistic as possible. For instance, one whitepaper self-righteously declares that “This correct ethnic policy in line with China’s actual situation has fostered the unity and harmonious coexistence of all ethnic groups who are striving with one mind for economic development, political stability, cultural prosperity and social harmony.” Indeed, in all the white papers on China’s ethnic minorities, Zhongnanhai takes great pains to point out how the ethnic minorities enjoy the

same constitutional rights as other Chinese citizens, how the government strives to provide the minorities with the same level of welfare benefits and infrastructure as in the rest of the country and how ethnic minorities are even positively discriminated against in some areas (such as being exempt from the one-child policy). Apart from being a universalistic narrative, ‘Unified China’ is the most introvert of the five main narratives, as already demonstrated above.

It almost goes without saying that the overall mission of ‘Unified China’ is to safeguard the unity of China. As captured in a characteristic phrasing in the 2009 white paper on ethnic minorities: “The realization of the unity of all ethnic groups is the prerequisite for safe-guarding the unification of the country, and preventing contradictions and conflicts among ethnic groups which could split the country and bring disorder to it.” More specifically, unity is achieved not only by building an all-encompassing modern, prosperous and harmonious socialist republic but also by firmly combatting those who oppose this civilizing project. After all, “History and reality have proved that if all ethnic groups in a country are united and treat one another with love, such a nation is bound to enjoy good administration, harmonious life and prosperity; if a country is full of ethnic conflicts and confrontations, such a nation is sure to suffer social unrest and bring calamity to its people.”

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612 In fact, one merely has to take a look at the list of contents in these white papers to realize as much.  
Building blocks and narrative evolution of `Unified China´

The `Unified China´ narrative draws on several discursive building blocks. First and foremost, the narrative invokes `the century of humiliation´ as a defining moment of Chinese history in forging the great multi-ethnic harmony of China today: “For 110 years from the Opium War in 1840, China suffered repeated invasions and bullying by imperialist powers, and Chinese people of all ethnic groups were subject to oppression and slavery. At the critical moment when China faced the danger of being carved up, and when the nation was on the verge of being subjugated, the Chinese people of all ethnic groups united as one, and put up the most arduous and bitter struggles against foreign invaders in order to uphold the country’s sovereignty, and win national independence and liberation.” Such discursive references to the fight against imperialism are quite plentiful in the two white papers on China’s ethnic minorities, but they can also be identified in other articulations of the narrative.

Although less pronounced, one may moreover come across references to `the communist march´ building block, primarily in the form of a discursive linkage between national unity and the ongoing CCP-guided modernization of China. Hence, in the important anniversary speech from 2001 Jiang argued that “To rally the 1.2 billion and more people behind the socialist modernization drive in a large and multi-ethnic developing country like China, it is a must to have the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China. Otherwise, the country will fall into a mess and break up. It will not only fail to realize its modernization but also sink into a chaotic abyss.” Finally, the `Unified China´ also draws discursively on `Sino-civilization´ by telling the story of how various ethnic groups have co-

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616 See SCIO (2005a: section I); SCIO (2009b: section I).
existed in harmony throughout China’s dynastic past and how some of the dynasties were even ruled by ethnic minorities (such as the Manchu Qing dynasty): “The central governments of the various periods, whether they were founded by the Han people or minority groups, considered themselves as "orthodox reigns" of China, and regarded the establishment of a unified multi-ethnic state their highest political goal. The vast territory of China, the time-honored and splendid Chinese culture and the unified multi-ethnic country are all parts of the legacy built by all ethnic groups in China.”

This kind of usage of `Sino-civilization´ as a discursive building block is particularly noticeable in the white papers on Xinjiang that recapitulate how the province has been closely linked to consecutive Chinese dynasties since ancient times.

So what does the official government discourse tell us about the evolution of the ‘Unified China´ narrative? First of all, a preliminary assessment of the coded data suggests that the narrative has been present throughout the examined period with no clear indications that it has been either gaining or losing momentum over time. However, while ‘Sovereign China´ and also ‘Globalist China´ are represented in most of the discursive material, the ‘Unified China´ narrative is concentrated around a more limited number of texts (primarily white papers), in effect somewhat weakening the robustness of the assessment. As already noted, this difference of representativeness in the data material primarily reflects the fact that ‘Unified China´, being the only narrative whose in-group/out-group-distinction is located domestically within China itself, is rarely addressed in the speeches held by Chinese leaders abroad. For this reason, I prefer to defer the question of the narrative evolution of ‘Unified China´ to Chapter 8.

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619 See especially the 2003 white paper on “The History and Development of Xinjiang” (SCIO, 2003).
7.5 ‘Sino-centric China’

“The culture of a nation tells a lot about the evolution of the nation’s understanding of the world and life, both past and present. Culture thus embodies a nation’s fundamental pursuit of mind and dictates its norms of behavior. The historical process of human development is one in which different civilizations interact with and enrich each other and all civilizations in human history have contributed to human progress in their own unique way.”

This quotation, taken from Hu Jintao’s important speech at Yale University in 2006, offers an illustrative introduction to some of the key elements of the ‘Sino-centric’ narrative. The narrative not only foregrounds culture and civilization as elementary components of any state’s (or nation’s) understanding of itself and thus motivation for its behavior; it also stresses the uniqueness of each civilization and juxtaposes different civilizations as equal voices of a diverse world.

Although ‘Sino-centric China’ can be indirectly discerned in many of the discursive sources of Zhongnanhai, the gist of the narrative can be extracted from a relatively limited number of speeches by especially Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping. I will argue that the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative rests on an identity strategy of self-cultivation (i.e. social creativity), pivoting on China’s deep-seated sense of its own distinctiveness.

Basically, the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative tells the story about a world of civilizational diversity where China itself represents a great and unique civilization,

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621 It should be noted that the narrative uses the concepts of culture and civilization in an interchangeable manner organized around an inside/outside distinction with culture referring primarily to the domestic context and civilization to the international context of Sino-centrism.

622 These speeches first of all include Hu (2005, 2006) and Xi (2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2014e, 2014h).
tracing its cultural roots several millennia back into history. As pointed out by Hu in his Yale-speech “The Chinese civilization is one that has continued uninterrupted for more than 5,000 years. The distinct cultural tradition of the Chinese nation that developed in the long course of history has exerted a strong influence on contemporary China, just as it did on ancient China.”\textsuperscript{623} Crucially, while the narrative certainly cultivates China’s civilizational uniqueness, it does so from a perspective of aspired egalitarianism, that is, ‘Sino-centric China’ is devoid of any explicit notion of civilizational superiority. Instead, it is repeatedly stressed that “All human civilizations are equal in terms of value. They all have their respective strengths and shortcomings. There is no perfect civilization in the world. Nor is there a civilization that is devoid of any merit. No one civilization can be judged superior to another.”\textsuperscript{624} Accordingly, the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative paints a picture of a world with multiple, juxtaposed civilizational centers where the willingness to accept diversity in international life, according to the narrative, is a prerequisite for coexisting harmoniously side-by-side. As pointed out by Hu in front of a UN-audience in one of his most important speeches, “We should endeavor to preserve the diversity of civilizations in the spirit of equality and openness, make international relations more democratic and jointly build towards a harmonious world where all civilizations coexist and accommodate each other.”\textsuperscript{625}

With respect to the in-group of ‘Sino-centric China’, one searches in vain for a clear-cut demarcation of it. Rather, the narrative seems to imply that all those people, who are steeped in the Chinese culture, are natural members of the in-group, thereby including Sinitic people both inside and outside of the PRC itself (e.g. Singapore and overseas Chinese communities). On the one hand, the cen-

\textsuperscript{623} Hu (2006).
\textsuperscript{624} Xi (2014a).
\textsuperscript{625} Hu (2005).
trality of Chinese culture in fostering collective identification is first of all linked to the national arena as when Hu, in his report to the NCCCP in 2007, discusses how to “Promote Chinese culture and build the common spiritual home for the Chinese nation. Chinese culture has been an unfailing driving force for the Chinese nation to keep its unity and make progress from generation to generation.”

On the other hand, one also detects a wider ambition to reach out to a broader potential in-group by means of Chinese culture as witnessed, among other things, by the many initiatives to disseminate Chinese culture in general and its Confucian heritage in particular. For instance, as part of the celebration in September 2014 of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the first Confucius Institute abroad (in South Korea back in 2004), Xi Jinping was quoted for proclaiming that “Confucius Institutes belong to China and the world as well”, after which he proudly recounted that “there are now 456 institutes in 123 countries worldwide along with 713 Confucius Classrooms.”

In a similar vein, Xi recently claimed – in a speech at the European College in Brugge – that “China represents in an important way the Eastern civilization, while Europe is the birthplace of the Western civilization”.

Nor is the out-group of `Sino-centric China´ very clearly defined in official government discourse. Most of the time, an out-group can only be inferred implicitly from public admonitions that seem to target the hegemonic position of Western civilization. “If all civilizations can uphold inclusiveness, the so-called "clash of civilizations" will be out of the question and the harmony of civilizations will become reality. We should respect diversity of civilizations and promote exchanges, dialogue, peaceful and harmonious coexistence among different civilizations and

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628 Xi (2014e).
should not seek supremacy or denigrate other civilizations and nations. Human
history tells us that any attempt to establish a dominant civilization in the world is
an illusion.”629 Yet, there are a few examples of Zhongnanhai-statements – di-
rected exclusively at a domestic audience – that unambiguously articulate the
out-group of ‘Sino-centric China’. A rather shrill example was delivered by Hu
Jintao in 2012 in a CCP policy magazine: “We must clearly see that international
hostile forces are intensifying the strategic plot of Westernizing and dividing Chi-
na, and ideological and cultural fields are the focal areas of their long-term infil-
tration”.630 In other words, the most salient negative point of reference for ‘Sino-
centric China’ is constituted by the West and its (allegedly) universal norms and
values.

In line with its underlying identity strategy of self-cultivation the ‘Sino-centric
China’ narrative vigorously promotes and nurtures China’s distinctiveness as a
community. Instead of accepting the universality of liberal democracy, the narra-
tive accentuates how China distinguishes itself from the salient (Western) out-
group states without, however, presenting China as outright incompatible with
the West. This is accomplished in two ways. Firstly, ‘Sino-centric China’ high-
lights and cherishes the civilizational heritage of dynastic China as amply illus-
trated in Xi Jinping’s speech at UNESCO: “Having gone through over 5,000 years
of vicissitudes, the Chinese civilization has always kept to its original root. As the
unique cultural identity of the Chinese nation, it contains our most profound cul-
tural pursuits and provides us with abundant nourishment for existence and devel-
opment.” Yet, in order not to overstate Chinese uniqueness, the very next sen-
tence of the speech reads: “The Chinese civilization, though born on the soil of

629 Xi (2014a).
630 Quoted in New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/04/world/asia/chinas-president-pushes-
back-against-western-culture.html [accessed on 25.11.2014].
China, has come to its present form through constant exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations.” Still, the next couple of paragraphs in the speech are littered with concrete examples of China’s civilizational uniqueness. Secondly, in all the white papers that deal with so-called Western values – such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law – one observes an unmistakably Sinocentric tone manifested most directly in the frequent usage of the conceptual appendage “with Chinese characteristics”. To take an (overloaded) example from a white paper on China’s legal system: “The socialist system of laws with Chinese characteristics is a legal foundation for socialism with Chinese characteristics to retain its nature, a legal reflection of the innovative practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and a legal guarantee for the prosperity of socialism with Chinese characteristics.” What is especially notable about the Sinocentric framing of these white papers is that the narrative does not flatly reject Western values such as democracy or human rights; rather, it engages them and offers an elaborate account of how these values are being accommodated to China’s specific cultural and political context. Hence, China’s distinctiveness does not imply any deep-seated incompatibility with the West.

By cultivating China’s own distinctiveness – rather than simply rejecting the West – the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative seeks to enhance China’s self-esteem in a positive, self-centered manner by virtue primarily of two discursive strategies. On the one hand, the narrative rejoices at the richness of China’s civilizational heritage and past accomplishments such as the Great Wall, the Seven Voy-

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631 Xi (2014a).
ages, the Four Great Inventions and the Silk Road. One example stems from Xi Jinping’s first address to the National People’s Congress after becoming president: “The Chinese nation has an unbroken history of more than 5000 years of civilization. It has created a rich and profound culture and has made an unforgettable contribution to the progress of human civilization.” Another example of Sino-centric pride is manifested in a white paper on democracy: “Boasting a splendid civilization in the same league as those of ancient Egypt, India and Babylon, China has contributed greatly to the development and progress of mankind. The Chinese people are industrious, courageous and full of wisdom. It is generally acknowledged in the world that the Chinese nation has a long, uninterrupted history and a rich cultural heritage.” On the other hand, ‘Sino-centric China’ deliberately attempts to counter the Western critique and transform the negative values associated with China’s political system by stressing how the Chinese polity is embedded in another set of fundamental values like, most notably, collectivism rather than individualism. For instance, a white paper on human rights stresses the need for “a balanced development between individual and collective human rights”, while a white paper on democracy notes that “China has always [...] assimilated the democratic elements of China’s traditional culture and institutional civilization. Therefore, socialist political democracy shows distinctive Chinese characteristics.”

Since ‘Sino-centric China’ is devoted to cultivating the distinctiveness of the Chinese self, the narrative represents an obvious case of a particularistic narrative. As pointed out by Xi in a speech to a national audience: “It is inevitable for China, 

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634 See e.g. Hu (2006); Xi (2014a, 2014e), SCIO (2011a: section IV), “China’s Peaceful Development”.
635 Xi (2013a).
a country with a unique culture, history and basic conditions, to choose a development path featuring its own characteristics.” Less obvious is whether to label ´Sino-centric China´ as an introvert or extrovert narrative. On the one hand, ´Sino-centric China´ displays a seemingly extrovert drive observable, among other things, in the stated ambition of disseminating Chinese culture to the outside world. In his report to the 18th NCCCP in 2012, Hu announced that “The strength and international competitiveness of Chinese culture are an important indicator of China’s power and prosperity and the renewal of the Chinese nation.” Likewise, Xi in his UNESCO-speech declared that “We need to inject new vitality into the Chinese civilization by energizing all cultural elements that transcend time, space and national borders and that possess both perpetual appeal and current value, and we need to bring all collections in our museums, all heritage structures across our lands and all records in our classics to life.” On balance, however, I will emphasize the introvert side of ´Sino-centric China´. That is, the narrative primarily contains a self-absorbed and defensive tendency, being about how to cultivate and safeguard the distinctiveness of Chineseness and the Chinese polity in a globalized world. For instance, in his first presidential address to the People’s National Congress Xi stressed that we “must take our own path, which is the path of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. [...] This path is deeply rooted in history and broadly based on China’s present realities. The Chinese nation has extraordinary capabilities, with which it has built the great Chinese civilization, and

639 Xi (2013b). This message was later echoed in front of an international audience at the European College in Brugge (2014e). “The uniqueness of China’s cultural tradition, history and circumstances determines that China needs to follow a development path that suits its own reality. In fact, we have found such a path and achieved success along this path.”

640 Hu (2012: section VI). In his report the 17th NCCCP, Hu (2007: section VII) similarly stated that “[...] We will [...] enhance the influence of Chinese culture worldwide”.

641 Xi (2014a, my own underlining). A more plain-spoken vision along these lines was delivered by Xi (2013c) to a national audience of high-ranking CCP-members: “During its 5000-year history, the Chinese nation has created a brilliant and profound culture. We should disseminate the most fundamental Chinese culture in a popular way to attract more people to participate in it, matching modern culture and society. We should popularize our cultural spirit across countries as well as across time and space, with contemporary values and the eternal charm of Chinese culture.”
with which we can expand and stay on the development path suited to China’s national conditions.” In this view, a ‘Sino-centric China’ enunciates the notion of civilizational diversity in international affairs and the right to pursue a separate path of development.

On this background, the overall mission of the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative is to cultivate a distinct Chinese identity based on China’s unique civilizational heritage and developmental history as a sort of counterweight to the growing impact of foreign norms and values. Hence, in a speech to high-ranking CCP members about how to disseminate Chinese values Xi underlined that “The extensive, profound and outstanding traditional Chinese culture is the foundation for us to stand firm upon in the global mingling and clashing of cultures.”

Building blocks and narrative evolution of ‘Sino-centric China’

As already demonstrated, the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative draws extensively on China’s dynastic past to build a self-image that sets China apart from the outside world. Most conspicuously, the narrative is discursively embedded in the building block of ‘Sino-civilization’ as illustrated (above) by the frequent use of references to China’s civilizational accomplishments, values, hallmarks etc. To take an example from a recent speech by Xi Jinping in Brugge containing a lengthy account of China’s historic civilizational greatness, which is subsequent-

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642 Xi (2013a).
643 Chapter 8 further illustrates the mainly introvert tendency of ‘Sino-centric China’ (see section 8.2).
644 Xi (2014b). Hu’s report to the 17th NCCC in 2007 also contains several passages that articulate the underlying guidelines of ‘Sino-centric China’. For example (2007: section VII), “We must have a comprehensive understanding of traditional Chinese culture, keep its essence and discard its dross to enable it to fit in with present-day society, stay in harmony with modern civilization, keep its national character and reflect changes of the times. We will further publicize the fine traditions of Chinese culture and use modern means of science and technology to exploit the rich resources of our national culture.”
ly linked directly to China’s current identity: “These values and teachings [of China’s civilizational past] still carry a profound impact on Chinese people’s way of life today, underpinning the unique value system in the Chinese outlook of the world, of society and of life itself.” With little need to further illustrate this discursive linkage I turn instead to the other discursive building block, which ‘Sino-centric China’ also draws upon, namely ‘Confucianism’. Whereas the building block of ‘Sino-civilization’ is employed to enunciate China’s unique cultural roots, China’s Confucian tradition is invoked (often somewhat implicitly) in order to bolster the narrative’s call for a world of civilizational diversity. After all, the narrative’s accentuation of Chinese distinctiveness goes hand-in-hand with its advocacy for the equality of different cultures and civilizations. This discursive linkage may be captured by the following passage from the 2011 white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development”: “The world has been believed to be a harmonious whole in the Chinese culture ever since the ancient times. […] We respect different cultures and views, treat others in the same way as we expect to be treated, and do not impose our will upon others. We treat all foreign countries with courtesy, foster harmonious ties with neighbors and make friends with different states. The Chinese people have inherited the fine tradition of Chinese culture of over 5000 years and added to it new dimensions of the times.”

How much does the official government discourse tell us about the evolution of the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative in the 21st century? There seems to be two points that can be made from such a preliminary assessment. One is that the narrative does not really emerge in Zhongnanhai’s discourse until a couple of years into Hu Jintao’s reign when especially his UN-speech about a “Harmonious

645 Xi (2014e).
646 Implicitly, since the concept of Confucianism itself is rarely mentioned in the discourse. Instead a “signifying proxy” like “harmonious society” is often used to invoke China’s Confucian tradition.

259
World” and his Yale-speech in New Haven together signaled the advent of the ´Sino-centric China´ narrative.648 To be sure, the conceptual appendage “with Chinese characteristics” has long been part of official government discourse (cf. figure E, Section 6.1), and the notion of “civilizational diversity” can be found in some of Jiang Zemin’s speeches.649 However, what is missing in the identity discourse prior to Hu is the explicit and systematic usage of China’s own civilizational heritage to narrate a public story about the uniqueness China as a state community (i.e. the cultivation of China’s civilizational self). The second point to make is that Xi Jinping seems to have bolstered the ´Sino-centric China´ narrative. Not only has Xi been proclaiming the same discursive notion of China’s civilizational uniqueness in several of both his national and international speeches, he has also been somewhat more outspoken in his praise of China’s distinct cultural roots.650 Furthermore, a recent very eye-catching discursive campaign from Zhongnanhai, using billboards and street-facing electronic screens to send “educational messages” across major cities in China, attempted to link “the Chinese Dream” to China’s civilizational past, notably its Confucian morality and its traditional culture.651 In sum, ´Sino-centric China´ appears, by now, to have been firmly established as an important narrative of Chinese identity in Zhongnanhai’s public discourse.

649 For instance in Jiang’s speech (2001a: section IV) at the 80th anniversary of the CCP he stresses that, “Our world is diversified and colorful. The diversity of civilizations is the basic feature of human society and also the driving force behind the progress of human civilization. Respect should be given to the history, culture, social system and model of development of each individual country. Diversity of the world is a reality that should be recognized.” Jiang also invokes the image of civilizational diversity in several other speeches (e.g. Jiang, 2000c, 2002d).
650 Apart from his Sino-centric speeches, Xi has made some high-profiled public statements at key cultural such as the birthplace of Confucius, where Xi in November 2013, according to Xinhua, declared that “Our nation will be full of hope as long as the Chinese pursuit of a beautiful and lofty moral realm continues from generation to generation.” See http://en.people.cn/102839/8470126.html [accessed 01.12.2014].
651 The poster images, among other things, extolled Confucian values such as benevolence and filial piety, see Lee (2014).
7.6 ‘Rising China’

“Our responsibility is to unite and lead people of the entire party and of all ethnic groups around the country while accepting the baton of history and continuing to work for realizing the great revival of the Chinese nation in order to let the Chinese nation stand more firmly and powerfully among all nations around the world and make a greater contribution to mankind.” This quotation, derived from Xi Jinping’s first public statement after assuming the leadership (as general secretary) of the CCP in November 2012, provides some insight into the ‘Rising China’ narrative. While certain elements of the narrative have been discernible in Zhongnanhai’s public discourse throughout the entire analyzed period, ‘Rising China’ has become more clearly enunciated under Xi’s leadership as a separate narrative predicated on an underlying identity strategy of social competition. Even so, ‘Rising China’ is still not quite as solidly grounded in the discursive material as are the preceding four main narratives (more on this in the sub-section). I have labeled the narrative “Rising China” despite the fact that the term “rise” has been rooted out of official government parlance since 2005. I will nevertheless stick to “Rising China”, not only because “rise” well captures the underlying identity strategy of social competition, but also because the narrative at any rate employs conceptual proxies to “rise” like “revival” and “rejuvenation”.

Essentially, the ‘Rising China’ narrative tells the story about an ascending China poised for resuming its historical position as a leading great power after a prolonged and humiliating period as a low-status state. Although the discursive linkage between China’s past greatness, recent humiliations, present rise and eventual redemption (as China reclaims its great power status) is rarely made

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652 Xi (2012a).
fully explicit in the government discourse, the frequent use of phrases like “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” is an indicator of such a “revivalist” mode of thinking. Indeed, the much-touted Chinese Dream is hardly mentioned without an accompanying reference to “the great rejuvenation” as illustrated by a symptomatic statement by Xi: “In my view, realizing the great renewal of the Chinese nation is the Chinese nation’s greatest dream in modern history.”653 Moreover, the linkage can also be detected in some of Xi Jinping’s recent speeches where he recapitulates – and stresses the importance of – China’s past: “For any country in the world, the past always holds the key to the present and the present is always rooted in the past. Only when we know where a country has come from, could we possibly understand why the country is what it is today, and only then could we realize to which direction it is heading.”654 Following this statement, Xi runs through China’s great civilizational heritage concluding that “For several thousand years before the industrial revolution, China had been leading the world in economic, technological and cultural development.”655 Subsequently, Xi invokes the ‘century of humiliation’ and points out that “the memory of foreign invasions and bullying has never been erased from the minds of the Chinese people, and that explains why we cherish so dear the life we lead today”.656 What is missing here, though, is an unequivocal promise or aspiration that China will once again resume its leading position in the world. China’s rise should certainly elicit respect and recognition (see below), but Zhongnanhai is (so far) not staking a direct claim for a new (Sino-centric) world order.

654 Xi (2014e).
655 Xi, ibid.
656 Xi, ibid.
The in-group of `Rising China´ is mostly defined as either “the Chinese nation” or “the Chinese people”. For instance, in a characteristic statement Xi declares that “The Chinese people are striving to fulfill the Chinese dream of the great renewal of the Chinese nation.”657 Similarly, Xi in his first speech as CCP-leader announced that “we have led the people to advance and struggle tenaciously, transforming the impoverished and Old China into the New China that has become prosperous and strong gradually. The great revival of the Chinese nation has demonstrated unprecedented bright prospects.”658 With respect to the salient out-group of `Rising China`, it is first of all constituted by the United States in its capacity as the leading great power (and primary stakeholder of the prevailing international order), thereby making the United States the ultimate point of reference for China’s rise to the top of the international hierarchy. A recurring theme in the foreign policy speeches by Xi (and other 5th generation Chinese leaders) has thus been “To build a new model of major-country relationship between China and the United States.”659 The basic elements of this new model have been described by foreign minister Wang Yi in an important speech at the Brookings Institution: "Mutual respect" is a basic principle for this new model. We live in a world of rich diversity. For China and the United States, two major countries different in social system, history and culture yet connected by intertwined interests, mutual respect is all the more important. Only by respecting each other’s system and path chosen by their people, as well as each other’s core interests and concerns can we seek common ground while reserving differences and, on that basis, expand common ground and dissolve differences so that China and the United States will be able to live together in harmony.”660

657 Xi (2014a).
658 Xi (2012a).
659 See e.g. Xi (2014d).
Whereas the `Sino-centric China´ narrative cultivates China’s cultural distinctiveness as a primarily self-absorbed identity strategy of social creativity, the `Rising China´ narrative articulates China’s distinctiveness as a state community in a far more extrovert manner as part of an identity strategy of social competition. What distinguishes ‘Rising China’ is the enunciation of a great power profile that places China on a par with but also as distinct from the other great powers in general and the United States in particular. For example, at the most recent New Year’s reception for the corps of foreign diplomats in Beijing, foreign minister Wang Yi proclaimed that China will “actively practice a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting China’s role as a major country to provide strong support for realizing the Chinese dream of national renewal”.

Discursive indications of an emerging great power profile can be traced back to the last years of Hu’s time in office. For instance, in his second report to the 18th NCCCP Hu for the first time makes an explicit connection between China’s military modernization and its international status: *It is a strategic task of China’s modernization drive [...] to build a strong national defense and powerful armed forces, which are commensurate with China’s international standing and meet the needs of its security and development interests*. Likewise, the notion that China now possesses certain “core interests”, which are not reducible to its sovereignty, can also be seen as a reflection of an emerging great power profile associated with ‘Rising China’.

In a 2013 article (symbolically published in the American journal the

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661 Wang (2014b). Interestingly, the previous New Year’s reception speech by Wang did not include any noticeable discursive references to ‘Rising China’ (see Wang, 2013c), whereas the most recent one contains several apart from the quotation.

662 Hu (2012: section IX). This phrasing was reiterated in the subsequent white paper on China’s armed forces (SCIO, 2013a: preface; “The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces”).

663 The first authoritative clarification of the concept of “core interests” is found in SCIO (2011a: section III), “China’s Peaceful Development”. Here, China’s “core interests” not only comprise sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unification but also political/social stability and economic/social development. Before that, the term “core interests” had been introduced as early as 2008 by foreign minister Yang Jiechi (Yang, 2008) and coined as a key term by state councilor Dai Bingguo at a press conference in 2009 during the First Round of the China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogues: [http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/90883/6713167.html](http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/90883/6713167.html) [accessed 12.12.2014].
state councilor Yang Jiechi stressed “that while firmly committed to peaceful development, we definitely must not forsake our legitimate interests or compromise our core national interests. No country should expect us to swallow the bitter fruit that undermines our sovereignty, security and development interests.”

Given its grounding in an identity strategy of social competition, the `Rising China´ narrative first of all derives a sense of positive self-esteem by referring to China’s growing international status. That is, by proving competitive and asserting China’s emerging great power status, `Rising China´ instills a sense of confidence in the Chinese people in stark contrast to the inferiority complex inflicted by the `century of humiliation´. To some extent, both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao have boasted the rapid rise of China in their five-yearly reports to the NCCCP. For instance, after recapitulating the past years’ material progress, Jiang announced that the “great achievements have attracted worldwide attention and will surely go down as a glorious page in the annals of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people.” Likewise, Hu – after pointing out how China has jumped to the fourth rank in the world in terms of economy – stated in his first report (to the 17th NCCCP in 2007) that China’s “achievements in political, cultural and social development have captured world attention.” In his second report (to the 18th NCCCP in 2012), Hu went considerably further in summing up the past five years’ achievements, using lengthy paragraphs and finally claiming that “All this shows the superiority and vitality of socialism with Chinese characteristics and has enhanced the pride and cohesiveness of the Chinese people and nation.”

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664 Yang (2013: section II). Xi Jinping himself has adopted the notion of China’s core interests and addressed them in several speeches (e.g. Xi, 2014c; Xi, 2014f).
er since Xi has taken over, the sense of pride over China’s rising international status seems to have become even more pronounced. An illustrious example is provided by state councilor Yang Jiechi: “The important thinking of the Chinese dream has not only energized our people’s determination and confidence in accomplishing the great renewal of the Chinese nation but also substantially boosted China’s appeal and influence in the world, enhanced our stature and voice in international affairs and given full expression to the strong synergy between our domestic and external agenda.”

In light of this, ‘Rising China’ should be classified as an unambiguous case of an extrovert narrative. The gist of the ‘Rising China’ narrative is outward-looking, that is, just like past humiliations were imposed on China from the outside world, ‘Rising China’ needs to prove to the outside world that China is a major country and an emerging great power, expecting to be recognized as well as treated as such, especially by the Americans. Furthermore, ‘Rising China’ is predominantly a particularistic narrative even though it is still far from clear what norms, values and political agenda we should expect from it given the narrative’s enunciation of largely empty signifiers such as “rejuvenation”, “major-country relationship” and “core interests”. However, insofar as ‘Rising China’ can be directly associated with Xi Jinping’s signature narrative about “the Chinese dream”, the outlook of a ‘rising China’ hardly extends beyond the specific dreams and visions of the Chinese themselves. After all, Xi has on numerous occasions emphasized, with minor variations, that “the Chinese dream is about enhancing the strength and prosperity of the nation and the well-being of the Chinese people.”

668 Yang (2013: section II).
669 Xi (2014f). Indeed, later in his speech to the Australian parliament, Xi further stresses the particularism of ‘Rising China’ when he states that “the Chinese and Australian people strive to fulfill their respective dreams.”
Finally, when it comes to the overall mission of a `Rising China´, Xi Jinping has on several important occasions provided a sort of missionary statement. For instance, in his first presidential address to the People’s National Congress he stated that “the Chinese dream of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation means that we will make China prosperous and strong, rejuvenate the nation, and bring happiness to the people.” Moreover, in a media-hyped domestic speech at the National Museum in front of the exhibition “The Road to Rejuvenation” Xi declared that “In the future, the Chinese nation will forge ahead like a gigantic ship breaking through strong winds and heavy waves’. Our struggles in the over 170 years since the Opium War have created bright prospects for achieving the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. We are now closer to this goal, and we are more confident and capable of achieving it than at any other time in history.” In other words, ‘Rising China’ aspires to leave behind the lost ‘century of humiliation’, transforming an emerging great power into a fully-fledged one.

**Building blocks and narrative evolution of `Rising China´**

As already argued, the `Rising China´ narrative is very consistent – if not entirely explicit – in linking China’s past with its present rise and future dreams. In fact, whenever representatives of Zhongnanhai address the issue of China’s rise – and what the world is to expect from an ascending China – they start by looking backwards and recapitulating “the lessons” of Chinese history. In the words of Xi Jinping, “History is the best teacher. It faithfully records the journey that every

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670 Xi (2014g).
671 Xi (2012b).
country has gone through, and offers guidance for its future development.”672 More specifically, the main discursive building block for `Rising China` is `the century of humiliation` as made abundantly clear in Xi’s high-profiled speech in 2012 at the National Museum, which starts with the words: “*The exhibition `The Road to Rejuvenation´ is about the past, presence and future of the Chinese nation, and it is a highly educational and inspiring one.*” The speech then elaborates on the sufferings and sacrifices, China experienced during the Century of Humiliation before concluding (like quoted above) that “Our struggles in the over 170 years since the Opium War have created bright prospects for achieving the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”673 In a similar vein, Hu Jintao in his 2012-report to the NCCCP draws a clear connection between China’s humiliating past, present rise and promising future: “Our Party brought an end to, once and for all, the misery of old China, a poor and weak country that had suffered from both domestic turmoil and foreign aggression in modern times, and launched the Chinese nation’s irreversible historic march to development and great renewal. It has thus enabled the Chinese nation, which has a civilization of over 5,000 years, to stand rock-firm with a completely new image in the family of nations.”674 Hu’s statement can furthermore serve as an introduction to the other discursive building block that runs like an undercurrent through much of the `Rising China´ narrative namely `Sino-civilization´. Hence, the “lessons of China’s past”, which will guide a `Rising China´, also draws on China’s civilizational history as witnessed by the frequent use of references to China’s glorious past. Yet, the coupling of `Sino-civilization´ and `Rising China´ is not very strong since one finds no discursive statements in the official discourse suggesting that a `rising China´ will adopt a set of norms and values based on its distinct civilizational heritage.

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672 Xi (2014g).
673 Xi (2012b).
674 Hu (2012: section XII).

268
Turning, lastly, to the question of narrative evolution – preliminarily assessed on the basis of the official government discourse – one may make the following two observations. First, the ‘Rising China’ narrative seems less solidly grounded in a distinct logic of social identity than the other main narratives. Not so much because Zhongnanhai has taken great pains to avoid using the specific term of “China’s rise” – conceptual proxies like “the great rejuvenation” basically drive home the same message – but rather because the narrative’s underlying identity strategy of social competition has so far not manifested itself fully into the articulations of a ‘Rising China’. After all, the discursive evidence of Zhongnanhai directly asserting China’s status as a great power – not to mention as a peer competitor to the United States – is still somewhat limited. The second observation is that ‘Rising China’ has nevertheless gained a prominent position in the official government discourse in recent years, conceived primarily during Xi Jinping’s time in office and constructed around discursive key terms such as ‘great rejuvenation/revival’, ‘core interests’, ‘major-country relationship’ and, of course, ‘the Chinese Dream’ with its aspiration of building a strong and prosperous China that elicits respect from the outside world.\textsuperscript{675} Taken together, then, even though ‘Rising China’ seems recently to have become a strong narrative of Chinese state identity discourse, its growing influence may not necessarily have any major effects insofar as the narrative does not quite yet rest on a distinct logic of social identity (of social competition).

\textsuperscript{675} Again, it should be underscored that the specific key term of “rejuvenation” has been part of the official identity discourse for at least two decades (see Section 6.2).


7.7 Critical reflections and an overview of Zhongnanhai’s identity discourse

Zhongnanhai’s public elite discourse on China’s sense of itself as a state community may at first sight appear exceedingly multifaceted and even inconsistent, containing seemingly irreconcilable discursive positions. Yet, by employing a primarily deductive analytical approach predicated on five different ideal-typical identity strategies that were “Sinicized” in Chapter 6, I have been able to organize and make sense of this discursive complexity. In the preceding sections, I have thus identified five discrete identity narratives in Zhongnanhai’s discourse, each of which articulates a relatively distinct logic of social identity in line with a specific identity strategy for how to differentiate between in- and out-group(s).

To be sure, my discourse analysis could be accused of being overly reductionist inasmuch as various discursive elements are coalesced into larger narrative categories – modeled on pre-established theoretical categories – and as other discursive elements are disregarded altogether if they do not fit these categories. Let me first address both of these reductionist aspects in turn before presenting an overview of the main findings of Chapter 7.

To begin with, the five narratives do not always appear quite as schematic and clear-cut in the discursive texts as I have rendered them above. Most problematic is the fact that the five narratives are not mutually exclusive discursive entities and that they therefore share certain discursive elements, thereby introducing a potential source of narrative blurring in the texts. For example, the ‘Sovereign China’ and ‘Sino-centric China’ narratives share an egalitarian outlook on international politics, emphasizing its diversity and insisting on the equality of different models and development paths. Some discursive statements that were coded as ‘Sovereign China’ could thus also have been labeled ‘Sino-centric Chi-
na´, as illustrated by an excerpt from Hu Jintao’s 18th report to the NCCCP: “In promoting inclusiveness and mutual learning, we should respect diversity of civilizations and development paths, respect and safeguard the rights of all peoples to independently choose their social system and development path, learn from others to make up for our shortcomings, and advance human civilization.”\textsuperscript{676} Yet, the challenge of coding such text pieces in a reliable manner is often not as great as it may at first seem if one examines the larger context (i.e. paragraph), in which the specific sentence is embedded. Hence, the above quotation is preceded by the following passage with an unmistakable `Sovereign China´ ring to it: “In promoting equality and mutual trust, we should observe the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and support equality among all countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor. We should advance democracy in international relations, respect sovereignty, share security, and uphold world peace and stability.”\textsuperscript{677}

Another example concerns the discursive key term of “core interests”, which I (in Section 7.6) associated with the `Rising China´ narrative for several reasons. For one thing, the term seems to signal that China considers itself to be a great power with a corresponding set of “core interests” that should be recognized by other great powers. For another, these “core interests” go beyond mere concerns for territorial sovereignty, which traditionally have been China’s “cordon sanitaire of non-negotiability”. Furthermore, the term has been introduced in the aftermath of the global financial crisis together with other discursive indications of a `Rising China´ narrative. All this notwithstanding, one observes at the same time a tendency to use “core interests” alongside with specific key terms that I have designated as part of the `Sovereign China´ narrative. For instance, in a

\textsuperscript{676} Hu (2012: section X).
\textsuperscript{677} Hu (ibid.)
speech at the UN in 2010, prime minister Wen Jiabao stated that “China values friendship and also sticks to principles. It firmly upholds its national core interests. When it comes to sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity, China will not yield or compromise.” For this reason, the term of “core interests” – or other key terms for that matter – is never in itself a sufficient indicator of a specific narrative. As argued in Section 5.2, my discourse analysis rests more on identifying the underlying discursive logic of each narrative than on auto-piloting through the texts with a navigational map of specific key terms. At any rate, the instances of terminological blurring between different narratives are far from overwhelming. Indeed, it is actually striking to observe how well-separated the narratives generally appear in the discursive material and how consistent Zhongnanhai uses the discursive key terms surrounding each of the five narratives.

The second reductionist aspect of my discourse analysis pertains to those narrative strands of Chinese identity that have been ignored in the texts since they did not clearly match any of the five pre-given narrative categories. By far the most conspicuous additional narrative, intentionally omitted from the discourse analysis, is constituted by what I referred to in Section 6.2 as ‘Developing China’. This narrative tells the story about how China as a developing country shares a bond of solidarity with other developing countries, which is nourished by their common history of being subject to Western imperialism. For instance, in a speech from 2000 Jiang Zemin declares that “China is the largest developing country in the world. [...] The positive role of the United Nations should be strengthened, so should the status and role of the developing countries and region-

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678 Wen (2010). These three sentences constitute a separate paragraph in the speech.
679 For an overview, see appendix C.
al organizations composed of such countries.” In a similar vein, Hu Jintao in the 18th report to the NCCCP points out that “We will increase unity and cooperation with other developing countries, work with them to uphold the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries and support efforts to increase their representation and voice in international affairs. China will remain a reliable friend and sincere partner of other developing countries.” Indeed, the ‘Developing China’ narrative is actually the third most frequently identified narrative throughout the discursive sources (see appendix C).

So why have I relegated ‘Developing China’ to the sidelines of my analysis? To start with, ‘Developing China’, though still discernible in the texts towards the end of the examined period, seems to have receded into the background of Zhongnanhai’s identity discourse in recent years. While many white papers and some speeches still make the point that “China is the world’s biggest developing country”, the designation no longer carries as much discursive substance as it once did. Rather, the narrative is primarily invoked either as a ritual gesture of affability in specific political settings (say, China-Africa summits) or as a justification for being exempt from certain international regulations (say, the Kyoto protocol) or evaluative standards (say, Western human rights norms). Moreover, whereas Jiang Zemin devoted lengthy paragraphs in his speeches to examine topics such as the North-South divide, Third World solidarity or the unequal international economic order, the fifth generation of Chinese leaders rarely dwell on such matters. After all, specific discursive key phrases (like “China is a developing country”) do not necessarily, as pointed out before, reflect any un-

683 See e.g. Jiang (2000b, 2000c).
derlying identity logic or narrative substance. Another main reason why I have disregarded the `Developing China´ narrative is that it may be viewed as a near equivalent of `Sovereign China´, being predicated on an identity strategy of moral high-grounding too and diverging only markedly from `Sovereign China´ with respect to its designated in-group. The discursive affinity between the two narratives can be cursorily illustrated by the following quotation from one of Jiang’s speeches: “However, development in different countries is extremely uneven. Hegemonism and power politics still exist. Developing countries are still faced with an arduous task of safeguarding their sovereignty, security and interests.” In other words, the `Developing China´ narrative, to the extent that it still enjoys any discursive impact on Chinese identity, pulls China in much the same direction as does `Sovereign China´.

Apart from `Developing China´, I have also disregarded a few other less conspicuous narrative elements that do not unequivocally fall within the discursive boundaries of the five main narratives. Suffice here is to mention one of them, namely `Asian China´, which is a regional Chinese identity construction, describing China as a member of an Asian community and highlighting the historical, political and economic bonds that unite Asian countries. For example, in a speech to regional leaders, Jiang Zemin stated that “In the course of the 20th century, we Asian people waged an unyielding struggle to win national independence and liberation, get rid of poverty and backwardness, and bring about development and prosperity, and scored remarkable achievements. All this has contributed significantly to peace and development in Asia and the world at large. [...] The Asian peoples know full well the importance for all countries to treat each other as

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684 That is, the in-group of `Developing China´ extends to other developing countries but is far more narrowly defined in the case of `Sovereign China´.
equals, conduct mutually beneficial cooperation and live with each other in peace and harmony. They strongly believe that peaceful co-existence among countries with different traditions, cultures and social systems is an important political condition for closer friendly relations and cooperation." I have disregarded ‘Asian China’, partly because it does not figure as prominently on the discursive horizon of Zhongnanhai as the five main narratives (see appendix C), and partly because it may be viewed merely as a regionalized version of ‘Globalist China’.

**The main findings of the discourse analysis**

Having addressed the limitations of my discursive analysis let me in conclusion present the main findings of Chapter 7. First of all, I have identified five main narratives in the official discourse on Chinese state identity, and even though their discursive boundaries to some extent overlap each other, the five narratives are still sufficiently discrete to warrant treating them as separate discursive entities. Crucially, each of the five narratives rests on a specific identity strategy that defines the relation between the Chinese in-group and its salient out-groups according to a distinct logic of social identity (see figure I for a conceptual overview). Hence, the principal finding of this chapter is a demonstration of how the heterogeneous and complex discourse on Chinese state identity can be ordered into a limited number of discrete and quite exhaustive narrative categories on the basis of my theoretical framework.

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686 Jiang (2001c). For a more recent example of the ‘Asian China’ narrative, see e.g. Xi (2014b).
## Figure I  
### The Five Main Narratives of Chinese State Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of narrative</th>
<th>Globalist China</th>
<th>Sovereign China</th>
<th>Unified China</th>
<th>Sino-centric China</th>
<th>Rising China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideal-typical identity strategy</td>
<td>Social affiliation</td>
<td>Moral high-grounding</td>
<td>Downward retargeting</td>
<td>Self-cultivation</td>
<td>Social competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-group of China</td>
<td>Global inter-state society</td>
<td>Sovereign state community</td>
<td>Unified multi-ethnic community</td>
<td>Sinic civilization</td>
<td>Rejuvenating nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salient Out-group of China</td>
<td>Western gate-keepers (non-salient)</td>
<td>United States and Japan</td>
<td>Radicalized minority groups</td>
<td>Western liberal democracy</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China's distinctiveness is based on:</td>
<td>Nothing (tones it down)</td>
<td>Political &amp; territorial sovereignty</td>
<td>A civilized domestic order</td>
<td>Unique civilization</td>
<td>Greatness (historic and emergent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China's positive self-esteem is based on:</td>
<td>Recognition as responsible partner</td>
<td>Moral authority</td>
<td>Developmental superiority</td>
<td>Civilizational greatness</td>
<td>Self-assertion as great power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introversion/extroversion</td>
<td>Extroversion</td>
<td>Introversion</td>
<td>Introversion</td>
<td>Introversion</td>
<td>Extroversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism/particularism</td>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>Particularism</td>
<td>Particularism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission (or purpose)</td>
<td>Furthering China's international integration</td>
<td>Upholding China's external sovereignty</td>
<td>Safeguarding China's political unity</td>
<td>Cultivating China's civilizational heritage</td>
<td>Promoting China's great power status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now, as the discursive logic of each identity narrative is quite distinct, it matters greatly – in the context of state grand strategy – if some narratives enjoy a substantially stronger position than others in Zhongnanhai’s discourse on Chinese state identity. The second main finding is that the relative discursive strength of the five main narratives has varied considerably over the course of the 21st century, and that some narratives have gradually increased their discursive authority while others seem to have receded into the background. In the following, I briefly summarize the five main narratives with a particular view to assessing their discursive strength before and after the global financial crisis:

- `Globalist China´ is the most frequently referenced narrative throughout the texts, and it was clearly one of the dominant narratives before the global financial crisis especially during the early years of Hu Jintao’s reign when much of Zhongnanhai’s public discourse reflected an identity strategy of social affiliation. That is, the `Globalist China´ narrative insisted on toning down China’s distinctiveness as a state community, instead pursuing growing international integration while seeking outside respect and recognition of China’s active role as a responsible member of international society. After the financial crisis, Zhongnanhai has certainly continued to reaffirm China’s commitment to “peaceful development”, China’s continued need for opening up to a globalized world and China’s active commitment to international society. Nevertheless, not only does the `Globalist China´ narrative figure less prominently than previously in the discursive material, it also seems to be less clearly embedded in an underlying identity strategy of social affiliation where China’s membership of international society becomes the primary source of positive self-esteem.
• ‘Sovereign China’ is the most widely dispersed narrative in the coded texts, and it was one of the key narratives especially during Jiang Zemin’s reign when a self-righteous identity strategy of moral high-grounding permeated much of Zhongnanhai’s public discourse. That is, ‘Sovereign China’ upheld Chinese distinctiveness in the shape of China’s inviolable right to political and territorial sovereignty while castigating potential violators as morally corrupt and even dangerous to international peace and stability. After the financial crisis, the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative is still one of the frequently enunciated narratives in Zhongnanhai’s identity discourse with recurrent invocations of China’s right to political independence and territorial integrity. However, the narrative no longer (with a few exceptions) holds an undisputed discursive sway in any of the coded texts, suggesting that the defensive and self-righteous articulation of ‘Sovereign China’ is giving way to other narratives of Chinese state identity.

• ‘Unified China’ is the least widely dispersed (albeit quite frequently referenced) narrative in the discursive material, and it is furthermore the only narrative whose in-group/out-group-distinction is located within China itself, reflecting an identity strategy of downward retargeting centered on China’s ethnic minorities. That is, ‘Unified China’ depicts a civilized, modern and harmonious state community of multi-ethnic unity, challenged only at the margins by radicalized fractions of specific ethnic minority groups. The examined primary sources offer no plain indications of discursive change in the ‘Unified China’ narrative on either side of the global financial crisis.

• ‘Sino-centric China’ is the least frequently referenced narrative in the discursive material, primarily because it was not until a couple of years into Hu’s time in office that it emerged as a fully-fledged narrative, pivoting on an identity strate-
gy of self-cultivation. That is, the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative is actively promoting and celebrating China’s political and civilizational distinctiveness as a sort of self-absorbed counterweight to – rather than an outright rejection of – the prevailing societal model of liberal democracy championed by the West. After the global financial crisis, the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative has retained a prominent position, and it even seems recently to have gained further traction as Xi Jinping has held several high-profiled speeches, in which he dwells on China’s civilizational heritage and its impact on China today.

• ‘Rising China’ is the most recent of the five narratives and therefore also one of the least frequently referenced ones, not really entering Zhongnanhai’s discourse on Chinese state identity until after the global financial crisis especially as Xi Jinping took over the reins of power. The narrative rests on an identity strategy of social competition and is primarily associated with the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation, which creates a powerful discursive linkage between China’s historic greatness, its recent humiliations, present rise and eventual redemption as China reasserts its great power status. Although Zhongnanhai takes great pains to avoid invoking any threatening image of a “rising China”, the ‘Rising China’ narrative is still littered with comparable terms and connotations and primarily predicated on an underlying identity strategy of social competition.

This preliminary assessment of the evolution and discursive strength of the five main narratives of Chinese state identity is based on the official government discourse. Importantly, the assessment relies on a heterogeneous set of discursive data, consisting of different types of primary sources unevenly distributed over the examined period. These primary data have primarily enabled me to tease
out each of the five narratives and only secondarily allowed me to trace the evolution of the narratives as well as their relative discursive strength. In order to further corroborate or perhaps revise this initial assessment I therefore need to supplement Zhongnanhai’s identity discourse with an alternative set of more homogenous discursive data that are better suited for a systematic interrogation of how the five narratives have evolved. To this end, Chapter 8 uses another highly authoritative source of China’s identity discourse, namely the editorials of Beijing Review, in an attempt to establish a more fine-grained picture of the narrative evolution of Chinese state identity and in this way gauge the extent to which the dominant conception of Chinese state identity has changed in any substantive way over the course of the 21st century.

Turning, lastly, to the deeper layers of the identity discourse, the third finding of Chapter 7 is the identification of a linkage between the discursive building blocks and identity narratives of Chinese state identity. What I have managed to demonstrate is that the four discursive building blocks – established in Chapter 6 from my reading of the secondary literature – are in fact fundamental to the construction of official Chinese state identity narratives. As argued in Section 4.2, discursive building blocks shape (Chinese) identity in a structural sense by constraining and enabling the formulation of specific narratives. The empirical implications of this have been pursued with a view to illustrating “the enabling aspect” of the discursive relation. That is, the five narratives derive much of their discursive content by drawing on a specific combination of discursive building blocks as shown in the previous sub-sections. For instance, the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative articulates a discrete understanding of Chineseness, which is largely constructed on the basis of two specific discursive building blocks, namely ‘Sino-civilization’ and ‘Confucianism’. Conversely, the ‘Sovereign China’ nar-
narrative is constructed mainly on the basis of a pair of more recent building blocks, ‘the Communist march’ and ‘the Century of humiliation’, which provide a very different sort of discursive content to the narrative. Accordingly, each of the five narratives articulates a distinct conception of Chinese state identity by drawing on a specific combination of the four available discursive building blocks at the beginning of the 21st century. Figure J present a graphical overview of the structural relation between discursive building blocks and identity narratives.\textsuperscript{687}

\textsuperscript{687} Note that some of the relations in the model are depicted as dotted lines, indicating that the structural relation between a given discursive building block and a specific identity narrative is not as tight and clear-cut as is in the case of the full-line relations.
Figure J: The structural linkage between the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} layer of the China’s state identity

2\textsuperscript{nd} structural layer: Discursive building blocks

3\textsuperscript{rd} structural layer: Identity narratives
With respect to “the constraining aspect” of the discursive building blocks, Chapter 7 has not demonstrated what it implies for the construction of Chinese state identity narratives, primarily because such discursive constraints are not easily or directly discernible in a discourse analysis of primary sources. Yet, one can indirectly tease them out by virtue of two empirical observations, a general and a more substantive one, which together may be said to constitute the fourth finding of the discourse analysis. At a general level, it is noteworthy that all of Zhongnanhai’s five main narratives are embedded in a set of underlying discursive building blocks (even if one of them, `Globalist China´, is only partially rooted in a single discursive building block, namely `Confucianism´, see figure J). This seems to suggest that Zhongnanhai’s identity narrators are indeed constrained by the prevailing discursive building blocks in their formulation of viable identity narratives. The second, more substantive, observation is that none of the five Chinese state identity narratives, which have dominated Zhongnanhai’s official discourse so far in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, conceive of China as an “insider” of international society in a normative sense. In fact, `Globalist China´ – the only universalistic and extrovert narrative predicated on an identity strategy of social affiliation – merely tones down China’s distinctiveness in order to render China compatible with a wider international society without, it should be stressed, adopting Western-style liberal-democratic norms and values (like the `Westernizing China´ narrative, cf. Section 6.1). While none of the other main narratives are being framed as directly incompatible with the West or the prevailing liberal-democratic norms of international society, these four narratives are either clearly particularistic or introvert in their outlook. My point is that the absence of a Chinese “insider narrative” is unsurprising given the four basic discursive build-

\footnote{The reason is that Zhongnanhai almost exclusively articulates the narratives that are deemed compatible with the underlying discursive building blocks.}
ing blocks of Chinese identity, of which two are narrowly related to Chinese cul-
ture and history (‘Sino-civilization’ and ‘Century of Humiliation’), a third is quite
universalistic in its philosophical aspirations but at the same time steeped in a
specifically Chinese tradition (‘Confucianism’), while the last building block (‘the
Communist March’) over the years has been reduced from a universalist ideolo-
gy to a discursive excursion into “the Chinese characteristics” of communism. In
this sense, the discursive building blocks of Chinese identity certainly exert a
constraining effect on the kind of narratives that Zhongnanhai are likely to for-
mulate.
Chapter 8:
The evolution of Chinese identity narratives in the 21st century

Having identified and described the five main narratives that dominate Zhong-nanhai’s discourse on Chinese state identity, I now undertake a content analysis to rank the narratives according to their relative discursive strength in the 21st century. Chapter 7 suggested that while two of the narratives, ‘Globalist China’ and ‘Sovereign China’, have lost some of their previous sway, two other narratives, ‘Sino-centric China’ and ‘Rising China’, have on the other hand emerged as increasingly powerful narratives in the examined period. Yet, the data materiel, on which the discourse analysis in Chapter 7 was based, was too heterogeneous to assess the evolution of the narratives in a fully reliable manner. This deficiency is being remedied in Chapter 8 as I employ a far more homogeneous dataset to trace the evolution of the main narratives of Chinese state identity before, during and after the global financial crisis (in line with the design of the case analysis in Section 5.1). The chapter consists of three sections, the first of which discusses the specific data material being used for the content analysis and the methods for analyzing the data. Section 8.2 presents an overview of the aggregated data of the content analysis, which enables me to trace the evolution of the five narratives in terms of their relative discursive strength in the 21st century so far. I elaborate on the depicted narrative evolution with a wide range of illustrative examples from the analyzed data material. Finally, Section 8.3 encapsulates the main findings of the content analysis and compares them to the tentative evolutionary hierarchization made in Chapter 7 based on the discourse analysis.
8.1 Designing the content analysis: Beijing Review as a primary source

In order to map the evolution of China’s official identity narratives I have conducted a content analysis of a Chinese newsmagazine called *Beijing Review*. Before presenting the findings of the content analysis, some prefatory observations about its analytical premises are in order. I first discuss what type of source Beijing Review is, then account for the selection of data for the analysis (the time frame) and finally describe the method for analyzing the data (the content analysis itself).

*Beijing Review* (called *Peking Review* from its inception in 1958 until 1978) describes itself as China’s only weekly newsmagazine in English and prides itself of targeting foreign elite readers, including statesmen, diplomats, company executives, scholars and researchers. The magazine claims a print circulation of around 70,000 per issue, which are being widely distributed via official channels to more than 150 countries.\(^{689}\) In other words, *Beijing Review* is not an ordinary magazine being sold from newsstands on the streets in China, but its online version can be read on *Beijing Review*’s homepage, providing full access to all magazines dating back to 2010.\(^{690}\) Compared to China’s daily omnibus newspapers in English such as *People’s Daily, China Daily* or *Global Times* (as well as news websites such as *Xinhua*), *Beijing Review* offers a broader and more selective (i.e. thematic) news perspective on China, covering the main trends in China’s economic, political, societal and diplomatic development. This makes *Beijing Review* well-suited for my analytical purposes as the magazine drifts above “the noise” and fluctuations of the daily news stream, giving its readers a rather “digested”

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Moreover, this digestion process is being directly informed or guided by representatives of Zhongnanhai, who makes sure that the editorial line reflects the official views of the Chinese government. As stated directly by the magazine itself: “Beijing Review is an English publication with a duty to explain to international readers the official policies and their background or, so to speak, to promote the public relations for the People’s Republic of China”. Especially the weekly editorial in Beijing Review called “The Desk” can be regarded as a highly authoritative source into the way China officially views itself.

In its capacity as a de facto mouthpiece of Zhongnanhai, Beijing Review seems like a perfect candidate for providing an alternative line of access to the authoritative discourse on China’s state identity. Indeed, in terms of validity, there is no obvious reason to believe that the Beijing Review is any less valid as a primary source of the official discourse than the white papers, speeches and reports used in Chapter 7. Moreover, by constituting a homogeneous set of primary data of the 21st century (i.e. one editorial every week) Beijing Review should be a reliable source for tracing the narrative evolution in the discourse on Chinese state identity. However, there are a couple of challenges in using the weekly editorial of the Beijing Review. One is the brevity of the “The Desk” (400-500 words), which means that the addressed issue is being treated in general terms. Another challenge is the fact that the editorials more often than not are concerned with non-identity-related issues mostly of an economic nature. On the other hand, these challenges are not critical in the context of a content analysis since I only

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691 Several other China-scholars have used the Beijing Review to study the official discourse, see e.g. Sullivan (1989); Beylerian and Canivet (1997); Wang (2005); Meng and Berger (2008).
692 In fact, Beijing Review is not in any way hiding its government affiliation, directly stating on its homepage that it is being produced and published under the auspices of state-governed institutions such as China.org and China International Publishing Group. For an insider’s description of how Beijing Review functions, see http://thetyee.ca/Mediacheck/2013/03/09/Escape-From-A-Chinese-Propaganda-Mill/ [accessed 03.03.2015].

287
need to be able to identify the specific narratives in the text, not make a discourse analysis of them, and since there are, after all, a sufficient number of positive observations (i.e. identity-related editorials for each examined year) to allow me to rank the five narratives.\textsuperscript{694} Actually, the primary challenge in using \textit{Beijing Review} is of a practical character. Like many other primary Chinese sources, it is not possible to gain full digital access to the magazine in the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. Specifically, I have had to rely on print-edition issues of the magazine before 2007, of which a tiny few were unfortunately missing (see appendix D for an overview). Moreover, the \textit{Beijing Review} did not include an editorial before April 2003 (#18 onwards), thereby skewing the time frame of my content analysis somewhat (see below).

Next, how should I design the content analysis to measure the relative strength of Chinese state identity narratives? Ideally, I would analyze every number of the magazine in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century to trace the evolution year-by-year and produce a fine-grained picture of the relative discursive authority of the five main narratives throughout the period. For practical reasons (of time and not least the difficulties in retrieving data prior to 2007) I have opted for a less ambitious analysis, which covers six years in total. What is most important about the analytical set-up is that the content analysis will be targeted at the identity discourse both before and after the global financial crisis, reflecting my empirical hypothesis about a discernible change of Chinese state identity following the global financial crisis (see Section 5.1). More specifically, I will examine \textit{Beijing Review} during three 2-year-periods namely 2003-2004, 2008-2009 and 2013-2014. With respect to the first period, I have had to extend the data collection halfway into 2005 (i.e. issue no. 22) not only because the 2003-magazine does not contain an

\textsuperscript{694} More specifically, 38\% of all the editorials address an identity-related issue (see below).
editorial prior to issue 18 but also because of some missing print issues. Furthermore, the reason why I have chosen to examine two-year stretches is to raise the reliability of the measurement by increasing the number of sequential observations. A single year of observations may thus turn out to yield a more or less outlying result owing to specific “disruptive” events, and that risk is being reduced by analyzing two consecutive year periods.  

But why have I selected these particular time periods for the content analysis? First, the 2013-2014 period was chosen not only because it covers the most recent development in China’s official identity discourse but also because it involves the first two years of Xi Jinping’s time in office. Given the widespread agreement among China-scholars that Xi’s reign differs markedly in many respects from that of his predecessor (see Chapter 1), there are good reasons to examine whether this deviation also affects China’s official identity discourse. Second, the 2008-2009 period was included because it encompasses the culmination of the global financial crisis (i.e. 2008) as well as the immediate aftermath when its implications for international order were hotly debated around the world. Hence, I would expect this period to constitute a critical juncture, foregrounding questions of Chinese state identity. Third, I have selected 2003-2004 as the third period for the content analysis, primarily because it results in even intervals between the three periods. Yet, as the period also marks the first two years of Hu Jintao’s time in office, I gain a sort of parallel set of observations (to that of 2013-14) when both leaders were consolidating their power, thereby increasing the comparability of those two sets of observations.  

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695 The best example of a critical juncture in the 21st century, which had, I claim (in Section 5.1), a disruptive effect on Chinese identity, is the global financial crisis. Before that, 9/11 in 2001 also had a significant effect (see Section 11.2).

696 That is, one might assume that a new leader would behave differently from an established one.
That brings me to the final question of how I have conducted the content analysis itself. First of all, I have undertaken a manual (rather than computer-assisted) content analysis since the identity narratives cannot be identified by virtue of key terms alone. Specifically, I have used the combination of discursive key terms and narrative identity logics (depicted in appendix A) to identify the five main narratives as I went through the editorials of the *Beijing Review*. Of the 312 (6x52) issues of the *Beijing Review* that were examined, 193 were immediately discarded as they did not contain any identity-related material (or were missing, see appendix D for an overview of the topics of all the discarded editorials). That left me with 119 positive (i.e. identity-related) observations (or 38% of all observations) and 110 affirmative references to any of the five identity narratives (see table 2 for a summary). On this background, I deemed the data material to be sufficient for conducting a content analysis and thus for tracing the evolution of the five narratives. All the identity-related editorials were subsequently imported into NVivo for the sake of coding the text passages that articulated a given identity narrative (see appendix E for an overview of all the coded narratives together with their respective text passages).

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697 The difference between positive and affirmative observations is explained below.
698 Unfortunately, appendix E does not include the coded text passages from the first examined period (2003-05) as these were not digitally available and therefore could not be directly imported into NVivo.
A few comments on the coding process itself are required. The primary objective for conducting the content analysis was to measure the relative frequency of the five identity narratives in the editorials as an indication of their relative discursive strength. Of course, frequency is only a useful indicator insofar as each reference to a specific narrative is actually affirmative (rather than dismissive) of that narrative.699 Moreover, in order not to skew the measurement of relative

* For practical reasons (see above) this volume’s period covers issue # 18, 2003 through issue # 19, 2004.
* For practical reasons (see above) this volume’s period covers issue # 20, 2004 through issue # 22, 2005.
* Each identity-related issue of the Beijing Review-editorial may contain more than one affirmative reference (e.g. to both ‘Globalist China’ and ‘Sino-centric China’), but may also contain none (if the editorial only refers to “sali-ent out-groups”, see below). Yet, most of the editorials have just one affirmative reference to a specific identity narrative (see appendix D).
699 Interestingly, almost all of the positive observations were in fact affirmative of a specific narrative (or several) while only a few distanced themselves from one of the five narratives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of positive (i.e. identity-related) observations</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of affirmative references*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of references to salient out-groups</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TABLE 2 Summary of the number of identity-related editorials and affirmative observations for each examined volume of the Beijing Review*
frequency, or make it overly arbitrary, I decided that while each editorial may hold affirmative references to *different* narratives, it can only contain one affirmative reference to any *specific* narrative notwithstanding that many editorial could easily support more than one reference to a specific narrative (from different paragraphs in the text). However, as some of the editorials deal with identity-related issues in a far more thorough manner than others, I divided all the affirmative references into two groups – i.e. directly or indirectly identity-related editorials – to reflect their different weight in the content analysis (see appendix D). More specifically, any affirmative reference located in a directly identity-related editorial was accorded double weight (or 2 points) in the overall assessment of the relative discursive strength of each narrative. On that account, less than a third of all the affirmative references (namely 34 out of 110) were awarded 2 points, amounting to a total of 144 affirmative reference points that were distributed among the five narratives (see table 2 below). Finally, apart from measuring the relative frequency of the five identity narratives, the content analysis also separately registered the most popular salient out-group categories that were articulated in the editorials (i.e. the United States, the West or Japan) and furthermore noted if the categorization was mainly positive or negative. As some of these out-group conceptions were found in editorials, which would otherwise not qualify as positive observations (i.e. containing no affirmative reference to any specific narrative), I gain an extra set of observations to supplement the content analysis.

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700 The criteria for differentiating between directly and indirectly identity-related editorials are that the former must treat identity-related questions as the primary subject of the editorial whereas the latter merely touches upon identity-related issues in a single paragraph or perhaps two (an editorial usually contains 4-8 paragraphs). 701 This explains the difference between the number of positive observations and the number of affirmative references above in table 2.
8.2 Measuring the discursive strength of China’s identity narratives

Does my content analysis yield any clear-cut findings? Table 3 below might be a good starting point for providing an answer. It depicts the evolution, in terms of relative discursive strength, of the five Chinese state identity narratives based on the number of weight-adjusted affirmative observations of each identity narrative in the Beijing Review-editorials during the selected time periods (with un-adjusted numbers in parenthesis).

From a first glance at table 3 there can be little doubt that an evolutionary pattern of shifting discursive authority is discernible when one assesses the relative discursive strength of the five narratives throughout the examined period. Only one of the five identity narratives, ‘Unified China’, does not undergo any significant development in terms of affirmative observations. Most conspicuously, the `Globalist China´ and `Rising China´ narratives have experienced the exact opposite transformation where `Globalist China’s´ discursive domination in 2003-05 has been reversed completely in 2013-14 and overtaken by `Rising China`, which did not even exist as a narrative back in 2003-05. Apart from that, the `Sovereign China´ narrative has changed discursively from being present but relatively insignificant (2003-05) over virtual non-existence (2008-09) to a rather prominent position towards the end of the period (2013-14). Finally, the `Sino-centric China´ narrative emerged midway into the first period to become the strongest narrative in 2008-09, after which it lost much of its discursive traction. Section 8.2 presents the evolution of four of the five examined narratives in quite some detail, leaving aside the largely insignificant `Unified China´ for the subsequent overall evaluation in Section 8.3.

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702 As noted in the previous section, affirmative references may be of a direct or indirect character with the direct ones consequently counting for 2 (instead of 1) affirmative reference points to reflect their greater discursive weight.
## Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beijing Review (selected volumes)</th>
<th>Globalist China</th>
<th>Sovereign China</th>
<th>Unified China</th>
<th>Sino-centric China</th>
<th>Rising China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggregated 2003-2005</td>
<td><strong>26 [20]</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 [6]</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 [1]</strong></td>
<td><strong>7 [6]</strong></td>
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<td>= 23%</td>
<td>= 2%</td>
<td>= 16%</td>
<td>= 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregated 2007-2008</td>
<td><strong>8 [6]</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 [1]</strong></td>
<td><strong>8 [5]</strong></td>
<td><strong>19 [13]</strong></td>
<td><strong>9 [7]</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>= 2%</td>
<td>= 18%</td>
<td>= 42%</td>
<td>= 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregated 2013-2014</td>
<td><strong>6 [6]</strong></td>
<td><strong>15 [11]</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 [2]</strong></td>
<td><strong>8 [5]</strong></td>
<td><strong>21 [16]</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= 11%</td>
<td>= 28%</td>
<td>= 7%</td>
<td>= 15%</td>
<td>= 39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Globalist China’: From discursive hegemony to marginalization

During the first examined period (2003-05), the ‘Globalist China’ narrative scored 26 affirmative reference points in Beijing Review, far more than the 18 points attributed to the other four narratives in total (table 3). The discursive sway of ‘Globalist China’ in this period can be illustrated in several ways. At the beginning of 2003, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) had become a critical threat to public health, not least in China where the outbreak of the disease was first registered in late 2002.703 While the Chinese government at first seemed to ignore or downplay SARS in its public statements, once it started in earnest to comment publicly on the disease it was through the prism of ‘Globalist China’ as indicated by two Beijing Review-editorials entitled “SARS as a global threat” and “Cooperation pays”.704 The former of the two editorials concluded that “It is encouraging to see that the current crisis, rather than severing China’s ties with its Asian neighbors, will enhance their joint efforts instead. These efforts are crucial for the world to win its war over SARS.”705 Likewise, the other editorial announced “a challenge to the whole world [that] requires strengthened regional and international cooperation,”706 after which it meticulously listed all the initiatives taken by the Chinese government to do so. Newly appointed premier, Wen Jiabao, was then quoted for stating that “the Chinese government [will] as always handle the issue of SARS with a highly responsible attitude, just like in dealings with the Asian financial crisis that broke out in 1997.”707

703 Tellingly, the first 6 examined editorials of the period all deal with SARS (see appendix D).
704 Respectively Beijing Review (2003, #19) and (2003, #20).
707 Ibid.
Another way to illustrate the prominence of `Globalist China´ in this period is to probe the last issue of Beijing Review (i.e. # 52) in 2003 and 2004 as the editorials in these end-of-the-year issues usually take stock of China’s overall development and position in the world during the past year. Not only do both editorials address identity-related issues in a direct manner – under the headlines of “On China’s role” and “Toward an all-win prospect” – they also both exclusively feature the `Globalist China´ narrative. In both articles the editor is at pains to articulate China’s cooperative, responsible and peaceful role in international society. One of the editorials concentrates on China’s positive relations with all major countries concluding that “Building a friendship and partnership with others is a Beijing product, which really worked in 2004. An all-win phenomenon, in which all parties gain their respective goals and tackle their differences through dialogues, should and will become a ubiquitous prospect.”

The other editorial focuses on China’s main contributions to international society, which are summarized by making the point that “As its leaders have proclaimed to their domestic and international audience, the role that China should be playing is that of a responsible big power. Being responsible is first of all a quality, not a proclamation. It requires continuity and not just a one-shot deal.”

A third way to demonstrate the discursive sway of `Globalist China´ in this period is to highlight the introduction of the “Peaceful rise” discourse, which first finds its way into the editorials of Beijing Review on April 22, 2004. As stated in an editorial entitled “Rising Peacefully” “the Chinese headship has made a strategic choice in espousing a peaceful rise. It intends to testify to the world that the country will not challenge the current world order, rather it will participate con-

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708 Respectively Beijing Review (2003, #52) and (2004, #52).
710 Beijing Review (2003, #52).
711 On the origin of the “Peaceful Rise”/“Peaceful development” discourse, see Section 6.2.
structively in it. A peaceful, self-assured and successful China will most certainly put the world at ease.”\textsuperscript{712} While it might be tempting to view the “Peaceful rise/development” discourse as the epitome of the `Globalist China´ narrative, it is important to note, however, that the latter clearly predates the former (as demonstrated, among other things, by the large number of affirmative references to `Globalist China´ prior to April 2004, cf. appendix D). Moreover, it is not until late 2005 that Zhongnanhai publishes its white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development Road” (see Section 7.2) and thereby further consolidates the `Globalist China´ narrative’s discursive hegemony.

A few other examples are worth mentioning here to illustrate the discursive strength of `Globalist China´ in the first period, the first of which concerns the People’s Republic of China’s relationship to Taiwan. Having previously been articulated almost exclusively within the confines of the `Sovereign China´ narrative, even the status of Taiwan is now being framed in terms of the `Globalist China´ narrative: “In fact, in view of globalization and China’s increasing role in the global arena, any Chinese progress can be interpreted as an advantage to the international community. Economically speaking, when China gallops, the whole world may come along for a ride. Similarly, when political forces across the strait rebuilt trust and engage in dialogue, the international community will feel more comfortable.”\textsuperscript{713} The other example is taken from the aftermath of the disastrous tsunami that hit several Asian countries in December 2004. Here, the Chinese government not only sought to demonstrate (and proclaim\textsuperscript{714}) its responsible role in providing disaster relief but also expressed a sense of solidarity that reflects the ultimate logic of the `Globalist China´ narrative: “In this issue, Chinese

\textsuperscript{712} Beijing Review (2004, #16).
\textsuperscript{713} Beijing Review (2005, #19).
\textsuperscript{714} Beijing Review (2005, #02, #08).
citizens are no longer limited to the boundary of nation, instead, they consider themselves a member of the whole international community, which is made of all people living in the global village. A responsible country cannot go without its people’s sense of being citizens of the world.”

From holding a virtual discursive hegemony during the 2003-05 period the ‘Globalist China’ narrative has become increasingly marginalized as gauged from the content analysis of Beijing Review. That is, while ‘Globalist China’ received 59% of the total affirmative reference points in the 2003-05 period, it only gained 18% of the points in the 2008-09 period and a mere 11% in the most recent period (cf. table 3). In order to briefly illustrate the “discursive downturn” of the ‘Globalist China’ narrative, I deal with each of the two examined periods in turn.

During the global financial crisis period (2008-09), ‘Globalist China’ certainly no longer held a preeminent discursive position, yet it was neither marginalized at this point. For instance, in addressing the financial crisis, one editorial reflected on China’s growing global role and international obligations concluding that “China’s voice and deeds do ring a bell – reminding the world of its responsible actions during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. [...] The current financial crisis may once again provide proof that China is a trustworthy and responsible country in the face of a global crisis.” More substantially, the period also saw two end-of-the-year editorials that adopted an overall perspective on China’s international role. In the first of these, written in January 2008 when the full scope of the global financial crisis had yet to unfold, the editor carefully reaffirms China’s pledge to stick to the existing globalist path: “China’s opening-up is a long term

one, as Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said [...] China will have more frequent economic interactions with the rest of the world, and the two will become even more interdependent and indivisible. This will make it even more unlikely for the country to reverse its opening-up policy.” In the second editorial in December 2009, when the effects of the crisis were dawning on most people, the year-defining headline was still boiled down to a reassuring “Active engagement”. Indeed, most of the editorial walks us through the many cooperative and responsible examples of China’s commitment to international society and ends up concluding that “With the world further developing toward multipolarity, as it is now, it is widely thought that China will become more involved and engaged in world affairs in the future. [...] This means the country will always pursue peace and economic and social development while seeking closer cooperation with all other countries, in order to build a mutually beneficial and harmonious world.” In other words, although ‘Globalist China’ had clearly lost its discursive hegemony in 2008-09, it still figured prominently in some of the key editorials.

Moving on to the final 2013-14 period, the outright marginalization of Globalist China is plainly seen through the content analysis of the Beijing Review. Indeed, there are few affirmative references to the narrative in the editorials, and none of these references appear any significant as they are either of an indirect character or overshadowed by rivaling narratives in the specific editorial. One telling example stems from an end-of-the-year editorial, which used to be an opportunity for directly reaffirming the ‘Globalist China’ narrative but now only reserves a single paragraph for it, not even fully devoted to its identity logic: “Since the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, China has pursued independent foreign policies that are focused on peace and development as well as mutual benefits...”

718 Beijing Review (2009, #51).
for itself and the world at large. Along with the country’s peaceful rise during the past 35 years, thanks largely to the reform and opening up, China has begun to play a growing role on the world stage. This, of course, calls for China to bring its diplomatic wisdom to the table.” Altogether, apart from a few occasional references, the ‘Globalist China’ narrative is strikingly absent from the editorials during the 2013-14 period, being thus indicative of the increasing marginalization of this specific framing of China’s state identity.

`Sovereign China`: From dwindling discursive significance to a recent surge

The `Sovereign China` narrative has seen some significant discursive fluctuations, transforming it from being the second strongest narrative in 2003-05, over the weakest one in 2008-09 to once again being the second strongest narrative in 2013-14 (see table 3). During the first period, the `Sovereign China` narrative was primarily articulated as part of Zhongnanhai’s general reflections on what constitutes a legitimate international order from a Chinese perspective. All of these articulations indirectly revolve around U.S. preponderance (or hegemony as the Chinese often dub it) and Washington’s propensity to “go it alone” on the international stage in the wake of 9/11. Around a year after the highly controversial, U.S.-orchestrated invasion of Iraq, one editorial reflects on the moral failure of war, stressing that “unilateralism leads to no peace [...] The Chinese have long held that international disputes should be settled by negotiation, while using force should be discouraged. [...] It is equality, sympathy, mutual tolerance and understanding that unite [countries] in a realistic yet firm way. [...] The

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719 Beijing Review (2014, #01: my own underlining). Moreover, the preceding paragraph articulates two other narratives namely `Sovereign China` and `Rising China`, see below for the full citation.

720 One such occasional reference (Beijing Review, 2013, #16) reads: “Xi reiterated China’s commitment to pursuing peace and development and carrying out equal and mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries.”
new strategy we call for in today’s world involves a win-win motivation and the doctrine of peaceful coexistence.” Such moral high-grounding, centered on universal principles of sovereignty, equality and peaceful coexistence, finds an unequivocal formulation in another editorial commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Bandung conference: “It [international community] should also respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, as well as the right of each nation to defend itself in conformity with the UN charter. [...] The [Bandung] conference turned out to be farsighted as this doctrine is still meaningful for today’s world. The essence of this doctrine is that all nations deserve respect. [...] We insist that the desire to show respect for other people’s beliefs, rights and systems is what a civilized nation is supposed to have.”

Even though Zhongnanhai predominantly enunciates the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative in terms of general principles during the 2003-05 period, the moral high-grounding also in a few cases directly targets Japan as part of territorial disputes and historical controversies: “So, the proposal of ‘shelving differences and seeking a common development’ in coping with the Diaoyudao issue could only be the product of China, rather than Japan. Its diplomatic considerateness is obvious, but the Japanese politicians remain uninterested in the proposal. They prefer to assume a Cold War attitude. They want to claim the islands. Once again, we see Japan’s stubbornness, maybe a national characteristic of this island nation.” However, what is more striking – and another indication of the discursive hegemony of ‘Globalist China’ during this period – the critique of Japan is actually quite

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722 The Bandung conference in 1955 was the first large-scale summit between Asian and African states, most of which were newly independent. Apart from promoting economic and cultural exchanges, the conference’s stated aim was to oppose imperialism and colonialism in any form.


moderate and restrained by other narrative logics. Hence, in the concluding paragraph of the same editorial, it is stated that “we are still confident in Sino-Japanese ties and in this unique neighbor. Not only because Japan in an important economic giant that serves all but also, and especially, because the Japanese nation is an indispensable force of world peace [sic!]. Also victims of World War II, the Japanese people, just like us, value and love peace.”

The secondary role of the `Sovereign China´ narrative during 2003-05 was even more pronounced in the 2008-09 period when only a single editorial partially addressed identity issues from the perspective of `Sovereign China´. Turning instead, therefore, to the most recent period, the `Sovereign China´ narrative has experienced quite a discursive surge, which makes it the second strongest narrative, scoring more than a quarter of all affirmative reference points during 2013-14. Unlike in the first period a decade earlier, by far the majority of the editorials now frame `Sovereign China´ in terms of China’s specific context rather than general principled considerations. The most prominent exception to this new trend is derived from another commemorative editorial, this time celebrating the 60th anniversary of China’s adoption of the principles of peaceful coexistence: “The principles were first proposed by China at the height of the post-WWII decolonization movement. They quickly gained the recognition of newly independent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America that yearned for equality in international relations. Today, while globalization has transformed the world into a community of nations with interwoven interests, the core values embodied in the five principles remain pertinent. One of these values is sovereign equality, which means that a country should be allowed to handle its domestic affairs free from

726 Ibid.: my own underlining.
727 The editorial does so to mark the 10th anniversary of Macao’s return to China (Beijing Review, 2009, #50).
foreign intervention, and international issues should be addressed through consultations by all countries concerned.”

Crucially, however, all the other editorials on ‘Sovereign China’ during this period pertain to China’s own political context, specifically targeting what Zhongnanhai perceives to be gross Japanese violations of either China’s territorial sovereignty or its traumatized history. In 2013, when political sentiments were still running high in the Sino-Japanese islands dispute over Senkaku/Diaoyu, three different editorials addressed the issue from the perspective of ‘Sovereign China’. For instance, “It should be noted that China was not the one that changed the status quo. China has long held the position that the dispute can be shelved when conditions are not ripe to resolve it. The current round of tensions flared up in September 2012 following the Japanese Government’s ‘nationalization’ of some of these islands, a unilateral move that forced China, the islands’ legitimate owner, to react. China is not the instigator of trouble; rather, its actions aim to cope with provocations from Japan.” In a similar vein of moral high-grounding, another editorial solemnly declared that “History has taught us many lessons. The injury inflicted by World War II has not yet been healed and the wars and upheavals in China since 1840 have caused deep pain. In order to avoid history repeating itself, the Chinese Government and people are actively striving for a peaceful international environment for its own development. Facing provocation, China will never give up its pursuit of peace, national sovereignty, safety and territorial integrity.”

729 Apart from targeting Japanese violations, there is also one editorial on ‘Sovereign China’ that focuses on the South China Sea and in particular Vietnam (Beijing Review, 2014, #24).
730 Beijing Review (2013, #07); ibid. (2013, #16); ibid. (2013, #49).
731 Beijing Review (2013, #07).
While the editorials featuring the `Sovereign China´ narrative in 2013 pivoted on the territorial row, those in 2014 were more concerned with the lessons of history under headlines such as “Doing justice to the past”, “Legacy of War” and “Somber celebrations”.

One of these editorials lashes out against Japanese premier Shinzo Abe and his controversial visit to the Yasukuni shrine: “Previous shrine visits by elected officials invariably drew international condemnation. They were deemed as attempts to whitewash history and as appeals to right-wing conservatives who refuse to show remorse for Japan’s aggressive past. The fact that Abe disregarded international opposition shows that the Japanese prime minister pays little concern toward the feelings of China or other nations. The visit aggravated tensions caused by Abe’s hard-line stance toward the China-Japan row over the sovereignty of the Diaoyu Islands and his vows to amend Japan’s pacifist Constitution.”

A similar outburst of moral high-grounding, informed by the “Sovereign China” narrative, is witnessed in a later editorial commemorating the victory in World War II over imperial Japan: “At present, however, Japanese right-wing politicians are seeking to deny the country’s dark past and amend its post-WWII pacifist constitution, moves that have shocked observers the world over. Under such circumstances, China's commemoration of the victory of the war serves to remind right-wing Japanese politicians and the international forces backing them that China has not relaxed its guard against Japanese militarism.”

In short, the content analysis shows that the `Sovereign China´ narrative once again assumes a strong discursive position during 2013-14 after being completely absent in the 2008-09 period.

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733 Respectively Beijing Review (2014, #02), (2014, #34) and (2014, #36).
734 Beijing Review (2014, #02).
`Sino-centric China`: Ascending the discursive horizon and fading out again

According to the content analysis, `Sino-centric China` first emerged midway into 2004 as a specific narrative in the editorials of *Beijing Review*, even attaining a dominant position during 2008-09 only to be relegated to a more peripheral position in the 2013-14 period. Although `Sino-centric China` received as many affirmative reference points as `Sovereign China` in the 2004-05 period (making it the second strongest narrative after `Globalist China`), a closer look at the affirmative references of this period shows that the underlying identity logic of `Sino-centric China` is far from clearly manifested from the beginning. On the one hand, China is certainly being framed as a distinctive civilizational community with an impressive cultural heritage that should elicit admiration. On the other hand, rather than stressing the uniqueness of Chineseness or cultivating it in a self-absorbed manner, the editorials accentuate the overall cultural diversity of the world, the dialogue between different civilizations and the value that China’s cultural heritage holds for mankind. In other words, in the early phase the identity logic of the `Sino-centric China` narrative is not quite as clear-cut and distinct as later, being to some extent shaped by the prevailing logic of `Globalist China`.

To take an illustrative example from an editorial on “China’s commitment to world heritages” (headline): “Now the conclusion: The Great Wall is forever an architectural masterpiece, of which the whole of mankind – not just the Chinese – should be proud [...] A five thousand-year civilization has enriched China’s landscape and nurtured a cultural milieu. And a sense of pride is inbred in its people. However, it must be made clear that these cultural relics are not just the gems of

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736 The first affirmative reference to `Sino-centric China` in *Beijing Review* is found in issue #19 (2004), which is the last issue of the 2003-04 volume (in this analytical context).
the Chinese nation, but also a common treasure of mankind, and thus should be shared by all nations.” Another example comes from an editorial on China’s all-inclusive culture that barely qualifies as an affirmative reference to the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative in terms of identity logic: “The fundamental reason for Christianity’s peaceful settlement and development in China lies in the fact that the Chinese culture is a very magnanimous, liberal and all-inclusive one with the nature of tolerability, absorbability and adaptability. [...] The Chinese are natural learners and diplomats, well understanding the importance of learning from others and the essentialness of peaceful coexistence. That’s why Christianity and other Western spiritual products could find a home here. [...] We believe a diversified world is a normal and healthy one.” Similarly, an editorial on the occasion of a Sino-French summit states that “Chinese culture constitutes an important part of, and is representative of, Eastern culture, while French culture is an important and representative part of Western civilization. [...] Culture implies dialogue. Dialogue should be advocated between different cultures; that is, diversity of cultures should be celebrated.” Importantly, while these examples reflect an emerging Sino-centric narrative logic, they also indirectly demonstrate the overall dominance of ‘Globalist China’ during the 2003-05 period.

Turning then to 2008-09, the apex of the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative, this period not only generated by far the largest share of affirmative reference points for ‘Sino-centric China’ (i.e. 42% of all) but also saw the emergence of a distinctively Sino-centric discursive logic. That is, the narrative now places self-cultivation, civilizational pride and cultural particularism at its discursive center, no longer putting emphasis on civilizational diversity and dialogue. In order to indicate

738 Beijing Review (2004, #19). As the editorial does, after all, view Chinese culture as an important and distinctive aspect of Chinese identity, I did code it as a reference to ‘Sino-centric China’.
this shift towards a more unadulterated Sino-centric logic one may highlight the headlines of editorials such as “Our past glories”, “Xian – ancient gateway”, “Unveiling the past”, “Heritage Dreams”, and “Protecting cultural heritage”. More specifically, one editorial concerns itself with how “China’s 5,000-year-old civilization has left a huge cultural legacy. The Beijing-based Palace Museum, which was established in 1925, has collected a large amount of precious cultural relics. These are integral symbols of the Chinese civilization. [...] The cultural collection in both museums shows an uninterrupted heritage showcasing the longstanding Chinese civilization.” Another editorial deals with the Four Great Inventions, stating that “The four symbolic creations—compass, papermaking, printing and gunpowder—are the pride of China’s 5,000-year-old culture, because of their recognized role in the development of human civilization.” The editorial subsequently worries about how to pass on to the younger generation “…the brilliance of ancient Chinese civilization. China used to be a leader in the field of science and technology. In more than 1,000 years after the fifth century, the large amounts of innovations in China formed a sharp contrast to the dim situation in Europe.”

Several editorials address, in much the same vein, the question of how to preserve China’s cultural heritage, providing detailed insights into specific elements of its rich civilizational culture: “On the 2,400-year-old bamboo strips now preserved in Tsinghua are inscribed several Confucian classics and historical works, which are very important for the exploration of China’s ancient history and traditional culture. The most exciting finding is the Book of History, the first compilation of documentary records of events in ancient Chinese history. The book is one of

the five Confucian classics.” Likewise, another editorial salutes Xian as “one of the world’s four ancient capitals” [along with Rome, Cairo and Athens] and “the showcase of brilliant history and culture. In China, there is no other city so closely connected with the country’s history as Xi’an, capital of northwestern Shaanxi Province. Remains of ancient sites and structures can be found everywhere within the borders of today’s Xi’an. Among them, the Terracotta Army found in the Mausoleum of Qinshihuang, founding emperor of the Qin Dynasty who united China for the first time in history, is now recognized as ‘the Eighth Wonder of the World’.”

In sum, during 2008-09 the identity discourse in *Beijing Review* is largely dominated by a distinctly Sino-centric narrative logic.

From being the strongest narrative in 2008-09, ‘Sino-centric China´ has subsequently lost much of its discursive traction, scoring only 15% of the affirmative reference points during 2013-14. As in the previous period, there are still some editorials that feature China’s civilizational heritage in a rather self-absorbed and self-cultivating manner, addressing its unique characteristics. For instance, one editorial is fully absorbed with the specifically Chinese Zodiac (or lunar calendar) system, while another editorial is concerned with the preservation of the Chinese handwriting style, making the point that “Over thousands of years, generations of Chinese have handwritten hanzi into a calligraphic art and means by which to spread ancient wisdom.” Other editorials, however, are adopting a somewhat more extrovert framing of the ‘Sino-centric China´ narrative, linking it to China’s growing international presence. One editorial, for example, uses the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the first Confucius Institute to celebrate

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743 *Beijing Review* (2008, #48); see also (2009, #30) and (2009, #45).
how Chinese culture is engaging the world. Another editorial, entitled “Restore the Silk Road” observes how “the Silk Road played an important role in creating marvelous civilizations and economic prosperity in ancient times. Around 2,000 years ago, a Chinese emperor of the Han Dynasty sent his envoy, Zhang Qian, to the unknown west in search of allies to resist the threat of northern nomads. Unexpectedly, Zhang’s journey pioneered a significant bond between China and Central Asia. Since then, a trade road linking China and Central Asia—even stretching as far as Europe—formed and countries along the road thrived.” Interestingly, this more extrovert version of the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative may indirectly reflect the discursive dominance of ‘Rising China’ during 2013-14 (see below).

‘Rising China’: Establishing a new discursive hegemony?

The ‘Rising China’ narrative does not manifest itself in earnest in the editorials of Beijing Review before well into 2009, after which it quickly becomes the most prominent narrative. In fact, from midway into 2009 the ‘Rising China’ narrative receives more affirmative references than any other narrative throughout the rest of the examined period (see appendix D for a detailed overview). Already in 2008, however, the first indirect reference to ‘Rising China’ appears in an editorial discussing China’s space program and its growing capacity to conduct manned spacecraft missions. “With the successful completion of Shenzhou 7’s missions and the crew’s safe return to the embrace of the Earth, China has once again demonstrated to the world its capability to explore the universe. Such a capability

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748 Beijing Review (2014, #13).
749 Yet, in terms of affirmative reference points (i.e. weighted values), ‘Sovereign China’ scores as many points as ‘Rising China’ in 2014.
conforms to China’s rising status in the world today, and should also help the country further pursue its space program in the days ahead. After all, space exploration has long been the cherished dream of our human race, and as a country with one fifth of the world population, China ought to make better use of its space technologies for peaceful purposes. It should also strive to contribute more to the progress and civilization of mankind, just as the forefathers of the Chinese nation did in ancient times. By explicitly linking China’s ambitious space program to its rising status in the world, the editorial seems to tap into the discursive universe of the ‘Rising China’ narrative, reminding us of China’s historic great power status and announcing China’s emerging capacity to adopt a leading role anew.

Apart from another indirect reference to the ‘Rising China’ narrative – stating that “China must have a powerful naval force to safeguard its national interests” – the first direct articulation of ‘Rising China’ appears in July 2009 in the wake of the founding BRIC-summit between the state leaders of the four emerging powers Brazil, Russia, India and China in Yekaterinburg (Russia). Under the headline of “Bricking a regime”, one editorial praises the new potentially powerful BRIC-formation, observing that “Some hailed the newborn while others worried about what it will grow into. Those uneasy feelings may be natural, from the perspective of international relations. None of the BRIC members is a Western power, but developing countries and emerging economies. They demand reform of the existing international system, which mainly caters to the interests of the old powers. [...] Brick by brick, the BRIC countries are working toward this goal.” In case, one might question the representativeness of this articulation of ‘Rising China’ – insofar as it may seem to rest more on the collective aspirations of a wider group

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752 Beijing Review (2009, #26; my own underlining).
of rising powers than on China’s own self-understanding – the next week’s editorial leaves little doubt of an emerging narrative shift of Chinese state identity. Once again, China’s technological progress (this time the ongoing construction of a global satellite positioning system called Beidou) serves as an occasion to put China’s rise into perspective: “China has continued to rely on its own resources to develop strategic technologies like this in the face of today’s highly competitive world. Such a strategy not only complies with the rising needs and status of China and conforms to its goal of becoming scientifically and technologically more innovative, but ought to be the basis for any nation wishing to grow stronger. Some Western powers said Beidou will threaten their military superiority or possibly encroach upon their commercial interests. This is a lopsided and narrow-minded perspective. In a world where competition dominates and leads to greater human progress, all countries have to compete to build their own strengths and develop for the benefit of the people and the world at large.” Hence, in a very explicit way, the editorial not only articulates the ‘Rising China’ narrative but also unpacks its underlying identity logic of social competition.

Later in 2009, an editorial entitled “Getting fit to win” about China’s physical competitiveness in the athletic arena begins by drawing a parallel to China’s overall capability to compete internationally: “Together with the People’s Republic of China as a whole, Chinese athletes have undergone an extraordinary process of development in the past 60 years, from being almost nonexistent to becoming highly accomplished and influential on the international stage. China has shed its image as the “sick man in East Asia.” Yet, the perhaps strongest example of the emerging ‘Rising China’ narrative in 2009 is found toward the end of the year when a newly elected Barack Obama makes an unprecedented first-year (four

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753 Beijing Review (2009, #27).
754 Beijing Review (2009, #44).
day long!) visit to China. The accompanying *Beijing Review*-editorial adopts a quite self-confident tone – at odds with earlier editorials on the Sino-U.S.-relationship⁷⁵⁵ – noting that “The United States welcomes China as a strong, prosperous and successful country, and recognizes its increasingly important role in regional and world affairs.”⁷⁵⁶ Even more importantly, the editorial also introduces a key term (underlined below) reflecting the changing vocabulary that comes with the ‘Rising China’ narrative: “The two sides also have realized the nurturing and deepening of bilateral strategic trust are essential to China-U.S. relations, and promised to respect each other’s core interests in developing the relationship.”⁷⁵⁷ Altogether, the cited editorials provide a clear indication of a narrative shift during 2009, bringing the ‘Rising China’ narrative to the fore.

Turning, finally, to the 2013-14 period, the ‘Rising China’ narrative demonstrates its dominant discursive position by scoring 39% of the affirmative reference points. One way to illustrate the discursive strength of ‘Rising China’ in this period is to focus specifically on those editorials that take stock of China’s development such as end-of-the-year editorials. Although the first of these (at the end of 2013) only indirectly touches on Chinese identity, focusing instead primarily on the latest breakthrough in China’s space program, the editorial nevertheless manages to drive home a point about China’s rising international status: “The monumental event makes China the third country to successfully soft land a probe on the moon after the United States and the former Soviet Union.”⁷⁵⁸ With a far more direct enunciation of the ‘Rising China’ narrative, the last editorial of 2014 discusses China’s still deeper impact on the world stage under the headline

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⁷⁵⁵ During the 2008-09 period, two other editorials (2008, #3; 2009, #3) concern themselves with the overall Sino-U.S. relationship, neither of which contain any passages that smacks of the ‘Rising China’ narrative.
⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.
“Brave new world”, the content of which bears a lengthy citation: “It [China] also made headway with the internationally acclaimed Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiatives, and the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund will bolster financial support for the construction of these two trade passages. [...] Notably, China’s hosting of the Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia and the APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting intimated that the country has assumed a new international role. China proposed to build an Asian security concept based on common security concerns and a forward-looking Asia-Pacific partnership during the meetings. Along with its partners, it came up with the vision of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific and outlined steps for its realization. All of the above demonstrates the systemic part China now plays in safeguarding regional stability and promoting cooperative development in the Asia-Pacific. The two gatherings testified to the nation’s ongoing transformation to a global trendsetter.”

Another occasion for painting with a broad brush was the 65th anniversary of the founding of the PRC in October 2014. The celebrative editorial entitled “Progress in the People’s Republic” is littered with references to `Rising China´: “it [China] is becoming an active participant in international relations, moving to the center of the world stage from its former role at the margins. [...] Premier Li Keqiang noted in his government work report that reforms would be the priority for 2014, with the goal of building China into a prosperous, strong, culturally advanced and harmonious country. This anniversary of the founding of the PRC has become a new historical starting point for the great renewal of the Chinese nation. However, there is still great potential to be tapped for further development—in moving for-

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ward from a big economy to a competitive economy, from "made in China" to "innovated in China". The corresponding editorial the year before also uses the anniversary of the PRC (the 64th) to paint the big picture of China’s changing status in the world: “The first 10 years of the 21st century marked a golden decade of development for China, as the country overtook Italy, France, Britain and Germany in terms of GDP, finally surpassing Japan in 2010 to become the world’s second largest economy next only to the United States. With China accession to the ranks of major economic giant, the international community has increasingly recognized China as another superpower.” Yet, the next couple of paragraphs in the editorial offers the caveat that China still ranks as number 87 in the world in per-capita GDP terms and that “the country has yet to build a powerful national defense system (sic!).” Still, in conclusion the editorial invokes the great power aspirations of the Chinese people by declaring that “China’s rapid rise has been a gratifying phenomenon for Chinese all over the world. [...] China now appears poised to fulfill the yearning desire to build a strong nation. This is a more meaningful goal that has never been so closely within reach.”

Possibly the most striking example of the discursive sway enjoyed by the `Rising China´ narrative is derived from an editorial on the first summit between Xi Jinping and Barack Obama, which took place in California back in June 2013. While the (above-cited) 2009-editorial on the Sino-U.S. relationship certainly broke new ground by framing the relationship from the perspective of `Rising China´, it still far from unfolded the full identity logic of the narrative, being mostly about earning respect and recognition as a major country with certain “core interests”. The 2013-editorial, however, analyzes the relationship within a
much more competitive framework that takes the identity logic of `Rising China´ almost to its ultimate conclusion: “Indeed, the leaders met at a time when the U.S.-dominated international system faces unprecedented challenges posed, among other things, by the emergence of major developing countries, including China. On bilateral and global issues alike, Beijing is seeking a voice commensurate with its rising status, a trend that will inevitably result in clashes with Washington’s vested interests. Their contentions over rulemaking in a wide array of areas are a strong testament to the ongoing shift of the center of gravity from the West to the East.”

8.3 Assessing the evolution of Chinese state identity in the 21st century
What are the main findings of the content analysis? One may start by presenting a graphical overview of the evolutionary pattern of the five Chinese state identity narratives in terms of their relative discursive strength throughout the 21st century so far (see figure K).

Importantly, figure K presents a rather clear-cut picture of changing hierarchical patterns with three of the five narratives each holding a periodical sway over the official identity discourse. Hence, despite spanning five separate narratives with discrete identity logics, Chinese state identity is neither too multifarious, nor too ephemeral to be a useful analytical variable, from which to derive a rather distinct logic of social identity. Indeed, the principle finding of this chapter is that at any point in time of the examined period the prevailing official conception of Chinese identity drew chiefly on one, at most two, narrative(s): `Globalist China´ during the first period, `Sino-centric China´ during the second period and `Rising China´ during the most recent period (with another narrative sometimes playing
an important secondary role). By establishing a hierarchy of relative narrative strength over time the content analysis moreover serves to pave the way for my overall explanatory agenda. That is, insofar as the independent variable of Chinese state identity may assume different “values” in terms of discrete identity logics, one may derive equally different expectations about Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century (more on this in Section 9.2).

The second main finding is that the ‘Globalist China’ and ‘Rising China’ narratives have gone through opposite paths of discursive evolution in the 21st century. Since the two narratives are predicated on very different types of extrovert identity strategies – of seeking social affiliation or engaging in social competition with salient out-groups respectively – their contrasting discursive patterns are an important indicator of a more fundamental change of Chinese state identity that is likely to have a direct impact on Chinese grand strategy as well. The potential implications of this narrative shift becomes all the more important given that the dominance of the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative midway into the period turns out not to leave much of an imprint on Chinese grand strategy for reasons to be explained in Chapter 10.

The third main finding concerns the specific emergence of the ‘Rising China’ narrative, which is critical for my underlying empirical hypothesis about a change of Chinese identity/grand strategy taking place in the wake of the global financial crisis (cf. Section 5.1). What the content analysis plainly shows is that ‘Rising China’ emerges as a distinctive narrative in the aftermath of the crisis as the dire consequences of the crisis for the West are becoming increasingly apparent. It therefore appears as if the narrative shift was generated by changing perceptions in Zhongnanhai of China’s position in the world – changing percep-
tions that were triggered, in the first place, by the global financial crisis (more on this in Section 11.2).

The fourth main finding – drawing on a set of observations from the content analysis left aside so far – is that a significant change in the salient out-group conceptions of Chinese identity takes place in the last part of the examined period. The change involves a much more frequent articulation as well as a far more negative framing of salient out-groups in the 2013-14 period as compared to the two previous periods. More specifically, salient out-group conceptions constituted respectively 26% and 21% of all positive observations in the 2003-05 and 2008-09 periods as compared to 60% in 2013-14 period. Likewise, negative framings rose markedly from constituting 41% of all salient out-group conceptions in the first two periods (with positive and neutral framings accounting for 41% and 18% respectively) to making up as much as 88% of all salient out-group conceptions in the most recent period (see appendix D for an overview).

What does this change reflect? In my view, it lends further credence to the other findings of this chapter. The first two periods were dominated by the ‘Globalist China´ and ‘Sino-centric China´ narratives respectively, both of which do not primarily rely on negative framings of their respective out-group. Conversely, the last period was marked by the ‘Rising China´ narrative with ‘Sovereign China´ as a prominent secondary narrative – informed by an identity logic of social competition and moral high-grounding respectively – both of which rest on the articulation of clearly defined, negatively framed out-group categories. Notably the United states looms large in most of the editorials as a negative frame of reference that constitutes an increasingly salient role in China’s changing concep-

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764 As pointed out in Section 8.1, I systematically registered the three most popular salient out-group categories – i.e. the West, the United States and Japan – and furthermore noted whether each out-group articulation was mainly positive or negative.
tion of itself as an emerging great power vying with the U.S. on the international arena.

To what extent do these findings correspond to the preliminary assessment in Chapter 7 (Section 7.7) of the five narratives’ relative strength in the 21st century? On the whole, there seems to be a relatively high degree of match. Above all, each of the central findings of the content analysis is fully compatible with the preliminary assessment based on the discourse analysis in Chapter 7. The latter also depicted ‘Globalist China’ as a dominating narrative during the initial period, ‘Sino-centric China’ as a prominent narrative in the middle period and ‘Rising China’ as an increasingly important narrative toward the end of the examined period. Chapter 7 was furthermore equally clear in describing a contrasting evolutionary pattern of the ‘Globalist China’ and ‘Rising China’ narratives. What was less clear from Chapter 7, though, was the more precise inception of ‘Rising China’ as a narrative – something that was instead pinned down by the content analysis. While the main findings of Chapter 8 are therefore quite consistent with those of Chapter 7, there is, nevertheless, a certain degree of incongruence between the two assessments that requires some clarification.

First of all, the evolutionary pattern of the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative, as depicted by figure K, does not exactly conform to the assessment in Section 7.7. There, ‘Sovereign China’ was described as a key narrative in the early period, after which it apparently lost some of its discursive traction, no longer being a prominent narrative by the end of the examined period. The first part of this incongruence is most easily accounted for: the discourse analysis of ‘Sovereign China’ in Chapter 7 relied to some extent on primary texts from the Jiang Zemin-period whereas the content analysis completely omits this period (for practical
reasons), instead conducting its first observations when Hu Jintao has just taken over Zhongnanhai. As a result, the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative might very well have appeared far stronger in the early years if the content analysis had been able to cover the 2000-02 period. When it comes to the last part of ‘Sovereign China’s’ discursive evolution, the incongruence is more problematic. Although the discourse analysis in Chapter 7 includes many sources from the 2013-14 period, it only sees ‘Sovereign China’ as a relevant narrative in that period, not a strong one (like in the content analysis, especially in 2014). The two most likely explanations for this divergence seem to be either the non-randomized selection of primary sources for the discourse analysis (see Section 7.1), which might have distorted the reliability of the analysis somewhat, or a possible “validity gap” between the two sources of the official Zhongnanhai-discourse. I consider the former possibility to be more likely than the latter.

Similarly, the evolution of the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative does not quite follow the pattern indicated by the discourse analysis in Chapter 7. While the emergence of the narrative during the early years of the Hu Jintao-reign is pinpointed by both chapters, there is disagreement when it comes to the narrative’s discursive status towards the end of the period. That is, according to the content analysis ‘Sino-centric China’ is effectively eclipsed by other narratives whereas the discourse analysis sees it as one of the dominant narratives in recent years. Once again, I will resort to the same two options for explaining the divergence as above with the reliability option being the more likely one. In the end, however, I intend to attach greater weight to the content analysis (than the discourse analysis) in gauging the discursive evolution of the five narratives given that the content analysis is rooted in a far more homogeneous data set.

765 Coincidentally, the first observation (editorial) in the content analysis comes in April 2003 as Hu has just been appointed president of the PRC (on top of his already acquired title as general secretary of the CCP).
What about the ‘Unified China’ narrative then? Actually, there is not really any incongruence between the two empirical analyses in depicting its narrative evolution since both of them see ‘Unified China’ as the least prominent discursive position in the 21st century so far. ‘Unified China’ was thus the least widely dispersed narrative in the discursive material in Chapter 7 and by far the weakest narrative in the content analysis (receiving only 7% of all affirmative references and 9% of the total points). It might be tempting to explain (away) the relative discursive weakness of the ‘Unified China’ narrative by arguing that it is really a domestic-oriented identity narrative, being the only narrative that identifies its salient out-group within China itself (see Section 7.4), and that my empirical material conversely predominantly targets an international audience. Although this argument seems to hold some merit, it is on the other hand worth stressing that the *Beijing Review* does not shy away from treating topics that are profoundly domestic in nature despite its international audience. Indeed, the majority of the editorials were discarded precisely because they were concerned with domestic topics such as the economy, the political system, provincial affairs, natural disasters etc. In other words, it is reasonable enough, based on the content analysis, to label ‘Unified China’ as the weakest of the five identity narratives in Zhongnanhai’s official discourse. In the first place, the narrative was incorporated into the analytical framework on theoretical grounds as it represents a Sinicized version of one of the five ideal-typical identity strategies (i.e. downward retargeting). While the two empirical analyses certainly testify that ‘Unified China’ is a relevant narrative of Chinese identity, they also suggest that it is not strong enough discursively to be a central driver of Zhongnanhai’s overall policy line – especially not in this IR-context of relating China’s identity to its grand strategy.
Chapter 8 has managed to establish a narrative hierarchy of Chinese state identity in the 21st century. It shows that three of the five main narratives of Chinese state identity have been particularly prominent, each holding a periodic sway over the official government discourse. As all the narratives rest on a discrete identity strategies for satisfying the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem, it matters greatly for Chinese grand strategy – I have claimed – whether Zhongnanhai’s discourse is dominated by, say, the ‘Globalist China’ narrative rather than the ‘Rising China’ narrative (provided of course that the logic of state identity significantly affects state grand strategy). My evolutionary account of Chinese state identity furthermore begs a final question, which is only of secondary concern to the dissertation: Why did the observed changes of Chinese state identity take place over the course of the first fifteen years of the 21st century, bringing different narratives to the fore? One may actually answer this question on the basis of the theoretical premises set up in the first part of the dissertation, but I will defer an answer until Section 11.2.
PART III: CHINA’S GRAND STRATEGY IN THE 21st CENTURY

Chapter 9:
State grand strategy and the rise of China

Until this point, the dissertation has been exploring the logic of state identity in general and the logic – or rather the different narrative logics – of China’s state identity in particular. In part III of the dissertation, I turn instead to the concept of state grand strategy in order to show how the logic of Chinese state identity can contribute to explaining China’s grand strategy as a rising power. While my theorization of the identity concept was predicated largely on key insights from outside the traditional domain of IR (i.e. social psychology), the grand strategy concept is widely considered to be the sole preserve of IR scholars; or more accurately, it is primarily associated with a specific subset of IR theory namely realism. As set out in the introduction, however, one of the key objectives of this dissertation is to demonstrate the explanatory potential of a mainstream constructivist approach in accounting for state grand strategy. Indeed, I will argue that my bounded constructivist theoretical framework (Chapter 2) – built on Social Identity Theory and a narrative-centered discursive structuralism (Chapter 3 and 4) – can explain state grand strategy on the basis of a very different set of explanatory variables than either realism or the third main IR contender of liberalism. What is more, the rise of China showcases many of the limitations that characterize realist or liberalist perspectives on state grand strategy as I will point out in Section 9.1. Although I am not claiming to advance a superior theoretical framework (compared to realism or liberalism), I do contend that an
identity-based perspective is a necessary, if not quite sufficient, constituent part of any comprehensive explanation of China’s grand strategy in the 21st century.

Part III of the dissertation consists of three chapters, the first of which (Chapter 9) is concerned with depicting the existing debate on Chinese grand strategy, delineating the grand strategy concept itself and deriving some empirical hypotheses about Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. In the following two chapters, I examine Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century in order to probe the plausibility of the posited relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy arrived at by the end of Chapter 9. First, Chapter 10 undertakes an empirical examination of Chinese grand strategy in relation to the prevailing international order in terms of a set of analytical distinctions between status quo and revisionism, engagement and detachment. The purpose of the examination is not only to discern and describe the main behavioral patterns of and shifts in Chinese grand strategy but also to determine the extent to which the observed patterns match the expected patterns derived from the empirical hypotheses. Subsequently, Chapter 11 first attempts more directly to trace a causal relationship between specific Chinese identity narratives and specific patterns of Chinese grand strategy and then provides a more comprehensive evolutionary account of the established relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy in the 21st century. On this background, the last part of Chapter 11 provides a critical assessment of the plausibility of my overall argument on its own terms and then compares my identity-based constructivist approach to a realist account of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century.

Before delving into the empirical substance of Chinese grand strategy, however, Chapter 9 needs to stake out the scholarly and conceptual terrain of its subject
Section 9.1 reviews the recent debate on Chinese grand strategy, provides an overview of the debate in terms of contending IR schools and situates my own approach to explaining Chinese grand strategy in relation to the existing literature. The second section briefly unpacks the conceptual baggage of the grand strategy term, explores the usage of the term in studies of Chinese grand strategy and offers a baseline definition of state grand strategy in relation to international order, which is then adjusted to my specific China-case. In the third section of Chapter 9, I specify the main ideal-types of grand strategy that China may pursue, I connect them (via empirical hypotheses) to the range of underlying Chinese narrative-borne identity logics and I finally translate the different types of grand strategies into discernible, measurable patterns of state behavior.

9.1 The IR debate on the rise of China and Chinese grand strategy

Few, if any, topics are as pivotal for the study of IR as the rise and fall of great powers. The rise of China – and thus relative decline of the United States – certainly underscores this point as witnessed by the extensive and contentious IR debate that has followed in its wake. After all, great powers are indispensable in forging a legitimate international order and foster a cooperative international society, which goes a long way to explain the scholarly commotion surrounding the rise of China. While there are still many observers who either question China’s potential to eventually overtake the United States as the preeminent great power or simply tone down the implications of China’s rise, long gone are the days when a serious China scholar could pose the (headlined!) question “Does China matter?” in a widely read *Foreign Affairs*-article from 1999 and provide
the following answer: “At best, China is a second-rank middle power that has mastered the art of diplomatic theater.” 766

Within IR, the rise of China first caught serious attention in the early 1990s as IR scholars, mainly of realist leanings, started pondering over likely threats against the newly established post-Cold War order dominated by the West. 767 Moreover, due to its violent repression in 1989 of the student-led democracy movement (the Tiananmen Square massacre) the communist regime in Beijing became a favorite target of criticism from various groups such as human rights activists, liberal missionaries and conservative hardliners. Several IR scholars started to depict China as a challenger, a revisionist power that should be contained before it amassed the resources and capabilities necessary to overthrow the prevailing order. 768 Concurrently with a series of bilateral clashes between Beijing and Washington in 1996 (the Taiwan Strait missile crisis), 1999 (the bombing of the Chinese Belgrade-embassy) and 2001 (the U.S. spy-plane emergency landing on Hainan) the choir of critical voices grew louder, allowing a so-called “China threat theory” to take root in some parts of the IR community. 769 At the same time, however, such China-bashing was countered by other IR scholars, some of whom (usually realists) simply downplayed the revisionist potential of a developing country like China, 770 while others (usually liberal institutionalists) pointed to a range of factors (e.g. growing economic interdependence, strong international regimes, democratization etc.) that would prevent China from becoming

768 E.g. Roy (1994); Rachman (1996); Segal (1996).
769 See especially Bernstein & Munroe (1997); for an overview of the subsequent debate on China as an emerging security threat, see Storey & Yee (2004).
770 Realists who downplayed China’s revisionist potential included, among others, Ross (1997); Segal (1999); Christensen (2001).
an outright challenger.\(^{771}\) In particular the latter group of IR scholars was in tune with the overriding political mantra of the day, championed by the Clinton-administration, which primarily saw the rise of China as an opportunity and devised a policy strategy of “engagement”. Engaging China politically, institutionally and not least economically would unleash a boundless trade potential and simultaneously embed China, the proponents argued, in a liberal world order that sooner or later would bring liberal democracy to the Chinese themselves.\(^{772}\)

At the turn of the century, an increasingly heated IR debate on the rise of China – largely revolving around the question of whether to view China as a threat or not and whether to contain or engage it\(^ {773}\) – seemed almost bound to constitute the primary axis of contention in the new century. Indeed, following the emergency landing of a US spy plane on Chinese soil in April 2001, Beijing and Washington locked horns in what turned out to be a very delicate and prolonged diplomatic standoff, characterized by some commentators as a prelude to an epochal struggle between a rising China and a declining America.\(^ {774}\) In the words of one of the leading China scholars at the time: “At the start of the twenty-first century, China and the United States teetered on the brink of a new Cold War.”\(^ {775}\)

Merely half a year after this incident, however, a new challenger to the U.S.-dominated world order materialized abruptly in the shape of Islamic terrorists. As the Bush-administration vigorously embarked on its global war on terror, the rise of China receded into the background of international politics, as well as IR,


\(^{772}\) See e.g. Gill (1999); see also Friedberg (2011: 90-94).

\(^{773}\) See Brown et al. (2000) for an overview of the debate; see also Deng & Wang (1999) for some prominent Chinese contributions to the debate.

\(^{774}\) See especially Kagan & Kristol (2001); see also Campbell & Mitchell (2001).

\(^{775}\) Goldstein (2005: 1).
for a time. Yet, it did not take very long before it reemerged as the war on terror gradually lost some of its traction while China kept rising apace, and the second half of the zeroes once again saw a rapidly intensifying IR debate on the rise of China.

**Contending explanations of Chinese grand strategy**

In the following sub-sections I present an overview of how the IR debate on the rise of China has unfolded over the previous decade (i.e. from 2005 to 2014). Specifically, I focus on those scholars that concern themselves with Chinese grand strategy and its underlying drivers broadly understood. Lining up the array of IR scholars, who have studied Chinese grand strategy, not only enables me to map the contending IR schools and their respective “explanations” of Chinese grand strategy; it also allows me to define my own approach in relation to the existing literature as I propose a new (bounded constructivist) perspective on Chinese grand strategy. Given the vast scope and multifarious character of the IR debate on the rise of China I limit my review to the most prominent contributions, with prominence being defined here simply in terms of the number of citations for each contribution. I furthermore attempt to categorize each scholar within one of the three main IR schools of the debate on the rise of China – realism, liberalism and constructivism – even though some of the scholars are sinologists rather than IR scholars and therefore not easily subjected to such labeling.\(^77^7\) An overview of the debate and the most prominent scholars is provided in table 4 below.

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\(^{776}\) In fact, one finds only a few prominent contributions on Chinese grand strategy from 2001 through 2004; these include Johnston (2003), Medeiros and Fravel (2003) and Deng & Wang (2004).

\(^{777}\) Those sinologists, who defy any such labeling, are designated as “not available” (i.e. N/A).
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Citations</th>
<th>IR school</th>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Avery Goldstein [<em>Rising to the Challenge</em>]</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>Realism [sinologist]</td>
<td>China’s growing power and the unipolar international system =&gt; instrumental status quo (to be seen as responsible and a strategic partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>David Shambaugh [“China Engages Asia”, <em>International Security</em>]</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>[N/A] [sinologist]</td>
<td>China’s new responsible diplomacy and institutional engagement =&gt; activist status quo (to enhance its regional role and reputation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Amitav Acharya [“Will Asia’s Past Be Its Future?”]</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>Liberal institutionalism</td>
<td>Constraints provided by interdependence and multilateral institutions =&gt; strong status quo (to reap the benefits of increased regional integration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Rosemary Foot [“Chinese strategies in a US-hegemonic Global Order”]</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>[N/A] [sinologist]</td>
<td>Chinese elite views of the U.S. world order and China’s position in it =&gt; deliberate status quo (to pursue development and avoid antagonizing U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>John Mearsheimer [“China’s Unpeaceful Rise”]</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Insecurity, competition, China’s rising power and hegemonic ambitions =&gt; strong revisionism (to establish its own regional hegemony)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Bates Gill [<em>Rising Star: China’s New Security Diplomacy</em>]</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>[N/A] [sinologist]</td>
<td>Evolving Chinese elite views of China’s new role in the world =&gt; deliberate status quo (to contribute as a responsible partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>David Kang [China Rising: Peace, Power and Order in East Asia]</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>Constructivism [sinologist]</td>
<td>China’s historical identity as a gravitational center of the Asian region =&gt; moderate revisionism (to peacefully reestablish its historic position)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Ann Kent [Beyond Compliance: China, international]</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>Liberal institutionalism</td>
<td>The primarily instrumental need to participate in international organizations =&gt; status quo (to comply with prevail-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only scholars with at least 100 citations have been included in the list. All citation numbers have been registered via Google Scholar between 01.03.2015-01.04.2015.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Status Quo</th>
<th>Revisionism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Taylor Fravel</td>
<td>Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in...</td>
<td>N/A [sinologist]</td>
<td>Domestic security, notably internal threats from separatist ethnic groups =&gt; instrumental status quo (reassurance to concentrate on domestic security)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>William Callahan</td>
<td>[&quot;Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-hegemonic or...&quot;]</td>
<td>N/A* [sinologist]</td>
<td>China's civilizational identity and the revival of the concept of <em>tianxia</em> =&gt; potential revisionism (to forge a Sino-centric world order)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Deng Yong</td>
<td>China's Struggle for Status: the Realignment of...</td>
<td>Constructivism [sinologist]</td>
<td>China's struggle for international status as its wealth and power increases =&gt; moderate revisionism (to be recognized as a great power)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>John Ikenberry</td>
<td>[&quot;The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the...&quot;]</td>
<td>Liberal institutionalism</td>
<td>The prevailing liberal world order that is open to rising powers =&gt; status quo (to reap the benefits of being part of the established order)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Alastair Johnston</td>
<td>Social States: China in International Institutions 1980-2000</td>
<td>Constructivism [sinologist]</td>
<td>The international institutional socialization of the Chinese policy elite =&gt; strong status quo (being socialized to become an insider)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Martin Jacques</td>
<td>[When China Rules the World: the End of the Western World...]</td>
<td>[N/A] [sinologist]</td>
<td>China's unique civilizational identity and its growing influence in the world =&gt; deep-seated revisionism (to build a new Sino-centric world order)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Robert Ross</td>
<td>[&quot;China’s Naval Nationalism: Sources, Prospects and the...&quot;]</td>
<td>Realism [sinologist]</td>
<td>Nationalism but also constrained by traditional security concerns =&gt; indirect revisionism (to gain respect as a great power)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Barry Buzan</td>
<td>[&quot;China in International Society: Is ‘Peaceful Rise’...&quot;]</td>
<td>Liberal institutionalism*</td>
<td>The constraints posed by the primary institutions of international society =&gt; moderate revisionism (to improve its status and some basic institutions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Callahan might be categorized as a constructivist IR scholar, but he is more accurately labeled as a critical IR scholar who deliberately avoids theorizing.

* Barry Buzan is more accurately labeled as an English School-scholar, combining constructivist, realist and liberalist elements, but in this review I will mainly focus on his liberal institutionalist insights.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Perspectives</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Robert Kaplan</td>
<td>“The Geography of Chinese Power: How Far Can Beijing...”</td>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Its growing power and thus expanding material needs/security interests =&gt; strong revisionism (to defend its expanding needs and interests)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Deborah Larson</td>
<td>“Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian responses to U.S...”</td>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>Concerns for China's international status in the face of U.S. primacy =&gt; moderate revisionism (to improve China's international status)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Aaron Friedberg</td>
<td>[A Contest for Supremacy: China, America and the...]</td>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>China's growing power and its authoritarian regime type =&gt; strong revisionism (to alter the existing international order)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Charles Glaser</td>
<td>“Will China’s Rise Lead to War: Why Realism Does Not...”</td>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>China's growing power, but dampened by a weak security dilemma =&gt; status quo (as China can continue rising without challenging the order)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Henry Kissinger</td>
<td>[On China]</td>
<td>Realism/constructivism</td>
<td>China's growing power, unique civilizational history and strategic culture =&gt; moderate revisionism (to establish a new balance of power with the U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>R. Schweller &amp; X. Pu</td>
<td>“After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order...”</td>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>The distribution of power and China's grand strategic visions =&gt; moderate revisionism (to delegitimize the American hegemony)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Wang Jisi</td>
<td>“Search for a Grand Strategy: A Rising Great Power...”</td>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>China's core interests and perceptions of main threats to these interests =&gt; moderate revisionism (to better serve expanding domestic interests)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>A Nathan &amp; A Scobell</td>
<td>[China’s Search for Security]</td>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Domestic and regional security challenges despite its rising power =&gt; instrumental status quo (to concentrate on domestic security challenges)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Even though Deborah W. Larson has written this particular article in collaboration with Alexei Shevchenko, I only refer here to Larson as she is responsible for their writing on Chinese grand strategy while Shevchenko focuses on Russian grand strategy (see also Larson, 2012).

* Henry Kissinger is usually considered a classical realist, who places as much emphasis on legitimacy as on power. In this review, I will primarily draw out the constructivist dimension of his work.

* As there are two separate, but identical versions of this article on Google Scholar, I have added together the number of citations for each of the two versions.
As seen from table 4, realism, constructivism and liberal institutionalism are the main IR contenders in the past decade’s debate on Chinese grand strategy. Yet, realist contributions to the debate are clearly more numerous than those of the other two IR schools.\textsuperscript{778} More importantly, I argue that the realist paradigm at any rate assumes an overall dominant position in the debate inasmuch as the non-realist scholars tend to define their own approach in relation (opposition) to the realist scholars.\textsuperscript{779} My review of the debate starts with the realist scholars, then accounts for the liberalist ones and finally engages with the constructivist scholars in order to carve out my own specific theoretical approach to explaining Chinese grand strategy. I will treat each of the unaffiliated scholars within the IR school that would most readily – in my reading – accommodate the specific approach of that scholar.

\textit{The realist IR school on Chinese grand strategy}

Realist scholars are not necessarily pessimistic about the consequences of China’s rise, but they are generally far more prone to see China as a potential chal-

\textsuperscript{778} One might note, though, that the majority of scholars unaffiliated with any IR schools can most reasonably be associated with a constructivist IR perspective.

\textsuperscript{779} Moreover, there are a number of prominent realist contributions that more indirectly analyze the rise of China (not listed here), some of which are included below.
lenger that will upset the current international order.\textsuperscript{780} Briefly put, realists ground their pessimism in a view of the international states system as ultimately characterized by the inescapable logic of anarchy, which breeds insecurity and competition, forces states to rely on self-help behavior and prevents them from transcending traditional rivalry and power politics.\textsuperscript{781} The relative distribution of power among states therefore becomes a key variable, and realist scholars moreover argue that the anarchical logic is particularly acute whenever a rising power becomes sufficiently powerful as to pose a challenge to the prevailing international order backed by the established great power(s).\textsuperscript{782}

In the present context of a China’s international rise, a wide range of realist scholars have employed such systemic-structural reasoning to account for China’s grand strategy and its international implications.\textsuperscript{783} For instance, in the words of John Mearsheimer, one of the most uncompromising realists, “no amount of goodwill can ameliorate the intense security competition that sets in when an aspiring hegemon appears in Eurasia.”\textsuperscript{784} “To put it bluntly, China cannot rise peacefully.”\textsuperscript{785} Taking his underlying IR theory as a point of departure, Mearsheimer furthermore argues that China will attempt to establish its own regional hegemony in Asia to consolidate its power and thereby enhance its security.\textsuperscript{786} In a similar vein, Robert Kaplan points out that a rapidly rising China cultivates new needs and apprehensions that force it to expand its zones of in-

\textsuperscript{780} Of the listed realist scholars, Charles Glaser (2011) in particular – and to some extent also Goldstein (2005: 212-216) and Nathan & Scobell (2012: xxii) – adopts an optimistic view of China’s rise. For a useful and still relevant overview of the basic arguments of realist pessimists and optimists, see Friedberg (2005: 17-29).

\textsuperscript{781} See especially Waltz (1979); see also Mearsheimer (2001).

\textsuperscript{782} Realists are themselves divided into several camps (more on this in Section 11.4). For an introduction to the various approaches within the realist canon, see Brown et al. (1995); Elman & Jensen (2014).

\textsuperscript{783} Some prominent realist voices in the debate that do not quite qualify (in terms of citations) for the above list include Yan X. (2006) and Wang Y. (2013).

\textsuperscript{784} Mearsheimer (2006: 162).

\textsuperscript{785} Mearsheimer (2010: 382).

\textsuperscript{786} Mearsheimer (2006: 160); see Mearsheimer (2001) for his underlying theory of international politics.
fluence. Indeed, Kaplan characterizes China as “a über-realist power” [whose] “foreign policy ambitions are as aggressive as those of the United States a century ago.”787 From a perspective, which combines realist structural logics with a focus on China’s authoritarian regime type, Aaron Friedberg observes that “Like other rising great powers, it [i.e. China] will ultimately seek to alter the existing institutional architecture in ways that are more conducive to its interests.”788 In the opening lines of his book, entitled *A Contest for Supremacy*, Friedberg furthermore makes the point that the recent acceleration of differential growth rates between China and the West has emboldened the Chinese leadership: “Since the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008-9, [the Chinese] have been far more assertive in word and deed than ever before.”789 One of China’s leading IR scholars, Wang Jisi, has made a similar point from a realist approach that combines a focus on China’s rising power, its core interests and leadership visions: “Based on the country’s enhanced position, China’s international behavior has become increasingly assertive.”790

Adopting different versions of structural realism to infer China’s grand strategy not only invites a constructivist inspired critique that it reduces China to just another identity-less state in the never-ending tragedy of great power politics (more on this below).791 It also, more specifically, seems problematic in light of the empirical record of China’s rise. Hence, despite the existence of periodically rather tense relations between China and the United States including the recent indications of Chinese assertiveness (see Section 10.3) we have certainly not in the post-Cold War era witnessed the sort of sustained rivalry or intense security

788 Friedberg (2011: 54; see also 37-38).
789 Friedberg (2011: xvi).
790 Wang J. (2011: 68); it should be added that Wang Jisi does not otherwise share the pessimistic projections of the above mentioned realists.
competition between Beijing and Washington that structural realists would expect – and have expected for decades!\textsuperscript{792} – nor have we seen China adopt any outright balancing or revisionist strategy.

In order to counter such critique, many realists contend that China is still not quite powerful enough to assume an openly revisionist role.\textsuperscript{793} Instead, the Chinese leadership is deliberately resorting to alternative strategies such as, firstly, reassuring the outside world to avoid any premature confrontations with or containment by the United States; secondly, keeping a low profile to concentrate resources on its domestic stability as well as its modernization process; and thirdly, attempting to delegitimize the leadership role of the United States to indirectly undermine the US-centered international order. As to the first type of strategy Avery Goldstein has argued that the Chinese leadership must “engineer China’s rise to great power status within the constraints of a unipolar international system […] China’s grand strategy, in short, aims at increasing China’s international clout without triggering a counterbalancing reaction”.\textsuperscript{794} According to Goldstein, it means that China’s grand strategy consists mainly of two reassuring components namely a strategic partnership program with other major powers and an attempt to assume the role as a responsible member of international society. With respect to the second type of strategy of keeping a low profile, Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell have recently pointed out how China is still bogged down in a host of domestic and regional security issues that prevents it from challenging the outside world. In fact, “vulnerability remains the key driver

\textsuperscript{792} See Friedberg (1993; 2000); Layne (1993; 2009); Waltz (1993); Mearsheimer (2001: Chapter 1).
\textsuperscript{793} See e.g. Mearsheimer (2010: 385); Schweller & Pu (2011: 53); Wang Y. (2011: 196-97); Layne (2012: 3).
\textsuperscript{794} Goldstein (2005: 12; see also 18-13).
of China’s foreign policy”, they claim. Turning to the third strategy of delegitimization, Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu claim that as we are transitioning from uni- to multipolarity, China has embarked on a sort of “soft balancing” strategy in order to contest the legitimacy of American hegemony in various areas without directly challenging the underlying international order. “In the short term, China seeks a gradual modification of Pax Americana, not a direct challenge to it.” Finally, a somewhat different perspective has been offered by Charles Glaser, who draws attention to the relatively mild security dilemma between China and the United States, owing mainly to China’s nuclear deterrent and the United States’ position as an off-shore balancer. As a result, “China’s rise need not be nearly as competitive and dangerous as the standard realist argument suggests, because the structural forces driving major powers into conflict will be relatively weak.”

In the end, all realists see (structurally given) security and power dynamics as a critically important factor in shaping China’s grand strategy, leaving Chinese leaders with a more or less tightly constrained maneuvering room for managing China’s rise in the international system. One may, as I do, certainly agree that security- and power-related dynamics are important factors in the shaping of China’s grand strategy. Indeed, I fully endorse two of realism’s key variables – rising state power and the relative distribution of power in the system – which have already been indirectly incorporated into my explanatory framework in

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795 Nathan & Scobell (2012: xiii; see also xii-xxii). Likewise, Tailor Fravel (2008b) has demonstrated how internal threats from notably ethnic separatists best explain China’s relatively low profile and pragmatic attitude in its relations with neighboring states.

796 Schweller & Pu (2011: 53; see also 41-42).

797 Glaser (2011: 81; see also 80-83).

798 Admittedly, some realists of the classical (Kirshner, 2012) and especially the neo-classical variant (e.g. Ross, 2011; Schweller and Pu, 2011; Nathan and Scobell, 2012; Christensen, 2015) assign as much explanatory weight to perceptions and politics at the domestic level (see also Section 11.4).
Section 3.2 in the form of the material hierarchy of international relations.\footnote{As pointed out in Section 3.2, the relative malleability of the international hierarchy of material power plays a significant role for a rising low-status state’s choice of identity strategy.} However, one may at the same time reject that security and power are the primary, let alone sufficient, explanatory factors at play. After all, if we are left with only realist logics, several central aspects of China’s grand strategy seem rather odd, if not outright incomprehensible. For instance, why has China allowed itself to become so economically interdependent with the United States and so deeply integrated into the prevailing international order if it were ultimately driven by security and power dynamics? Furthermore, can we adequately explain the shift towards Chinese strategic assertiveness in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century if the key realist variables have remained largely unaltered throughout the period, that is, a unipolar system with a rising contender? And perhaps most importantly – in order to demonstrate the insufficiency of a realist explanation – why does the Chinese leadership seemingly attach so much importance to China’s international status that it threatens to compromise China’s security as well as its power potential? While the latter two questions are dealt with in Section 11.4, the first question is addressed below as my literature review continues with an introduction to liberal institutionalism.

**The liberalist institutionalist IR school on Chinese grand strategy**

Liberal institutionalists – or simply liberals in the following\footnote{More precisely, one can distinguish between liberals and liberal institutionalists with the former focusing mainly on domestic factors and the latter highlighting the international level. Since China’s semi-authoritarian regime does not render itself easily to a domestic-liberal reading, most liberal IR scholars on China are in reality liberal institutionalists.} – are generally far more optimistic about the rise of China than are realists. Even though liberals accept the realist premise of an anarchical international system, they do not
view insecurity, competition and self-help as the mainstay of inter-state behavior. Rather, liberalists perceive states to be primarily motivated by shared interests, interdependence as well as the pursuit of absolute gains, and they emphasize the strength and autonomy of international institutions, which facilitate inter-state cooperation in various ways.\textsuperscript{801} Specifically, liberalists argue that the \textit{liberal} character of the current international order – i.e. being open, consensual and rule-based – makes its institutional architecture not only particularly effective in fostering cooperation but also quite resilient in the face of rising powers.\textsuperscript{802}

In the context of China’s rise, liberalists have investigated China’s changing pattern of participation in – as well as compliance with the rules of – international institutions and treaties over the past three decades, concluding on that background that China has become an integral member of the society of states. For instance, Ann Kent has observed that \textit{“Formerly castigated as a ‘rogue’ or ‘renegade’, China has changed its international behavior under the impact of international institutions.”}\textsuperscript{803} That is, China’s grand strategy has been constrained by its growing membership of a wide range of international institutions, and although China joined most of these for largely instrumental reasons, its participation and compliance with existing rules have changed over time from being primarily procedural to become deeper and more meaningful (with substantial variance across different institutional regimes).\textsuperscript{804} In what is to some extent a parallel study of China’s expanding and deepening involvement in the existing institutional architecture of international society, Alastair Johnston has (from a con-
structivist perspective\textsuperscript{805}) highlighted the socialization effect of international institutions on Chinese diplomats even within issue areas that mostly concern China’s security interests.\textsuperscript{806} Against this backdrop, Johnston states that “In sum, it is not a stretch to characterize Chinese diplomacy since the 1990s as being, in relative terms, more status quo-oriented than at any period since 1949. [...] Chinese foreign policy accepts that for the foreseeable future it will have to accommodate U.S. hegemony, or when it must be challenged, it will do so mainly inside international institutions.”\textsuperscript{807}

In one of the most-cited contributions on the rise of China, John Ikenberry presents a strong liberalist defense of the existing international order, pivoting on its specifically liberal nature. The crucial features of this Liberal Order are its extraordinary openness, institutional denseness, consensus-oriented governance and ruled-based character, which taken together “give the Western order a remarkable capacity to integrate rising powers.”\textsuperscript{808} In fact, it is nearly impossible, Ikenberry claims, for an emerging power to modernize without integrating itself into the Liberal Order.\textsuperscript{809} China is therefore best served, according to Ikenberry, by adopting a status quo-oriented grand strategy as “Today’s Western order, in short, is hard to overturn and easy to join.”\textsuperscript{810} Apart from looking at the global level, some liberalist scholars have focused on the growing interdependence between China and its regional neighbors, a dynamic process that has spurred regional institution-building. For instance Amatav Acharya has argued that China’s engagement in regional institutions has helped mitigate power asymmetries, fa-

\textsuperscript{805} Despite Johnston’s constructivist approach, I deal with his scholarship here because of its strong focus on the role of international institutions.

\textsuperscript{806} Johnston (2008: xiii-xiv).

\textsuperscript{807} Johnston (2008: 207-08; see also 199-212).

\textsuperscript{808} Ikenberry (2008: 31; see also 29-30).

\textsuperscript{809} Ikenberry (2008: 33).

\textsuperscript{810} Ikenberry (2008: 24).
cilitated effective cooperation and thereby also changed Chinese grand strategy.\textsuperscript{811} Regional institutions thus “\textit{bind China into a regional framework to restrain Beijing at a time of its rising power}”.\textsuperscript{812} In a similar institutionalist-inspired vein, David Shambaugh has observed how China’s commitment to multilateral institutions and treaties in Southeast Asia seems to reflect a changing line in its grand strategy.\textsuperscript{813} Consequently, “\textit{the United States and China’s neighbors should welcome China’s place at the regional table and the constructive role Beijing is increasingly playing multilaterally in addressing regional challenges}.”\textsuperscript{814}

Liberalist perspectives on the rise of China and its grand strategy clearly hold some merit. Ever since Deng Xiaoping officially launched the “Reform and Opening-up” program in the late 1970s, China has embarked on an overall foreign policy course that largely seems to conform to the basic premises of the liberalist IR paradigm. Hence, with explicit reference to the need for growth, progress and comprehensive modernization, Chinese leaders have allowed their country to become increasingly economically interdependent with the outside world – notably with its most salient out-groups (Japan and the United States) – as well as institutionally engaged in the prevailing Liberal Order.\textsuperscript{815} And as China has continued along its modernization track, growing ever more economically interdependent and institutionally enmeshed, its grand strategy seems to have become correspondingly constrained, binding China to a status quo-oriented policy course. While I, to some extent, subscribe to this liberalist line of reasoning, I also – as with realism – harbor a number of reservations.

\textsuperscript{811} Acharya (2006: 157-64).
\textsuperscript{812} Acharya (2006: 161).
\textsuperscript{813} Shambaugh (2005: 63-66).
\textsuperscript{814} Shambaugh (2005: 99).
\textsuperscript{815} The best examples of how Chinese leaders have directly linked China’s integrationist course with the imperatives of modernization can be found in the whitepapers on China’s peaceful development (SCIO, 2005e; SGIO, 2011a); see also Zheng (2005).
First of all, if the liberalist logics are as strong as their proponents claim, why has China never become a core member of the Liberal Order but rather retained an independent and somewhat distanced position towards the Western liberal powers (see Section 11.2)? Moreover, if growing interdependence and institutional integration increase the behavioral constraints on China’s grand strategy, why is China repeatedly having its most serious foreign policy clashes with exactly those states, with which it enjoys the most interdependent relationship (see Chapter 10)? Finally, although liberal international institutions may constrain state behavior, they may also be turned into institutional battlegrounds for clashing interests between China and its salient out-groups as witnessed in, among others, the UN Security Council and the ASEAN Regional Forum (see especially Section 10.3). In light of these reservations, I find the liberalist logic of (mainly) economic and institutional incentives to constitute a set of relevant but far from sufficient factors in explaining China’s grand strategy. I will not attempt to incorporate the liberalist logic into my explanatory framework in any way; nor will I directly compare the explanatory power of a liberalist approach with a constructivist approach informed by the logic of social identity.

However, I consider Barry Buzan’s English School-related distinction between primary and secondary international institutions to be a useful addition to liberal institutionalism. As one of the leading proponents of the English School, Barry Buzan has analyzed China’s relationship to international society over the course of China’s recent history, combining a focus on primary institutions with a concern for relative power and social status.\footnote{Buzan (2010: 5-36). Buzan could equally (un)reasonably have been discussed as part of my account of both the realist and constructivist schools.} From this perspective, Buzan labels China a “\textit{reformist revisionist state}” as it seeks some institutional revisions along
with an improvement of its relative status in international society commensurate with its rising power.\textsuperscript{817} I will return to the distinction between primary and secondary institutions in Section 9.2 as part of my discussion of state grand strategy as an analytical concept.

\textbf{The constructivist IR school on Chinese grand strategy}

Constructivist scholars constitute a variegated lot in this review, encompassing several scholars who do not label themselves as constructivists and some who do not even ground their approach to China’s grand strategy in any spelled-out theoretical framework. As such, it is far harder to present a distinctively constructivist perspective on the rise of China. What warrants treating these scholars as a single group, however, is their shared focus on social constructions as more important in accounting for China’s grand strategy course than either power/security dynamics or economic/institutional incentives. Broadly speaking, IR constructivist scholars study the socially constructed nature of international relations, and they emphasize how state interests, as well as the states themselves, are constituted or generated by various types of identities, norms, beliefs or cultures. Moreover, given their focus on social constructions IR constructivists tend to stress the discursive, contestable and thus changeable nature of international relations (even if social constructions may periodically congeal and become discursively structured, according to `bounded constructivism`).\textsuperscript{818} Although constructivism earned much of its original raison d’être in IR by investigating social constructions and socialization processes at the systemic level of

\textsuperscript{817} Buzan (2010: 17-18).
\textsuperscript{818} For a seminal treatise on mainstream IR constructivism, see Wendt (1999). For some overviews of constructivist scholarship, see Checkel (1998); Hopf (1998); Finnemore & Sikkink (2001); Dessler & Owen (2005); and more recently Adler (2013).
international politics (cf. Chapter 2), most constructivist China scholars have adopted a more narrow perspective, that is, an inside-out approach to how China socially constructs itself and accordingly its overall interests. Such an approach is not only justified by China’s position as a great power – as it enhances the relevance of the unit rather than system level of analysis – but also by a widespread belief, among constructivists, in China’s cultural, political and historical distinctiveness. After all, to believe that China represents just another rising power – as realist and liberalist theories imply – is to fundamentally neglect the specific character of China and consequently an important potential explanatory source of its grand strategy.

One group of constructivist China scholars, which only partially fits the constructivist label, highlights the role played by Chinese leaders in constructing the discursive premises for Chinese grand strategy. For instance, Rosemary Foot acknowledges that the unipolar international structure is a primary concern for Chinese leaders, but she contends that Chinese grand strategy is first of all shaped by elite perceptions, beliefs and visions as manifested in the official discourse. She further argues that “there seem to be two dominant policy perspectives at the base of Beijing’s strategy in this unipolar world; both hope for accommodation with the U.S.” From a similar perspective that examines China’s increasingly proactive security diplomacy, Bates Gill presents an elaborate account of the evolving discursive views and policies of the Chinese leadership as

819 Tellingly, Alastair Johnston’s work on the socialization of China in international society (Johnston, 2008) is one of a few examples, and by far the most prominent one, of a systemic constructivist approach to the rise of China.
820 These “constructivists” may also merely be categorized as FPA-scholars.
821 See especially Foot (2006); Gill (2007); Sutter (2012); see also Zhu Z. (2010).
it struggles to define China’s role and position in the world.\textsuperscript{824} Against this backdrop, Gill describes China’s grand strategy as status quo-oriented, guided as it is by a general belief among the leadership that “the overall tendency of world affairs is toward peace and development”.\textsuperscript{825} While these “constructivist” China scholars cogently capture Chinese elite perceptions and discourse, they are generally less concerned with uncovering the underlying factors that shape the discursive manifestations of the elite.\textsuperscript{826} A shortcoming that makes their contributions less relevant in this context.

Turning instead to the principal group of constructivist oriented China scholars, its exponents refer in various ways to China’s identity as a main source of China’s overall role, profile and strategy in its foreign relations. Where these constructivist scholars differ from each other is not only in their conceptualizations of identity but also in their far from uniform delineation of the key elements of Chinese identity. Attracting the most attention are a number of constructivist scholars who have explored China’s unique civilizational identity and its (potential) impact on China’s grand strategy.\textsuperscript{827} One prominent, if somewhat odd, example stems from Henry Kissinger’s book “On China”, the first part of which is devoted to China’s unique civilizational culture and strategic culture.\textsuperscript{828} “Throughout its history”, Kissinger concludes “China has acted on the basis of its singularity”, which is why China, imbued by its exceptionalist mentality, is naturally inclined to seek some sort of revision of the existing international order,

\textsuperscript{824} Gill (2007: viii-xi).
\textsuperscript{825} Gill (2007: 2).
\textsuperscript{826} Or worse, some of these scholars (e.g. Zhu, 2010: 6) link China’s evolving diplomatic discourse to the material needs of the modernization process, in effect reducing it to an utterly instrumental discourse.
\textsuperscript{827} Another group of constructivist oriented identity-scholars have focused on Chinese nationalism (e.g. Gries, 2004; Hughes, 2006; Zhao, 2014). Yet, I will disregard these scholars here, mainly because their analyses do not operate at the level of grand strategy.
\textsuperscript{828} Kissinger (2011: 5-90). The example may appear somewhat odd since Kissinger is traditionally associated with realism, but his ‘classical’ version of realism (e.g. Kissinger, 1994) is actually to some extent congenial to constructivism.
which primarily reflects the interests of the United States. Another example is provided by Martin Jacques’ book “When China Rules the World”, in which he, more fervently than Kissinger, challenges the view that the rise of China can be accommodated within the prevailing international order as “China should not primarily be seen as a nation-state but rather as a civilizational state”. Specifically, Jacques discusses what he considers to be the main Sino-centric elements of China’s civilizational identity, including its “Middle Kingdom mentality”, its conception of race and its Confucian moral system, all of which is likely to turn China into a revisionist great power. Likewise, William Callahan has demonstrated (from a critical constructivist approach) how Chinese intellectuals are increasingly cultivating a Sino-centric identity predicated on concepts such as Tianxia that stem from China’s civilizational heritage. Indeed, Callahan argues that rather than heeding the official government discourse of peaceful development we should pay attention to this Sino-centric preoccupation as it represents “a broader trend where China’s imperial mode of governance is increasingly revived for the 21st century.” Yet another perspective on China’s civilizational identity has been championed by David Kang, who focuses in particular on China’s century-long position as the civilizational center of a relatively peaceful, prosperous and harmonious East Asia bound together by mutual economic interests, a powerful China and not least a common Confucian culture. In light of this, Kang paints a far more favorable picture of a benign hegemon to explain

830 Jacques (2009: 18). Martin Jacques is actually a journalist, not an IR scholar, but his book has been widely quoted in the IR debate on the rise of China.
why China today “can be the most powerful state in the region and yet have stable relations with other states in it.”

Kang, Callahan, Jacques, Kissinger and other Sino-centric China scholars are certainly right in placing emphasis on China’s civilizational identity as ‘the Middle Kingdom’ and to investigate how it affects China’s grand strategy as a rising power. Yet, one should be careful not to overstate this Sino-centric tendency by disregarding other equally relevant narrative strands in China’s self-understanding. As shown in Chapter 8, the ‘Sino-centric’ narrative has actually lost some of its momentum recently, being overshadowed by in particular the ‘Rising China’ narrative in the official government discourse. At any rate, rather than focusing on a single narrative, my own constructivist approach deliberately embraces the narrative pluralism, which characterizes China’s state identity in the 21st century. To be sure, I am not the only constructivist China scholar who examines and systematizes the narrative pluralism of Chinese identity in an attempt to explain the overall direction of China’s foreign policy. For instance, one of the leading IR sinologists, David Shambaugh, has explored the discursive range of China’s international identities (or roles), identifying seven contending schools with different visions and guidelines for China’s overall foreign policy line. Although Shambaugh therefore makes the point “that China possesses multiple international identities and is a conflicted country in its international persona”, he also stresses “that the center of gravity on this identity spectrum does not lie in the middle or toward the Globalist end of the spectrum” [but

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{835}}\] Kang (2007: 4). Strictly speaking, David Kang’s book is more about how other states respond to China’s rise (limited balancing, he argues) than about Chinese grand strategy itself.

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{836}}\] Interestingly, the contributions of Kang, Callahan and Jacques were written during a time period when the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative actually dominated the official government discourse.

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{837}}\] Shambaugh (2013: 27-44). Shambaugh’s focuses primarily on the Chinese IR community’s discourse rather than on the official government discourse as I do.
Accordingly, “Beijing is not comfortable with this ‘Liberal International Order’ – despite having benefited greatly from it – and increasingly seeks to either amend or ignore it.” While I to some extent agree with Shambaugh’s portrayal of Chinese identity, his identity categories ends up being merely descriptive as he fails to provide any underlying explanatory logic for the narrative variation.

This brings me finally to a couple of constructivist-oriented scholars who share my agenda of theorizing the variation in China’s identity narratives with the aim of explaining the overall path in China’s foreign affairs. In a well-grounded assessment of Chinese foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, Yong Deng builds a comprehensive, SIT-inspired theoretical framework centered on identity-related status concerns to explain China’s overall relations to the outside world. Indeed, he claims that “the Chinese are intensely sensitive to their nation’s international status, treating it as if it were the overriding foreign policy objective” and furthermore that “the PRC naturally feels that its great power rise is yet to be duly recognized.” Less comprehensively but more in line with my own theoretical undertaking, Deborah Larson builds an explanatory framework on the basis of SIT-propositions alone, using the different identity strategies available to low status groups to explain China’s grand strategy in the post-Cold War era (see Section 3.3 for a comparison of how Larson’s framework differs from mine). On this background, she claims that China’s “foreign policies since the end of the Cold War have been motivated by a consistent objective – to restore [its] great power

838 Shambaugh (2013: 43). What Shambaugh calls ‘the realist identity school’ overlaps in most respects with what I have termed the ‘Rising China’ and ‘Sovereign China’ narratives.
839 Shambaugh (2013: 309).
840 For other examples of scholars who investigate the narrative pluralism of Chinese identity in a mainly descriptive manner, see Zhu L. (2010); Rozman (2011: esp. 89-90).
842 Deng (2008: 8; 9).
status.” More specifically she argues that China, in the first decade of the 21st century, has adopted an identity strategy of social creativity in order to gain respect and recognition from the outside world. “In sum, China has increasingly taken on a more activist, constructive world role that includes increased support for multilateralism, a policy that has reassured other states, enhanced China’s global role, and increased its relative status.”

Both Deng and Larson should be credited for aptly highlighting China’s status concerns and how they affect China’s grand strategy. What is missing from their accounts, however, is an appreciation of the equally strong cognitive need for social distinctiveness, which plays a significant role in four of China’s five official identity narratives in the 21st century (see Chapter 7), and which is also crucial, as I shall argue in Section 11.2, for understanding the narrative shift away from the ‘Globalist China’ narrative. What is furthermore missing from their accounts is a realization that a state’s desire for positive self-esteem cannot be reduced to international status concerns. Hence, identity strategies of social creativity are introvert rather than extrovert, generating positive self-esteem by other strategies than direct status comparison with the salient out-groups (cf. Section 3.2). For example, when Zhongnanhai from the middle of the 2000s increasingly articulated a ‘Sino-centric China’ identity narrative (based on an identity strategy of social creativity, i.e. self-cultivation), the narrative clearly aimed at improving China’s self-esteem by taking pride in China’s civilizational distinctiveness (see Section 7.5). Yet, such an identity strategy does not directly feed into China’s international status concerns in the same way as the far more extrovert identity strategies of social affiliation and not least social competition do. In other words,

844 Shevchenko & Larson (2010: 82-87). What Larson sees as an identity strategy of social creativity, I see as social affiliation (see Section 3.2).
if states are motivated by (among other factors) the dual identity-generated needs for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem, a focus on China’s status struggle risks becoming too narrow to provide a strong identity-based explanation of Chinese grand strategy.

9.2 Defining state grand strategy
My review in the previous section demonstrated that even though there is already an extensive theoretically informed IR debate on Chinese grand strategy, my own constructivist approach offers a novel perspective. This is important inasmuch as my contribution on Chinese grand strategy does not come from uncovering new empirical data or from disputing the mainstream empirical account of the overall direction of China’s foreign policy in the 21st century. Rather, based on my constructivist SIT-framework, I will attempt to provide a different type of explanation of what I perceive to be the mainstream empirical account of Chinese grand strategy. Specifically, it means that I will infer some hypotheses on Chinese grand strategy from my theoretically guided evolutionary mapping of China’s official identity narratives and then probe the relative plausibility of these hypotheses against the existing empirical evidence.

Yet, before I can arrive at these hypotheses and undertake an operationalization of Chinese grand strategy, Section 9.2 needs to zoom in on the concept of state grand strategy itself in order to clarify how I define it in the context of a rising China. This is not a straightforward task since there is no widespread scholarly consensus about how to approach the concept, let alone a well-established definition of it. Taking the reviewed debate about Chinese grand strategy as a point
of departure, the conceptual pluralism within the literature is easily illustrated. First of all, scholars from different IR schools not only employ different explanatory factors; they also tend to foreground different aspects of China’s grand strategy (with realists often focusing on China’s military modernization, liberals typically studying China’s ongoing institutional integration and constructivists usually drawing attention to China’s status-enhancing measures). Furthermore, several of the reviewed scholars examine China’s grand strategy without ever referring explicitly to the concept. This scholarly pluralism notwithstanding, I argue that one may at the same time discern some common conceptual denominators, binding together this literature around the concept of grand strategy.

One such common denominator is, unsurprisingly, the adoption of a strategic perspective on Chinese foreign policies, irrespective of whether the specific scholar actually deems Zhongnanhai to be pursuing China’s foreign policies in a strategic manner. Although a range of specific elements of China’s foreign affairs are being investigated, all the reviewed scholars do so with the ultimate aim of being able to discern the broader patterns in Chinese foreign policy and to discuss what kind of (if any deliberate) grand strategy such patterns reflect. Another common denominator is that all the reviewed contributions are concerned with China’s position in and attitude towards the existing international order. In fact, all the scholars use the terms “revisionist” and “status quo” (or similar meaning terms) to discuss whether China’s grand strategy is compatible with the prevailing international order. Table 4 (above) provides a brief overview of how each scholar can be located with respect to the distinction between revisionism and status quo. In light of the reviewed literature, state grand strategy may thus initially be conceived of as the strategic aspects of a state’s foreign pol-
icies in relation to the prevailing international order. Before settling for a more specific definition, however, let me address some of the available definitions in the wider IR literature.

Apart from the debate on China’s grand strategy, most of the IR literature on state grand strategy deals either with great power politics in historical eras or with American grand strategy in the current post-Cold War era. While some of this realism-dominated literature is, as already noted, overly preoccupied with the military dimension of state grand strategy, one also finds a set of somewhat broader definitions. For example, in his Cold War-study of the Truman-administration Melvyn Leffler defines state grand strategy as “the process by which officials identified vital national security interests and charted the political, economic, military and diplomatic moves necessary for their realization.” In a similar realist vein, Christopher Layne delineates state grand strategy as a three-step process of “determining a state’s vital security interests; identifying the threats to those interests; and deciding how best to employ the state’s political, military and economic resources to protect those interests.” From yet another realist perspective, Wang Jisi has stated that “Any country’s grand strategy must answer at least three questions: What are the nation’s core interests? What external forces threaten them? And what can the national leadership do to safeguard them?” Although broader in their inclusion of non-military strategic means, these realist definitions are still too narrowly concerned with security and threats when it comes to the overall (national) interests or goals of the state.

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846 On state grand strategy in a historical context, see e.g. Posen (1986); Kennedy (1991); Leffler (1992); Kupchan (1994); Schweller (1994). For some prominent examples from the vast literature on American grand strategy, see e.g. Layne (1997); Art (2003); Deibel (2007); Brooks et al. (2012).
847 Colin Gray (2007: 1) makes a useful distinction between strategy and grand strategy, where “The latter embraces all the instruments of statecraft, including the military.” For a similar argument, see Feng H. (2007: 35).
848 Leffler (1992: ix).
Instead, a third set of (mainly) realist scholars have chosen a more minimalist (and thus wider) definition of grand strategy that may at the same time open up the field to non-realist approaches. Most prominently, leading IR scholars such as Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry and William Wohlforth have recently opted for a definition of grand strategy as “a set of ideas for deploying a nation’s resources to achieve its interests over the long run.” In one of the most cited studies on Chinese grand strategy, Avery Goldstein also adopts a rather wide definition, seeing it as a “guiding logic or overarching vision about how a country’s leaders combine a broad range of capabilities linked with military, economic and diplomatic strategies to pursue international goals.” I will employ a similarly wide baseline definition of state grand strategy as a set of principles for the strategic employment of a state’s resources to pursue its overall goals. By “strategic employment” I simply mean that activities are systematically coordinated as well as long-run oriented and what I refer to as “a state’s resources” may encompass “diplomatic, political, military and economic means”. This baseline definition will be expanded somewhat below to better reflect my case study, but prior to that I will address two other elements from the definition namely “overall state goals” and “a set of principles”.

What do I mean by a state’s overall goals (or national interests), and could they in themselves determine grand strategy? As long as one operates at the level of overall state goals – such as enjoying security, becoming powerful, promoting development, sustaining prosperity, safeguarding independence, gaining outside recognition or achieving a higher status – such abstract goals can be pursued by

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851 Brooks et al. (2012: 11). With this definition, the authors are able to focus on three aspects of U.S. grand strategy namely managing threats, promoting prosperity and sustaining the international order. For similarly minimalist definitions, see also e.g. Narizny (2007: 8); Gaddis (2009: 7); Drezner (2011: 58); Feng Z. (2012: 319).
852 Goldstein (2005: 19).
means of quite diverse state grand strategies. For instance, even if one believes, like most realists do, that security is the overriding national interest of the state, security may in principle be achieved equally plausibly by an activist (internationalist) or inactivist (isolationist) grand strategy as well as a defensive (accommodationist) or offensive (expansionist) grand strategy. Analogously, my privileging of identity-related “goals” does not in advance exclude or favor certain types of state grand strategies. However, as soon as one starts to specify these “identity goals” – i.e. what I have identified as the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem that may be satisfied by virtue of five separate identity strategies – the link between “goals” and grand strategy becomes less flexible. Indeed, I will argue below, as part of my formulation of hypotheses on Chinese grand strategy, that the discursive logics of specific identity narratives render some types of grand strategy far more likely than others. As each identity narrative is predicated on a distinct identity strategy (for satisfying the dual needs for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem) state grand strategy may in this sense be perceived as the basic identity strategy of the state writ large.

Next, given my definition of grand strategy as a set of principles, one may reasonably ask in the context of China if Zhongnanhai has even formulated any such principles or overarching guidelines. Consulting the literature on Chinese grand strategy reveals that scholars diverge markedly on this question. A rather skeptical view comes from one of China’s leading IR scholars, Wang Jisi, who has observed that “the Chinese government has yet to disclose any document that comprehensively expounds the country’s strategic goals and the ways to achieve

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853 For a similar line of reasoning about the decoupling of state grand strategy from state interests/goals, see Johnston (1995: 114-116).
854 For a couple of very different realist theorizations of security-seeking state grand strategies, see e.g. Glaser (1994) and Schweller (1996).
them.” Another skeptic, Feng Zhang, has claimed that even though we may post hoc rationalize its overall foreign policies, “China cannot be said to have developed a premeditated grand strategy in the reform period.” Robert Sutter even goes as far as to state that due to high levels of complexity and insecurity, “Chinese leaders are in no position to formulate and implement a coherent and lasting strategy in foreign affairs.” Yet, there are also a number of affirmative views from scholars, who attribute China’s grand strategy directly to specific official government sources. For instance, Timothy Heath has argued that “Because China lacks a national strategy document, observers may conclude that any attempt to deduce such a strategy from disparate [official] writings can only produce contrived and artificial results. [...] Unfortunately, the neglect of key party writings denies observers a rich and authoritative source of insight into China’s strategic intent. [In fact,] the national strategy [...] is a coherent one, even though its contents are captured in diverse authoritative sources” Barry Buzan likewise sees China’s grand strategy as springing directly from its official government discourse: “China therefore does not need to invent a grand strategy, because it has already articulated one that is based on a home-grown idea: ‘peaceful rise/development’.”

While it is certainly true that China’s grand strategy cannot be reduced to any single document officially published by the Chinese government, I nevertheless concur with Heath and Buzan that one may discern some of the underlying principles of China’s grand strategy by tapping into a number of key documents. One such document is the recently published whitepaper on “China’s Military Strate-

856 Feng Z. (2012: 337).
857 Sutter (2012: 1).
858 Heath (2012: 54).
859 Buzan (Buzan, 2014: 383).
“China’s Military Strategy” (2015), referred to by some as the first-ever of its kind even though it largely carries on the Chinese government’s practice since 1995 of publishing a biannual white paper on China’s national defense.\(^{860}\) Another key document on Chinese grand strategy is the government white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development” from 2011, which appears even more relevant in this context as it comprises a broader set of strategic considerations than those narrowly related to defense, military and security issues.\(^{861}\) Yet, there are a wide range of official documents (such as the Party Congress Work Reports), containing more or less relevant insights on how China sees the outside world and how (strategically) it wants to interact with it.\(^{862}\) Therefore, if one knows how to navigate in the official party and government discourse, one could use it to identify the guiding principles behind China’s grand strategy provided, of course, that one has faith in the official discourse (see below). For a number of reasons, however, I will not pursue that path.

First of all, as I have already analyzed much of the official government discourse, including the whitepaper on “China’s Peaceful Development”, to derive my independent (identity) variable, I would risk conflating it with my dependent variable (grand strategy) if I were to employ the same kind of sources. Instead, my explanatory agenda seems best served by keeping the two variables as separate as possible by extracting Chinese grand strategy primarily from behavioral indicators (as argued in Section 5.1). Furthermore, by forgoing the official government discourse I deflect the traditional, usually realist, criticism that whitepa-

\(^{860}\) See SCIO (2015), “China’s Military Strategy”. The white paper has been characterized as the first-ever of its kind by e.g. Sullivan & Erickson (2015). Conversely, Dennis Blasko (2015) provides a sounder assessment of the new white paper as an extension of earlier white papers on China’s national defense. For the previous whitepaper on China military modernization, see SCIO (2013), “The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces”.  
\(^{862}\) For an example of a Work Report, see http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40182&cHash=15c31780cea335c08645f1644ef17799#VUonFqPU-70 [accessed 06.05.2015].
pers and other government documents are at best irrelevant, at worst deliberately misleading, sources on China’s real grand strategy, which should rather be deduced from its actual behavior (or theoretically inferred from systemic-structural incentives). As such, my approach involves a distinction between discourse and behavior, but unlike realists I believe that discourse may actually hold the key (in the form of discursively accessible identity logics) to explaining behavior (i.e. grand strategy). Hence, while I define state grand strategy as “a set of principles” that may be more or less easily accessible via discursive sources, I choose, on the other hand, to derive these principles mainly from behavioral indicators to reduce the risk of causal conflation.

Finally, I have not adequately addressed the argument made by Robert Sutter and other China scholars that the Chinese leadership is incapable of formulating a coherent grand strategy because of cognitive complexity or perhaps competing political interests. Although it may appear to be a plausible line of reasoning – after all, China’s rapid rise has obviously multiplied the number of challenges and interests at play in China’s foreign policy – I do not subscribe to it. For one thing, as a very resourceful, semi-authoritarian regime with a highly centralized political system (see Section 5.2) the PRC certainly seems fully capable of not only formulating a set of authoritative guidelines for Chinese grand strategy but also of implementing such guidelines in actual behavioral measures. For another, few scholars would dispute that China during, for example, the 1990s was strategically guided in its foreign policy by some overarching principles such as

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863 To paraphrase some of the realist points made in Section 5.2 and 9.1: Talk is cheap, and official government discourse is therefore instrumental in its attempt to alleviate the fears of the outside world of China’s rise (see e.g. Mearsheimer, 2010; Layne, 2012; Wang, 2013).

864 Sutter (2012); see also Jakobson & Knox (2010: vii, 1); Zhu L (2010: 57). Tellingly, those scholars, who paint a picture of China’s foreign policy incoherence, tend to study the various levels of, the increasing number of actors in and the specific decision-making processes of Chinese foreign policy, all of which make them more prone to focusing on complexities and inconsistencies.
Deng Xiaoping’s “Reform and Opening-up program” as well as his “Keeping a low profile”-guideline (see Section 10.1).\textsuperscript{865} Despite rapidly changing circumstances over the past few decades, I see no inherent obstacles for Zhongnanhai preventing its representatives from adopting a strategic approach to China’s overall foreign policy line. Ultimately, however, the question about strategic guidance of Chinese foreign policy is an empirical one: If I find no consistency in China’s overall foreign policy line (in Chapter 10), it would seem far-fetched to insist on it being guided by a set of underlying strategic principles.

\textit{State grand strategy in relation to international order}

Having addressed a number of conceptual issues, I now return to my baseline definition of grand strategy in order to slightly customize it to my case study. What I propose here is an appendage to the definition, reflecting the case-specific focus on a rising China whose chief strategic challenge – as demonstrated in the literature review above – is how to manage its rise within an already existing international order. More specifically, I suggest the following addition to the baseline definition of state grand strategy as a set of principles for the strategic employment of a state’s resources to pursue its overall goals \textit{in relation to the existing international order}. Although a bit narrower, this definition of grand strategy is thus still sufficiently broad to cover the current debate on Chinese grand strategy.\textsuperscript{866} Bringing the concept of international order into the definition requires a few reflections on what I mean by the concept. Like most other key IR

\textsuperscript{865} On the centrality of Deng’s strategic guidelines, see e.g. Deng Y. (2008: 41-42); Dittmer (2010: 49-52); Sham-baugh (2013: 18-20). Whether or not such grand strategy principles were explicitly formulated in official government discourse is not so important here – given my focus mainly on behavioral indicators – as whether or not these principles actually provided strategic guidance for China’s overall foreign policy.

\textsuperscript{866} Barry Buzan (2010; 2014) has been equally specific in emphasizing China’s relationship to the existing international order in his approach to Chinese grand strategy – even if his definition of grand strategy does not quite reflect this (Buzan, 2014: 385).
concepts, international order is a heavily loaded term, having spawned a long-standing debate among IR scholars about, among other things, how to define international order, how to build, sustain or revise it and how important are great powers, institutions or norms and culture in providing order.\footnote{On the concept of international order, see e.g. Bull (1977); Clark (1989); Holsti (1991); Paul & Hall (1999); Ikenberry (2001); Kissinger (2014).} This debate notwithstanding, suffice here is to clarify my approach to the concept of international order and the way I will make use of it in the context of state grand strategy.

Loosely combining Hedley Bull’s seminal treatise on international order with key points from the prevailing IR schools, I will conceive of international order as an institutionalized pattern of inter-state practice that reflects the elementary goals, normative ideals and power constellation of the society of states in the system.\footnote{Bull’s (1977: 16) famous definition reads “a pattern or disposition of international activity that sustains those goals of the society of states that are elementary, primary or universal.” These goals are primarily associated with the security of states, the sanctity of agreements and the protection of territorial rights (Bull, 1977: 16–19).} With this definition, I deliberately blur the distinction made by the English School between international order and international society in order to gain a broader concept.\footnote{For an English School-definition of international society, see Bull (1977: 13); Bull & Watson (1984: 1).} What is more, following John Ikenberry I will refer to the existing (prevailing) international order as the \textit{Liberal Order}, which was built and designed largely by the liberal-democratic Western great powers, and which despite the rise of China and other emerging powers still does not face any rivaling orders.\footnote{See especially Ikenberry (2009; 2011).} In this context of state grand strategy, there are three aspects of international order that are of particular relevance.

Firstly, I emphasize the institutional aspect of international order. This is what, for example, John Ikenberry captures as “the explicit principles, rules and institu-
tions that define the core relationships between states that are party to the order”\textsuperscript{871} or what Christian Reus-Smit describes as fundamental institutions, defining “the elementary rules of practice that states formulate to solve the coordination and collaboration problem.”\textsuperscript{872} Crucially, one can make a useful English School-distinction between primary and secondary institutions with the former being characterized as more durable, gradually evolving patterns of interstate practice that have a constitutive role in relation to the states themselves.\textsuperscript{873} As further specified by Barry Buzan, secondary institutions comprise all the specific organizations, treaties and regimes that states have consciously designed to solve their coordination and cooperation problems, whereas primary institutions comprise the deeper, order-providing principles such as sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, great power management, equality of people and the market.\textsuperscript{874} In that sense, most of the primary institutions predate the Liberal Order while the secondary institutions, on the other hand, can be seen as specific products of it.

Secondly, I highlight the normative ideals involved in the institutional ordering of international society. Such normative ideals have been captured by, for example, Samuel Barkin and Bruce Cronin, who stress how “understandings of legitimacy tend to change from era to era” and how “the norms of the international order [may, for instance.] favor national over state sovereignty”.\textsuperscript{875} Likewise, Janice Mattern points out how international order is “fundamentally rooted in the stable

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\textsuperscript{871} Ikenberry (2001: 23).
\textsuperscript{872} Reus-Smit (1999: 14).
\textsuperscript{873} Buzan (2004: chapter 6). Reus-Smit (1999: chapter 1) likewise proposes a hierarchical order of international institutions as he distinguishes between “the constitutional structure” (deepest level) and “fundamental institutions”.
\textsuperscript{874} Buzan (2004: 176-90). It should be added that Buzan analyzes these institutions in relation to international society (rather than international order).
\textsuperscript{875} Barkin & Cronin (1994: 108).
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expectations and behaviors constituted by international identities,” while Mlada Bukovansky argues that every international “order posits a specific form of political authority as legitimate, and the rules of the game of international relations are conditioned by these authority conceptions” (themselves grounded in specific normative cultures, as demonstrated by Bukuvansky). Furthermore, Christian Reus-Smit writes of “coherent ensembles of intersubjective beliefs, principles and norms that perform two functions in ordering international societies: they define what constitutes a legitimate actor, entitled to all the rights and privileges of statehood; and they define the basic parameters of rightful state action.” What these constructivist approaches to international order have in common is that they theorize identity-related conceptions of what constitutes legitimate statehood in the society of states. Since the end of the Cold War, such conceptions of legitimate statehood have been largely rooted in the norms and ideals of liberal democracy associated with the Liberal Order. Hence, the normative ideals of the prevailing Liberal Order play an important part in determining the relative legitimacy and status of any individual state in the system.

Third and finally, I will draw attention to the power constellation in the system and how it affects the international order. As pointed out by realist scholars, given the anarchical nature of the international system (i.e. no overarching authority), the distribution of power among states is critical to the stability of any international order. Some realists like Henry Kissinger posit that order requires “a balance of power that enforces restraint where rules break down, preventing one

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878 Reus-Smit (1999: 30; my own underlining). See also Hall (1999).
879 On the normative values and ideals of the Liberal Order, see Deudney & Ikenberry (1999); Ikenberry (2009); Dunne & Flockhart (2013).
880 According to Waltz (1979: 88-89), anarchy can be defined as the ordering principle of international relations.
unit from subjugating all others.” Likewise, in the words of John Hall & T.V. Paul “The major prescription [of] realism for creating and sustaining order is through the attainment of a balance of power”.882 Other realists see international order as a result of hegemonic stability. For instance, Robert Gilpin has argued that by the end of World War II, “American economic and military power was supreme, and it provided the basis for an American-centered world economic and political order.”883 Moreover, William Wohlforth has theorized “The Stability of a Unipolar World” in the post-Cold War era, stating that “The clearer and larger the concentration of power in the leading state, the more peaceful the international order associated with it will be.”884 While these realists differ on the sources of a stable international order (balance of power or hegemonic stability), they all agree that rising powers pose the main challenge to the stability of any international order. Thus, provided that China can keep on rising, it will gradually erode the U.S.-centered unipolar power structure and thereby eventually also undermine the stability of the current international order.

In sum, in this context of state grand strategy the concept of international order can be usefully analyzed in terms of the depth of its institutional anchoring, the prevailing norms about legitimate statehood and the distribution of power in the states system. If we accept that the grand strategy of a rising state primarily pertains to how it positions itself towards the existing international order, then an examination of Chinese grand strategy needs to address how China approaches the primary as well as secondary institutions of international society, the extent to which it accepts the prevailing liberal-democratic norms of legitimate state-
hood and whether it uses its rising power to contest the prevailing international order in general and American unipolarity in particular.

9.3 Chinese grand strategy: Hypotheses and operationalization
Having offered a definition of state grand strategy and adjusted it to the specific case of a rising China, I am now in a position to specify the different types of grand strategy that China may pursue, to couple these to the range of underlying Chinese narrative-borne identity logics and to translate the different types of grand strategies into discernible, measurable patterns of state behavior. Put differently, I will first define the specific “values” of the dependent variable (Chinese grand strategy), then relate these (in the form of hypotheses) to the different “values” that the independent variable (Chinese identity narratives) may assume and finally operationalize the dependent variable by virtue primarily of behavioral indicators.

In order to specify the different types of grand strategy that a rising power may adopt IR scholars have suggested a broad range of paired opposing principles such as unilateralism or multilateralism, isolationism or internationalism, expansionism or accommodation and balancing or bandwagoning. Yet, although all these sets of ideal-typical principles could be relevant as contrasting reference points for Chinese grand strategy, I prefer to adopt the same terminology that most other scholars employ to analyze the rise of China, namely the distinction
between *revisionism* and *status quo*.\textsuperscript{885} The benefit of using this distinction is not only that it pertains directly to international order but also that it allows me to compare my own approach more easily with existing scholarship (as depicted in table 4).\textsuperscript{886} Broadly speaking, a *revisionist* grand strategy can be described as one that rejects the prevailing international order, whereas a grand strategy of *status quo* accepts the prevailing international order.

A simple binary distinction between revisionism and status quo may, however, seem somewhat rudimentary as a yardstick for capturing the variety of Chinese grand strategy given that I operate with five different types of identity narratives/logics (independent variable). I therefore introduce an additional analytical distinction inspired by the above-mentioned distinction between internationalism and isolationism. Only, in the context of Chinese grand strategy I prefer to distinguish between *detachment* and *engagement* (rather than isolationism and internationalism) as a second set of “values” for classifying Chinese grand strategy. Many scholars have analyzed China’s grand strategy in light of this distinction, using terms such as “shirker” or “free-rider” and “stake-holder” or “responsible great power” to describe the variation in China’s approach to the existing international order.\textsuperscript{887} Here, I will preliminarily describe a *detached* grand strategy as one where the state distances itself from (and ultimately ignores) the international order, whereas an *engaged* grand strategy is characterized by the state actively involving itself in central aspects of international order.

\textsuperscript{885} Some of the most explicit discussions of Chinese grand strategy along these lines include Shambaugh (2001); Johnston (2003); Feng H. (2009); Buzan (2010); Mearsheimer (2010); Schweller & Pu (2011); Kastner & Saunders (2012); Buzan (2014).

\textsuperscript{886} On the definitional challenges in using the distinction between revisionism and status quo in the context of China, see especially Johnston (2003: 6-12).

\textsuperscript{887} On China as a “shirker”, see Schweller & Pu (2011: 64-66); on China as a “free-rider”, see Shambaugh (2001: 28); on China as a stakeholder, see Etzioni (2011); on China as a “responsible great power”, see Xia (2001). See also the debate that followed a speech by then-US deputy secretary of state Robert Zoellick (2005) entitled “Whither China: From membership to responsibility”; e.g. Christensen (2005); Kleine-Ahlbrandt & Small (2007); Gill & Schiffer (2008); Kleine-Ahlbrandt (2009); Pei (2010); Richardson (2011).
Combining these two analytical distinctions yields four distinct grand strategy options as illustrated by Figure L.

To be sure, a rising state’s grand strategy rarely reflects any single one of the four ideal-typical principles (detachment or engagement, revisionism or status...
quo) in a pure form. Rather, any state grand strategy is far more likely to fall within one of the four blue-shaded boxes in Figure L that contain conflicting tendencies of the two sets of ideal-typical principles. For the sake of highlighting the ideal-typical differences, however, let me briefly present the four main grand strategy options that China may pursue as a rising power. I use the three-pronged conceptualization of international order from above to guide the discussion.

If China adopts a grand strategy of `engaged revisionism´ (type 1), it will directly challenge the existing international order in an active manner. Firstly, China will reject the existing institutions (secondary and ultimately also primary institutions) of international order by actively undermining them and/or establishing competing institutions. Secondly, China will strongly dispute the norms and values of the Liberal Order and propose a set of alternative norms and values, on which to build a new Sino-centric world order. Thirdly, China will challenge the power constellation undergirding the current international order, i.e. American unipolarity, by means of different kinds of balancing strategies.

If China embarks on a grand strategy of `detached revisionism´ (type 2), it will reject the existing international order in a far less direct manner. Firstly, China will question the legitimacy of secondary (not primary) institutions but will prefer to disassociate itself from these institutions or participate in a purely instrumental fashion rather than challenge them head on. Secondly, China will distance itself from the norms and values of the Liberal Order, favoring in their stead an alternative set of Sino-centric norms and values but without actively projecting these to the outside world in a missionary way. Thirdly, China will be

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888 Interestingly, the PRC in the late 1960s during the Cultural Revolution may have come quite close to a completely detached grand strategy (see e.g. Dittmer, 2010: 46-48; Shambaugh, 2013: 47-48).
critical of the U.S.-centered, unipolar power constellation, yet avoid taking any sort of balancing measures to undermine it.

If China chooses a grand strategy of ‘detached status quo’ (type 3), it will accept the existing international order without taking any active part in shaping or maintaining it. Firstly, China will fully subscribe to the primary institutions of international order and furthermore participate in the secondary institutions albeit in a mainly instrumental or reserved manner. Secondly, China will not champion a set of alternative (Sino-centric) norms and values but rather maintain a distance to the dominant norms and values of the Liberal Order and its main proponents. Thirdly, China will accommodate, though not take part in, the American-dominated unipolar power constellation.

Finally, if China pursues a grand strategy of ‘engaged status quo’ (type 4), it will become an active stakeholder of the existing international order. Firstly, China will not only embrace the existing institutional architecture of the Liberal Order but also engage itself actively in the main organizations of that order. Secondly, China will seek to adopt the norms and values of the Liberal Order or at least recognize their legitimacy as universal standards that any state should aspire to. Thirdly, China will support or at least accept the unipolar power constellation, preferring to bandwagon with the United States in situations of international crisis.

Having delineated the four main grand strategy options a rising power like China may pursue, I now attempt to establish an explanatory link between Chinese identity and Chinese grand strategy. That is, I will pinpoint how the separate narrative logics of Chinese identity are related to the four main types of grand
strategy that China may adopt. To begin with, I argue that one of the five Chinese identity narratives, ‘Unified China’, should be omitted in this explanatory context as it turned out (in Chapter 8) to be negligible in Zhongnanhai’s official identity discourse compared to the other four narratives. The separate identity logics of the remaining four Chinese narratives are recapitulated below in Figure M (a modified version of Figure I).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE M</th>
<th>FOUR CHINESE IDENTITY NARRATIVES IN THE 21ST CENTURY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of narrative</td>
<td><strong>Globalist China</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal-typical identity strategy</td>
<td>Social affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s distinctiveness is based on:</td>
<td>Nothing (tones it down)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s positive self-esteem is based on:</td>
<td>Recognition as responsible partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introversion/extroversion</td>
<td>Extroversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism/particularism</td>
<td>Universalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As demonstrated at length in Chapter 7, each of the four listed identity narratives is predicated on a discrete identity strategy for how to satisfy the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem. Moreover, each identity strategy involves a specific set of identity markers for framing the relationship between in-group and salient out-groups, and these markers can be distinguished from each other according to whether they (i.e. their basic social categories for in-/out-group differentiation) are primarily extrovert or introvert, particularistic or universalistic. I furthermore argue that the identity markers provide the best starting point for establishing the proposed relationship between the narrative logics of Chinese state identity and the main options of Chinese grand strategy. Below, Figure N therefore graphically illustrates how the four main narratives of Chinese identity can be distinguished from each other according to their distinct logics of identity, specifically in terms of their respective identity markers. In order to clearly illustrate these differences Figure N depicts the narratives in an ideal-typical fashion, even though the narratives are not quite as clear-cut in the official discourse (as pointed out in Section 7.7). Still, the four narratives are sufficiently distinct from each other as to warrant treating them as fundamentally different ways of narrating China’s state identity in relation to the outside world.
Crucially, the two sets of analytical dimensions used for capturing, on the one hand, Chinese state identity logics and, on the other hand, Chinese grand strategy principles can be brought into alignment. A rather obvious case can be made for juxtaposing the distinction between introversion/extroversion (identity logics) with that between detachment/engagement (grand strategy principles). Hence, I posit (in ideal-typical terms) that by shielding itself from salient out-group(s) an introvert identity narrative will generate a detached grand strategy.
that ignores the prevailing international order, whereas an *extrovert* identity narrative, which directly compares the in-group to salient out-group(s), will generate an *engaged* grand strategy that seeks to involve the state actively in questions of international order. Another case can be made for juxtaposing the distinction between particularism and universalism (identity logics) with that between revisionism and status quo (grand strategy principles). That is, I further posit that by perceiving the in-group as fundamentally distinct from its salient out-group(s) a *particularistic* identity narrative will generate a potentially *revisionist* grand strategy that challenges central aspects of the prevailing international order, whereas a *universalistic* identity narrative, which sees the in-group as affiliated with its salient out-group(s), will generate a status quo-oriented grand strategy that supports the existing international order. The proposed relationship between state identity logics and principles of state grand strategy is further specified in a Chinese context below in table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 5:</strong> Proposed relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy</th>
<th>INTROVERSION ➔ DETACHMENT</th>
<th>EXTROVERSION ➔ ENGAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARTICULARISM ➔ REVISIONISM</strong></td>
<td><code>Sino-centric China</code> ➔ Detached revisionism</td>
<td><code>Rising China</code> ➔ Engaged revisionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNIVERSALISM ➔ STATUS QUO</strong></td>
<td><code>Sovereign China</code> ➔ Detached status quo</td>
<td><code>Globalist China</code> ➔ Engaged status quo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 encapsulates the main empirical hypotheses of this dissertation, derived from a hypothesized causal relationship between the generative logic of state identity narratives and two sets of principles for a state’s grand strategy. The suggested relationship is causal in the sense that each of the four Chinese state identity narratives is predicated on a distinct identity strategy (conceptualized here in terms of two sets of identity markers), the logic of which generates a certain type of state grand strategy. The next two chapters offer a plausibility probe to determine whether the hypothesized relationship seems to be borne out empirically in the 21st century.

Now, the final step in advancing a set of specific empirical hypotheses about the direction of Chinese grand strategy is to pinpoint the shifting values of the independent value during the first 15 years of the 21st century. To this end, I will use the evolutionary hierarchical mapping of Chinese identity narratives based on the official government discourse (Chapter 8). As illustrated by Figure 0 (see below), the independent variable (Chinese identity narratives) assumes three different values, and for each of these I derive the correspondent value of the dependent variable (Chinese grand strategy) from table 5. Strictly speaking, the different values of my independent variable only pertain to three bounded time intervals [2003-05, 2008-09 and 2013-14], punctuated by periods not covered directly by the evolutionary mapping. However, based on simple straight-line projections across the unexamined periods (already suggested by Figure K in Chapter 8), I propose the following expansion of the three “narrative hegemonies” – i.e. their respective time intervals – in order to cover the entire period:

- **2002-2006**: Official discourse dominated by ‘Globalist China’
- **2007-2009**: Official discourse dominated by `Sino-centric China`
- **2010-2014**: Official discourse dominated by `Rising China`

This periodical sub-division corresponds to the way I preliminarily (in Chapter 5) divided my empirical study of the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy into three sub-cases (cf. Figure C).

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As noted in Section 5.1, there are several reasons to choose 2002 (rather than 2000) as the starting point for the empirical analysis of Chinese grand strategy as it not only leaves behind 9/11 but also the last years of Jiang Zemin’s leadership. Moreover, my inability to trace the evolutionary mapping of the independent variable (in Beijing Review) further back than April 2003 (see Section 8.1) also militates against an earlier starting point.

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889 As noted in Section 5.1, there are several reasons to choose 2002 (rather than 2000) as the starting point for the empirical analysis of Chinese grand strategy as it not only leaves behind 9/11 but also the last years of Jiang Zemin’s leadership. Moreover, my inability to trace the evolutionary mapping of the independent variable (in Beijing Review) further back than April 2003 (see Section 8.1) also militates against an earlier starting point.
Setting up criteria for assessing Chinese grand strategy

Before I can undertake an empirical analysis to probe the plausibility of the empirical hypotheses in Chapter 10, I will end this chapter by operationalizing Chinese grand strategy. Such an operationalization will bring about a number of behavioral indicators for determining whether Chinese grand strategy can be described as detached or engaged, revisionist or status quo? In fact, I already started on the operationalization in the previous sub-section by establishing some basic criteria for distinguishing between the four variants of Chinese grand strategy (type 1-4). To further specify these distinguishing criteria I introduce a number of behavioral indicators within each of the three key dimensions of a rising state’s grand strategy in relation to international order: Its position towards the institutional architecture of the Liberal Order; its position towards the norms and values of the Liberal Order; its position towards the unipolar power constellation of the Liberal Order. The operationalization criteria for distinguishing between the four ideal-typical variants of Chinese grand strategy are listed below in table 6 in the form of seven sets of behavioral indicators (O1-O7). Importantly, these distinguishing criteria are formulated specifically on the basis of the separate identity strategies that underlie each of the four grand strategy variants, thus reflecting their distinct identity logics. I should also underline that although the four grand strategy variants are sufficiently abstract to allow one to analyze any rising state’s grand strategy, I have modified them somewhat to reflect the specific case of China. For example, a rising power pursuing a grand strategy of “engaged status quo” might aspire to become an insider of the Liberal Order, fully subscribing to its norms and values. Yet, in the case of China “en-
“engaged status quo” does not quite involve such aspirations of joining the coterie of the Liberal Order as will become clear from table 6.\textsuperscript{890}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6</th>
<th>FOUR VARIANTS OF CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operationalization criteria ([O_{1-0.7}])</td>
<td>① Engaged revisionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional dimension of grand strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary institution of diplomacy and multilateralism ([O_1])</td>
<td>China becomes increasingly assertive within existing multilateral institutions and/or will establish new international institutions dominated by China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{890} Likewise, “engaged revisionism” could potentially involve far more assertive behavior than what I have listed here to reflect China’s specific context.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary institutions of Sovereignty and non-intervention</th>
<th>China accepts the basic principle of state sovereignty but pursues its own territorial claims in an assertive way even when they are in conflict with other state's sovereignty claims</th>
<th>China accepts the basic principle of state sovereignty but harbors revisionist illusions that are not translated into concrete policies or behavior</th>
<th>China adheres to the basic principles of state sovereignty and non-intervention, distancing itself from any measures that are in violation of these principles</th>
<th>China adheres to the basic principles of state sovereignty but at the same time actively supports international (e.g. peacekeeping) interventions that aim to maintain international order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary institution of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)</td>
<td>China actively pursues its own great power interests in the UNSC, drafting its own resolution proposals and/or exercising its veto power to block Western resolutions that run counter to Chinese interests</td>
<td>China adopts a low profile in the deliberations of the UNSC, preferring to abstain but not shying away from blocking resolutions that run counter to Chinese interests</td>
<td>China disapproves of the international security agenda of the Western UNSC-members but prefers to abstain from taking part in rather than directly blocking resolutions that impinge upon the sovereignty of UN member states</td>
<td>China to some extent accepts the international security agenda of the Western members of the council and takes active part in implementing UNSC-resolutions (e.g. by contributing personnel and other resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power dimension of grand strategy</td>
<td>China boosts its military budget, acquire power projection capa-</td>
<td>China adopts a neutral military budget aimed at acquiring primar-</td>
<td>China adopts a neutral military budget aimed at acquiring primar-</td>
<td>China keeps the growth of its military budget below the overall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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891 A neutral military budget does not increase the budget’s share of the overall economy (GDP) given the level of economic growth.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>military modernization</th>
<th>capabilities and generally strengthen its capacity to assert its claims in outstanding territorial disputes</th>
<th>ing primarily defensive military capabilities</th>
<th>ily defensive military capabilities</th>
<th>GDP growth rate, acquiring defensive capabilities or deploying resources that can contribute to UNSC-mandated missions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China’s willingness to use coercive power in its foreign relations</td>
<td>China does not shy away from using coercive power in its foreign relations to further its core interests and assert itself as a great power</td>
<td>China generally refrains from using coercive power in its foreign relations but is more susceptible to use threats of force in order to back its territorial claims</td>
<td>China generally refrains from using (or threatening to use) coercive power in its foreign relations unless in reaction to other countries’ encroachments on China’s territorial sovereignty</td>
<td>China generally refrains from using (or threatening to use) coercive power in its foreign relations unless based on a clear UNSC-mandate or otherwise justified by the UN-charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s approach to American unipolarity</td>
<td>China overtly challenges U.S. strategic dominance in China’s own neighborhood and devise various kinds of balancing strategies to balance the U.S. and its allies</td>
<td>China overtly challenges U.S. strategic dominance in China’s own neighborhood but refrain from directly attempting to balance the U.S. and its allies</td>
<td>China generally accommodates American unipolarity but Beijing at the same time covertly seeks to challenge U.S. strategic dominance in China’s own neighborhood</td>
<td>China accepts American unipolarity and cooperates with the United States especially in handling regional security issues in China’s own neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative dimension of grand strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative position in</td>
<td>Contender: China actively</td>
<td>Maverick: China maintains</td>
<td>Sceptic: China maintains</td>
<td>Associate: China embraces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 proposes seven specific behavioral indicators (or criteria) for determining whether China’s grand strategy is best described as engaged revisionist, detached revisionist, detached status quo or engaged status quo. There are, of course, other potential criteria to employ, but those in table 6 seem to comprise most of the central topics found in the literature on Chinese grand strategy in relation to international order.

| relation to Liberal Order | challenges the normative legitimacy of the Liberal Order, building coalitions with other non-Western states to promote alternative norms and values | its distance and promulgates a set of Sino-centric norms and values in its foreign affairs but without directly challenging the Liberal Order | its distance and insists on the normative diversity of international relations, but offers no set of alternative norms and values | the norms and values of the Liberal Order (e.g. democracy and human rights), yet attempts to adjust these universal standards to a specific Chinese context |
Chapter 10:
Examining Chinese grand strategy behavior

This chapter undertakes the first of two steps in assessing the plausibility of my empirical hypotheses arrived at by the end of the previous chapter. Chapter 10 thus conducts an examination of the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century in order to determine whether the observed pattern conforms to my theoretically guided empirical expectations (see Figure 0 in Chapter 9). As such, the empirical examination should first of all reveal a shifting behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy from engaged status quo during the first decade of the 21st century to engaged revisionism in the second decade of the 21st century. This is what I have claimed (in the introduction and in Chapter 5) to be the main shift in Chinese grand strategy, a shift that has received widespread attention among IR scholars (see Section 10.3). In addition, my empirical hypotheses suggest that we should also witness a relatively brief period of detached revisionism around the global financial crisis. However, I only find limited indication of such a shift for a number of reasons stated towards the end of Section 10.2. Accordingly, my empirical examination in Chapter 10 will concentrate on capturing the main behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century and on making evident the central shift towards the end of the 2000s, namely from engaged status quo to engaged revisionism.

In order to be able to discern a main shift in Chinese grand strategy behavior in the 21st century the behavioral patterns on either side of the shift need to be, ideally speaking, sufficiently distinct from each other as well as sufficiently consistent within each examined period (in terms of the operationalized criteria, see table 6 in Chapter 9). Moreover, given my use of binary analytical ideal-types
(detachment/engagement and revisionism/status quo) it becomes all the more challenging to categorize Chinese grand strategy if the observed empirical patterns turn out to be ambiguous. Admittedly, the observed behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century are not as distinct and consistent as to render the categorization unproblematic. Specifically, as I operate with three different sets (or dimensions) of operationalization criteria for measuring and categorizing Chinese grand strategy, not all parts of the observed behavioral patterns point in the same direction, thereby complicating the overall assessment. What is more, insofar as the empirical track record turns out to display diverse, even mutually inconsistent, tendencies it will not only complicate the categorization of Chinese grand strategy but also ultimately defy the notion of a grand strategy per se, that is, question the reasonableness of treating the observed behavioral patterns as a grand strategy.

Notwithstanding these reservations, my empirical examination of Chinese grand strategy does enable me to discern a changing behavioral pattern over the course of the 21st century. My examination therefore focuses on these observed changes in order to determine the extent to which they amount to a shift in the main categories (or values) of the dependent analytical variable (i.e. engagement/detachment and revisionism/status quo). At the end of each section, I attempt to categorize Chinese grand strategy in the examined sub-period based on an overall assessment of the behavioral indications across the three dimensions of operationalization. Here, I will also address the question of whether the observed behavioral patterns are sufficiently distinct and consistent as to support my empirical claims. As to the question of whether the observed behavioral patterns amount to a proper grand strategy on behalf of Zhongnanhai, Chapter 11 will provide an answer.
I should also stress from the outset that, if my empirical examination of Chinese grand strategy yields a relatively clear-cut pattern of co-variation between the dependent and independent variable in line with my empirical hypotheses (cf. Figure O), I have still taken only the first step in explaining Chinese grand strategy. After all, any successful explanation presupposes that its “explanandum” is first accurately described. Subsequently, Chapter 11 will more directly attempt to link the observed behavioral patterns to the specific narrative logics of the dominant Chinese identity conceptions during the same period. Thus, while the purpose of Chapter 10 is to describe the behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy (to determine whether they conform to the empirical hypotheses), the purpose of Chapter 11 is to explain those patterns by demonstrating how they are generated by the narrative logic of Chinese state identity. As such, Chapter 10 concentrates on the dependent variable of the proposed relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy.

However, before I embark on my empirical examination of the 21st century, the first section of Chapter 10 provides an introduction to Chinese grand strategy in the second half of the 20th century with a special focus on the 1990s. This is necessary in order to establish some background context (or yardstick) for examining the main course of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century and, more specifically, for being able to determine whether Chinese grand strategy underwent any main shift at the beginning of the examined period. As it turns out, Chinese grand strategy went through an important behavioral change, I will show, at the beginning of the new century from detached status quo in the 1990s to engaged status quo in the 2000s. Although this behavioral change is not covered by my empirical hypotheses (cf. Figure O), I will nevertheless attempt to account for it.
in Chapter 11. After introducing Chinese grand strategy in the second half of the 20th century in Section 10.1, the bulk of Chapter 10 is devoted to examining Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. Section 10.2 analyzes Chinese grand strategy during the first decade of the 21st century in order to depict the main behavioral pattern (if any) and to assess whether such a pattern corresponds to the expected pattern of engaged status quo. Subsequently, Section 10.3 turns the gaze towards the second decade of the 21st century, looking into the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy to find out whether its main tendency can reasonably be characterized as engaged revisionism. My entire empirical examination of Chinese grand strategy in Section 10.1-3 is predicated on the operationalized criteria that were delineated in Chapter 9 (see table 6).

10.1 Chinese grand strategy in the 20th century: zooming in on the 1990s
Since the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China, Chinese grand strategy has gone through some major shifts with the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (from 1966) and the Reform and Opening-up Program (from 1979) being the most prominent examples of such critical junctures. Following its establishment in 1949, the PRC fully committed itself to the revolutionary agenda of the international communist movement, as epitomized by Mao Zedong’s slogan of “leaning to one side”. It meant that “Red China” undertook a grand strategy of engaged revisionism to overthrow the “Western bourgeoisie regimes and their imperialist international order”. Accordingly, the PRC, among other things, dispatched a million soldiers to counter the United States (in Korea), it actively

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892 For an overview of Chinese grand strategy during this period, see e.g. Dittmer (2010: 42-46); see also Van Ness (1970).
supported communist liberation movements and parliamentary parties in various countries around the world and it later assumed a leading role (with India) among the non-aligned countries as the Sino-Soviet split began to unravel the communist bloc. Chinese grand strategy experienced its first critical juncture in 1966 with the onset of the Cultural Revolution and the public statement by Mao the year before that China was no longer part of the Communist Bloc. As the PRC immersed itself into a self-absorbed ideological cleansing process executed by Red Guards, Chinese grand strategy entered an isolationist phase of detached revisionism. At the apex of this strategy in 1967, all foreign ambassadors were sent home from Beijing, Red Guards seized the ministry of foreign affairs and the Soviet embassy was picketed for two years as a prelude to the outbreak of border clashes between the two former communist brothers in 1969. Although Zhongnanhai subsequently sought to gradually reverse its diplomatic isolation – witnessing a preliminary breakthrough with Nixon’s visit to Beijing in 1972 and the taking-over of Taiwan’s seat in the UNSC in 1973 – it was not until the late 1970s that the PRC’s grand strategy in earnest went through a second critical juncture.

With the demise of Mao and the advent of the Deng Xiaoping-orchestrated Reform and Opening-up program initiated in 1978, Chinese grand strategy took a decisive turn towards a pragmatist oriented development course, as encapsulated by Deng’s famous phrase of “crossing the river by groping for the stones”. In terms of grand strategy, Deng replaced high-pitched revisionism with a gradually increasing involvement in the Western-centered international order, thereby manifesting a new Chinese grand strategy of detached status quo in the course of

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893 For an overview of Chinese grand strategy during this period, see e.g. Dittmer (2010: 46-49); see also Bar-nouin Yu (1998).
the 1980s. As part of the new strategy, China instituted a number of liberal economic reforms inspired by the West, encouraged foreign direct investments along the East Coast, signed/ratified a wide range of international treaties and applied for membership of central international organizations in order to integrate itself into the institutional framework of the Western Liberal Order. Equally central for Beijing’s new status quo course was the normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States in 1979 and eventually also the Soviet Union a decade later. Yet, economic reforms also generated domestic demands for political reforms, and as PRC-hardliners led by Deng launched a crackdown on students-organized demonstrations on Tiananmen in 1989, Chinese grand strategy arrived at a third juncture, which turned out not to be nearly as critical as the previous ones though. On the one hand, the PRC-regime’s heavy-handed suppression of public demands for liberal reforms provoked Western sanctions against Beijing and thwarted hopes in the West that China would anytime soon become an insider of the new international order emerging in the wake of the Cold War. On the other hand, after an initial period of strategic wavering and intense internal debate, the new third generation of Chinese leaders headed by Jiang Zemin resumed the Reform and Opening-up program in the 1990s under the strategic guidance of another famous Deng-dictum of “keeping a low profile” in international affairs. In other words, China stuck to its grand strategy of “detached status quo”.

With this brief introduction to Chinese grand strategy in the first 50 years of the PRC’s history (1949-89) Chapter 10 has provided some background context (summarized in table 7 at the end of this section) for analyzing and assessing the

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894 For an overview of Chinese grand strategy during this period, see e.g. Dittmer (2010: 49-52); see also Robinson (1994: 567-587); Feng Z. (2012: 321-323).
895 For a similar argument about the continuation of the overall line in Chinese grand strategy despite the Tiananmen-juncture, see e.g. Feng Z. (2012: 323-324); see also Goldstein (2005: 118-119).
course of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. A closer look at Chinese grand strategy in the 20th century would most certainly have revealed a number of minor shifts within each of the designated periods, but this is not important for my present purposes. In the remainder of Section 10.1, I account more thoroughly for China’s overall strategic behavior during the 1990s in order to establish a basis for comparison that I can use for my examination of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. My account will examine Chinese strategic behavior in relation to international order in terms of the three dimensions of operationalization introduced in Chapter 9. As already stated, my claim is that Chinese grand strategy sticks to a course of detached status quo during the 1990s, and while the status quo orientation is easily demonstrated (despite a few “incidents”, see below), China’s detached strategic position requires some elaboration. However, I will argue that even though China continued along an integrationist path into the global economy that went hand in hand with increased institutional involvement, China assumed a fundamentally disengaged strategic position in relation to the Liberal Order during the 1990s.

To begin with, China’s institutional involvement in the Liberal Order certainly kept expanding throughout the 1990s, thereby continuing the rapid pace of China’s accession to international organizations and treaties during the 1980s. In fact, by 2000 China’s formal membership profile in international organizations and treaties had come close to resembling that of the developed countries and thus surpassed what one could reasonably expect given China’s level of socioeconomic development at that time. Importantly, China also signed a number of central international security treaties in the 1990s – such as the Treaty on the

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896 In numbers, China went from being member of around 20 international organizations in 1980 to having joined 50 two decades later. Moreover, during the same period China’s accession to security-related treaties went from around 25% to more than 80% of eligible accessions (Johnston, 2008: 34-35).

897 See Johnston (2008: 34-36).
Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1992), the Chemical Weapons Convention (1993) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (1996) – which clearly signaled China’s desire to become (seen as) a responsible status quo power.\footnote{Apart from these formal signatures, China also, for instance, acquiesced to American pressure of not exporting its ballistic missile technology (Ross, 1997: 41).} Beijing’s signing of the CTBT in 1996 is probably the most radical example of China’s increasing willingness to accept international institutional bindings in the 1990s since it entailed considerable trade-offs in terms of national security and only materialized after sustained pressure from international society.\footnote{As pointed out by Johnston (2008: 99-117) Zhongnanhai and especially the PLA feared that the CTBT would freeze China’s inferior nuclear capability. According to Johnston, Beijing eventually signed the treaty to avoid being stigmatized as an outsider of international society.} Yet, the great majority of China’s newly assumed institutional obligations to international society did not imply any deep commitment to the Liberal Order or prevent China from retaining an autonomous profile in international relations; nor were these institutional obligations (with a few exceptions) fundamentally at odds with China’s security interests. In this sense, China’s growing institutional involvement appeared to be first of all instrumental as it greatly facilitated China’s modernization by paving the way for China to become an integral part of the global economy. The same type of instrumental approach also seemed to inform a novel element of China’s diplomatic engagement with the outside world, that is, the launch from the second half of the 1990s of a series of bilateral strategic partnerships, including one with Russia in 1996 and one with the United States in 1997/98.\footnote{On China’s strategic partnership program, see Goldstein (2005: chapter 7); see also Feng & Huang (2014).}

Another relevant aspect of China’s institutional involvement in the 1990s, which is reflective of its grand strategy, concerns Beijing’s participation in the evolving regional institutional framework orchestrated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In the second half of the decade, China thus chose to be-
come increasingly affiliated with ASEAN (primarily via ARF from 1994 and ASEAN+3 from 1996), thereby reversing its prior dismissive position towards multilateral regional cooperation. Furthermore, by playing a widely acclaimed constructive role during the Asian financial crisis (erupting in 1997) China sowed the seeds for adopting a more prominent role in regional affairs in the following years. Still, in this early phase, China’s regional institutional involvement – which also included establishing “the Shanghai Five” in Central Asia in 1996 – followed the overall pattern of deliberately eschewing any deep commitments, being instead primarily driven by instrumental motives such as laying the ground for regional economic integration (ASEAN), securing access to a stable supply of energy (Central Asia) and not least limiting Washington’s influence in the region. Overall, the character of China’s growing institutional engagement in the 1990s at both the global and regional level has been aptly summarized by David Shambaugh, “China has joined a wide variety of international organizations and is more fully integrated institutionally into the international order than ever before, but I would argue that this integration remains shallow. That is, being a member may mean that China obeys the rules, but it does not necessarily mean that it accepts all of the norms underlying these rules of the international community.”

Taking a look at China’s voting record in the UNSC in the 1990s furthermore shows Beijing’s relatively detached position of status quo in relation to the Lib-

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901 For an overview, see e.g. Cheng-chwee (2005). ASEAN+1 denotes ASEAN + China while ASEAN+3 also encompasses Japan and South Korea.

902 China’s constructive assistance consisted in refraining from devaluing its own currency in response to other ASEAN countries’ devaluations and in providing financial assistance (see e.g. Ba, 2003: 634-638).

903 The Shanghai Five was later (in 2001) transformed into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (see Section 10.2).


905 Shambaugh (2001: 28). Likewise, Elizabeth Economy (2001: 232) summed up the prevailing view of China’s international involvement back then by stating that “despite an overall reorientation towards more active participation in global regimes, China remains ambivalent, if not suspicious, of global governance.”
eral Order. With the UNSC no longer stalemated by the Cold War, China’s principled stance on state sovereignty came under increasing pressure during the 1990s as the Western UNSC-members proposed a number of peace-keeping/enforcing missions in ex-Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti and East-Timor to prevent genocide, ethnic cleansing and other threats to international peace. In all these cases, China did not exercise its veto right, instead adopting a skeptical attitude of cautious acceptance of the emerging “Responsibility-to-Protect”-norm.\textsuperscript{906} At the same time, however, Beijing demonstrated its detached position of status quo by abstaining from voting in, rather than supporting, the UNSC-resolutions and by providing an altogether modest contribution to international peace-keeping missions in the 90s.\textsuperscript{907} Moreover, China’s skeptical attitude towards the new UN-interventionist trend was put on full display in 1999 as U.S.-led NATO-forces in ex-Yugoslavia (accidentally?) bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, triggering a massive public outcry in China of moral high-grounding.\textsuperscript{908} In the words of Bates Gill at that time: “\textit{This tragic event cuts to the very core of [...] China’s long and passionately held principle of non-interference in the affairs of other states.}”\textsuperscript{909}

Moving on, from China’s principled stance on questions of sovereignty in the UN to its own practice in relation to outstanding territorial issues, there are several points to make about Chinese grand strategy in the 1990s. First of all, as a strong indication of its status quo orientation China went to great lengths in the early 1990s to settle territorial disputes with smaller neighboring countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan, often accepting

\textsuperscript{906} Carlson (2006: 218-221).
\textsuperscript{907} Kim (2006: 293); Carlson (2006: 221).
\textsuperscript{908} See Gries (2004: 16-20); Gill (1999: 70-71). Washington claimed that the bombing was an accident while Beijing declared it to be an intentional barbaric and criminal act.
\textsuperscript{909} Gill (1999: 70).
considerable territorial concessions in order to resolve the disputes.\footnote{Fravel (2008b: chapter 3). As summed up by Tailor Fravel (2008c: 126), “From 1991-1999, China signed eleven boundary agreements resolving part or all of seven frontier disputes.”} Beijing also took conciliatory steps towards major power neighbors such as Russia and India, settling its land border with the former and holding several rounds of peace consultations with the latter.\footnote{Fravel (2008b: chapter 3). Apart from India, the only other land-territorial dispute, which China was unable to settle, involved Bhutan.} While all this did much to consolidate China’s status quo profile, the 1990s also saw a couple of episodes of Chinese assertiveness in relation to its offshore neighbors, first with the seizure in 1994 of the Mischief Reef in the Spratlys (located in the South China Sea) and later in 1996 with the failed attempt to intimidate Taiwanese voters by a show of military force in the Taiwan Strait.\footnote{See Christensen (2006: 116); See Goldstein (2005: 73-74; 114-15).} Although both of these episodes raised concern throughout the region – and were important in nurturing the so-called “China threat theory”\footnote{Tellingly, Robert Ross (a realist scholar) wrote about the seizure of the Mischief Reef (1997: 42) that “This action remains an anomaly in China’s relations with the ASEAN countries.” For a more critical analysis, viewing the episodes as indications of Chinese revisionism, see Kim (1996).} – one should not overstate their importance as indicators of Chinese revisionism. Not only because these episodes did not conform to the broader pattern of Chinese restraint in the 1990s, but also because they were not even very clear examples of Chinese assertiveness.\footnote{See e.g. Overholt (1996: 73-74); Fravel (2008a: 65-66). See also Fravel (2008a: 78) for a reading of the Mischief Reef-episode that renders it compatible with a status quo-oriented Chinese strategy.} Especially in the case of the Taiwan Strait Crisis, there is actually plenty of evidence suggesting that China reacted defensively to maintain status quo in its overall “One China policy” in the face of Taiwanese and American attempts to promote Taiwan’s \textit{de facto} independence.\footnote{See e.g. Overholt (1996: 73-74); Fravel (2008a: 65-66). See also Fravel (2008a: 78) for a reading of the Mischief Reef-episode that renders it compatible with a status quo-oriented Chinese strategy.}

When it comes to China’s strategic behavior towards the United States (i.e. Beijing’s strategic positioning in the unipolar international order), it also seems
largely to reflect an underlying grand strategy of detached status quo. Most importantly, there is little, if any, substantial evidence of China attempting to directly balance the United States in the 1990s to offset its preponderant systemic position. With respect to China’s much-debated military modernization, it did not really set in before the late 90s, and the growth rate of the military budget during the 90s – being on average on a par with the overall expansion of the economy – was barely enough to compensate for decades of neglect. China’s acquisition of military equipment in the 1990s moreover clearly signaled a defensive preoccupation with maintaining status quo in China’s own neighborhood. Hence, China’s deployment of new military resources (e.g. short-range ballistic missiles and Russian-designed aircraft and submarines) was primarily aimed at, on the one hand, deterring Taiwan from changing the status quo and, on the other hand, deterring the United States from intervening militarily by acquiring the capabilities to incur huge costs on enemy troops in China’s vicinity. Furthermore, China did neither seek to directly balance (or constrain) American unipolarity by building up strategic alliances against Washington or by consistently obstructing its international security agenda in the UN (as discussed above). Indeed, China’s strategic behavior basically reflected a dawning realization in Beijing that the international system contained “one superpower, several great powers” as stated by Jiang Zemin. At the same time, however, Beijing maintained a posture of strategic distance (detachment) to Washington, being constantly on its guard to (defensively) counter any alleged encroach-

916 Blasko (2013: 6, 10-13).
917 Nathan & Ross (1997: 146-152); Goldstein (2005: 54-56).
918 See e.g. Goldstein (2005: 56-69). Tellingly, Pentagon in its first “Annual Report [to Congress] on the Military Power of the PRC” (2002: 55) concludes that “China has embarked on a force modernization program intended to diversify its options for use of force against potential targets such as Taiwan and to complicate United States intervention in a Taiwan Strait conflict.” [downloaded 02.06.2015 at: http://www.defense.gov/news/Jul2002/d20020712china.pdf]
919 Cited in Lam (2009:21). Conversely, in the early 1990s, Zhongnanhai believed that the world was about to enter a new era of multipolarity (Li, 2008: 174-180).
ments of Chinese sovereignty by the United States, as amply demonstrated in the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis and the 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing episode (mentioned above). Symptomatically for the state of the Sino-American relationship, the 1990s saw few summits between the Chinese and American presidents (until 1997/98).

One last aspect of China’s strategic behavior in the 1990s concerns its normative positioning in relation to the Liberal Order. Following the Tiananmen-incident, China was subjected to sustained Western criticism of its human rights violations, spearheaded by the Clinton-administration, which sought to combine economic engagement with a critical human rights dialogue. Beijing’s participation in this “dialogue” well illustrated its underlying grand strategy of detached status quo. On the one hand, Zhongnanhai systematically dismissed the critique via public statements, white papers, communiqués etc. where Zhongnanhai attempted to assume the moral high-ground against these “infringements” on Chinese sovereignty, in this way demonstrating China’s detached normative position from the Liberal Order. On the other hand, China did not directly challenge the (proclaimed) universal normative standards associated with Western liberal democracy by professing an alternative set of international norms and values. Instead, Beijing indirectly acknowledged the universality of human rights by signing key international human rights conventions while simultaneously adopting its own interpretation of how to pursue and prioritize these basic

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920 One could also mention a 1994-incident involving a serious face-off between the US Fleet and a Chinese submarine in the Yellow Sea (Jerdén, 2014: 56) and the so-called Yinhe-incident when the U.S. government forced a Chinese vessel in international waters to be inspected for chemical weapons materials bound for Iran on what turned out to be erroneous intelligence (see Whiting, 1995: 312).

921 Due to the Tiananmen incident, China and the United States held no summits prior to 1997 (Gill, 1999: 66).


923 In a symptomatic statement from 1995 by SCIO, Zhongnanhai attributed U.S. human rights criticism to hostility to the CCP regime and the ulterior American motive to demonize, destabilize and contain China (Deng, 2008: 87; see also 82-89).
Specifically, China propounded in international forums what it calls a comprehensive notion of human rights that privileges collective socio-economic and developmental rights rather than individual liberalist rights. Apart from the question of human rights, China’s international “normative positioning” in the 1990s was also reflected in Beijing’s persistent call for a New Security Concept (NSC). The gist of the NSC was to seek security “by establishing mutual trust, dialogue and cooperation without interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and without aiming at a third party.” Although it introduced elements of collective security and multilateral cooperation into Chinese strategic thinking, the NSC still relied heavily on the overriding principle of state sovereignty (with frequent references to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence) and contained a thinly veiled criticism of the U.S. alliance system in Asia. As such, the NSC further confirmed Beijing’s adoption of a grand strategy of detached status quo.

In sum, in spite of the disruptive effects of the Tiananmen-incident Beijing soon resumed its overall strategic course from the 1980s. I have described this course as detached status quo since it was predicated partly on a fundamental acceptance of the prevailing unipolar Liberal Order (status quo) and partly on a basic reservation of becoming directly engaged in an institutional and normative sense (detachment). Alongside its deepening integration into the global economy – culminating with the accession into the WTO in 2001 – China still preferred

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924 Most importantly, China signed (but has not yet ratified) the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1998 (Kim, 2006: 293). Already from 1991, China had started justifying its own human rights practices in a long array of government white papers (with 10 out of the 20 white papers in the 1990s concerning human rights issues, see http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/). For a comprehensive treatment of China’s approach to human rights in the 1990s, see Kent (1999).


to remain on the sidelines of international society in many respects. And even though Beijing did not seek to challenge American unipolarity, it remained ever wary of potential U.S. violations of Chinese sovereignty. Hence, Chinese grand strategy in the 1990s seems to be well captured by Deng’s dictum of “keeping a low profile”. Below, the main periods of China’s grand strategy behavior in the 20th century have been summarized (see table 7). On this background, I turn next to Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Type of Chinese grand strategy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949-1960s [World revolution]</td>
<td>Engaged revisionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-1970s [Cultural Revolution]</td>
<td>Detached revisionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-1989 [Reform and Opening-up]</td>
<td>Detached status quo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.2 **Chinese grand strategy in the first decade of the 21st century**

At the beginning of the 21st century, Chinese grand strategy was in the process of changing. In Section 10.2, I will show that the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy was being transformed from detached status quo to engaged status quo, thus undergoing a shift on one of the two main dimensions. Although one may find several indications of an emerging shift in the late 1990s, I will argue that the shift did not really materialize until 2001, more specifically in the
wake of 9/11. While the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington can readily be seen as a critical juncture in international politics, provoking the American-led Global War on Terror, few China scholars consider 9/11 to constitute a watershed event for Zhongnanhai or Chinese grand strategy. Yet, what many scholars seem to overlook is that Washington’s Global War on Terror not only markedly expanded Beijing’s strategic maneuvering room but also allowed China to pursue a different identity strategy (more on this in Section 11.2). As late as in April 2001, Beijing and Washington locked horns in the so-called “Hainan-spy-plane incident” (see below), which seriously threatened to undermine Sino-American relations and potentially to derail China’s status quo-oriented grand strategy course. 9/11 was therefore critical in (temporarily) burying the prospects of an outright Sino-American strategic rivalry and in facilitating China’s shift towards strategic engagement that had already been underway since the late 90s in some respects. Indeed, China even became a sort of partner to the U.S. in the Global War on Terror, and at the National Congress of the CCP in 2002 president Jiang Zemin declared that China was entering a period of strategic opportunity.

Section 10.2 examines China’s grand strategy behavior in relation to the prevailing international order in terms of the three dimensions of operationalization presented in Section 9.3, that is, an institutional, normative and power-related dimension of China’s strategic behavior. The primary task is to demonstrate that Beijing adopted a significantly more engaged strategic position in international

\[\text{927} \text{ Scholars, who trace the shift in Chinese grand strategy towards a more actively engaged course to the late 1990s, include among others Medeiros & Fravel (2003); Goldstein (2005: chapter 6); Gill (2010: 1-3); Sutter (2012: 102-103); Zhu (2013: 8-9).} \]

\[\text{928} \text{ See e.g. Gill (2010: 6).} \]

\[\text{929} \text{ The marked improvement of Sino-American relations following 9/11 has itself been noted by several scholars, e.g. Deng (2008: 94); Li R. (2008: 95); Sutter (2012: 145-147).} \]

\[\text{930} \text{ See Lampton (2008: 47); Li R. (2008: 300); Wang J. (2011: 70).} \]
society, thus taking an active part in supporting the prevailing international order, since this is the only dimension of Chinese grand strategy that changes. Interestingly, US deputy Secretary of State, Robert Zoellick, famously urged China in 2005 to “become a responsible stakeholder”, thereby suggesting that China was still a free-rider in international society.\footnote{Zoellick (2005).} China may not during the 2000s have become quite the direct stakeholder that Washington seemed to envision, but I will argue that it certainly adopted a far more engaged position as compared to the 1990s. Apart from making China’s increased engagement evident, I will also show that China retained its status quo-oriented attitude, largely accepting the institutional and unipolar structure of the Liberal Order while not directly challenging its normative underpinnings. On balance, China thus became more actively engaged \emph{in support of} the prevailing order during the 2000s. Finally, towards the end of Section 10.2 I briefly discuss why there are only limited behavioral indications of a shift towards detached revisionism in the 2007-09 period even though my empirical hypotheses suggest such a shift (cf. Section 9.3).

\textbf{China’s institutional engagement in the 2000s}

While China’s institutional engagement during the 1980s and 1990s was characterized by a pattern of formal accession to the central institutions of the prevailing Liberal Order, it was rather the \textit{quality} of China’s institutional engagement that changed markedly during the 2000s. From being largely on the sidelines of multilateral international cooperation, China took an increasingly active part in dealing with the main challenges to international society and supporting the ex-
isting order. To be sure, China did not become part of the Western dominated “coterie” of the Liberal Order in the 2000s as it was unable to join key institutions or forums such as the OECD (due to its membership criteria) and the G8 (due to reservations on both sides).\textsuperscript{932} Yet, in the latter case, China still attended several of the meetings as an observatory partner, and in 2007 the OECD designated China as a key partner.\textsuperscript{933} Also, despite having its application for membership of the Missile Technology Control Regime rejected in 2004, China by and large sought to live up to the MTCR-regulations, introducing a range of export control mechanisms on missile technology into national law.\textsuperscript{934} Perhaps most importantly, following years of strenuous negotiations China was finally, in late 2001, accorded membership of the World Trade Organization, thereby irrevocably cementing China’s economic integration into the Liberal Order.\textsuperscript{935} Altogether, the institutional dimension of China’s grand strategy behavior suggests that China in the 2000s adopted an increasingly active and supportive role of the Liberal Order even though China never quite became part of its inner circle.

In order to illustrate the changing pattern in China’s institutional participation I will examine Chinese behavior in terms of the three operationalization criteria listed in table 6 (O\textsubscript{1}-O\textsubscript{3}), which address China’s general behavioral approach to multilateral cooperation, its practices in relation to the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention and more specifically its participation in the UN Security Council. Most of the examination focuses on China’s engagement with the UN,

\textsuperscript{932} The “accession roadmap” of the OECD indicates (Section B, paragraph 17) that member states need to be democratic, respect the rule of law, uphold human rights etc.; see http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?doclanguage=en&cote=C(2007)31/Final [accessed 22.06.2015].
\textsuperscript{933} As to China’s participation in the informal great power forum of G8, China participated in the yearly meetings (as an observatory member) in 2003 and 2005-2007 (see Deng, 2008: 48, 81).
\textsuperscript{934} On China’s engagement with the MTCR, see Medeiros (2009b: chapter 3). China’s application was rejected by the MTCR member states out of fear (particularly from Washington) that China had not properly implemented the control mechanisms.
\textsuperscript{935} On China’s accession to the WTO, see e.g. Breslin (2007: 89-97); Sutter (2012: 74-77).
not only because it constitutes the primary institutional platform for international cooperation, but also because the changing pattern of China’s institutional engagement is most clearly illustrated in the context of the UN. What makes the UN particularly attractive in the eyes of Zhongnanhai is China’s vetoing right in the UN Security Council as well as the critical status of the principle of sovereignty in the UN-charter.\textsuperscript{936} In the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, Beijing still clearly favored a relatively conservative approach to sovereignty, which was one of the main stumbling blocks separating China from especially the Western members of the Liberal Order in the 2000s. However, China to some extent moderated its (previously absolutist) stance on the principle of state sovereignty as demonstrated, among other things, by China’s evolving position and role in UN peacekeeping missions and its UN-centered contributions to limiting the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). Accordingly, China became unequivocally more active and generally also more supportive in its UN-centered institutional engagement during the 2000s.

Most strikingly – as a behavioral indicator of a changing grand strategy – China went from playing a negligible role in UN Peace-Keeping Operations (UNPKOs) at the turn of the century to assuming a leading role a decade later with a twenty-fold increase in terms of dispatched uniformed personnel (see Figure P).\textsuperscript{937} In fact, China’s total personnel contribution of more than 2000 troops on average from 2007 exceeded the contribution of any other permanent member of the UNSC.\textsuperscript{938} The new era of Chinese UNPKO-activism was marked in 2002 by Beijing’s decision to join the UN Standby Arrangement System, whereby China

\textsuperscript{936} Deng (2008: 46); Medeiros (2009a: 170); Dellios & Ferguson (2013: 106).
\textsuperscript{937} Gill & Huang (2009: 1). See also the official Chinese account of China’s contribution to UNPKOs in the 2010-white paper on defense (SCIO, 2010: section IV).
\textsuperscript{938} Huang (2011: 257). Conversely, China’s financial contribution (of around 3%) to the UNPKO’s budget in 2010 was significantly lower than that of the other four UNSC permanent members, primarily reflecting China’s much lower GDP per capita (Huang, 2011: 264).
agreed to have its troops – predominantly engineer battalions, logistic forces, police personnel and medical units – ready for deployment within 90 days. More specifically, China deployed its UNPKO-troops in various countries with large contributions in Congo (from 2001, historic total at ultimo 2008 = 1962 troops), Liberia (from 2003, total = 3906), Haiti (from 2004, total = 916), Sudan (from 2005, total = 1740) and Lebanon (from 2006, total = 1187). This new activist role was in 2004 officially framed by Hu Jintao in a speech where he launched the concept of “New Historic Missions” that included, among other things, “playing an important role in safeguarding world peace and promoting common development.” Furthermore, the Chinese government even went as far as to accept, at the 2005 UN World Summit, a narrow specification of the emerging norm on the responsibility to protect populations against their own governments in the case of mass atrocity crisis and other gross violations of human rights. Importantly, according to Bates Gill and Chin-Hao Huang, two of the leading experts in this area, “[t]he expansion in Chinese peacekeeping contributions reflects the country’s overall efforts, especially since the late 1990s, to raise its profile in the international community as a constructive and responsible power.”

940 For a detailed overview, see Medeiros (2009a: 174-75).
941 See Mulvenon (2009: 2).
China’s evolving position on the armed conflict and humanitarian crisis in the Darfur province of Sudan may provide a case in point of China’s new behavioral pattern. Due to its significant material interests in Sudan (i.e. in the petroleum sector) as well as its traditional opposition to international interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, Beijing initially in 2004 sought to shield the Khartoum-government in the UNSC despite well-documented reports about an unfolding humanitarian crisis, leading Washington to label the activities of the Sudanese government as constituting “genocide”. However, in the face of mounting international pressure (also involving several international NGOs), China from the beginning of 2006 started to adopt a far more constructive and active role, carrying out a widely appreciated “shuttle diplomacy” between Khartoum, the African Union and the UN. Eventually, the Sudanese government acquiesced in mid-2007 to allow UN forces to be deployed to Darfur, and Beijing

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943 The figure is taken from Chin-Hao Huang, “Providing for Peace-keeping”, online country profile for the PRC: http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/2014/04/03/contributor-profile-china/ [accessed 24.06.2015].
944 For an overview of China’s voting record of the 23 UNSC-resolutions on Sudan, see Medeiros (2009a: 178-82).
945 Medeiros (2009a: 177, 184).
946 Gill & Huang (2009: 14).
itself took the lead by dispatching 324 engineering troops in late 2007 to help prepare for the larger UNAMID-force.\footnote{Medeiros (2009a: 175); Gill & Huang (2009: 14).} In other words, \textit{Zhongnanhai}'s endeavor to build up its international profile as a responsible partner of international society was clearly crucial in trumping China's economic-material concerns in Sudan.

Aside from its expanding engagement in the UNPKOs, China also became an increasingly constructive – as seen from Washington's perspective – player in the UNSC-deliberations on the U.S.-initiated Global War on Terror (GWT). Beijing thus supported the two key resolutions (1369 and 1373) on Afghanistan following 9/11, both of which established the UN's role in the GWT.\footnote{Carlson (2006: 230).} As the United States subsequently expanded the GWT to Iraq, China backed the critical UNSC-resolution 1441, thus paving the way for UN-mandated weapons inspections in Iraq.\footnote{Medeiros & Fravel (2003: 27).} The Chinese even refrained from making a vocal stand in the UNSC in the lead-up to the highly controversial U.S.-led war on Iraq in 2003, leaving the oppositional role to Russia, France and Germany.\footnote{Carlson (2006: 233).} China furthermore shared intelligence information on terrorism with Washington in the aftermath of 9/11 via a series of bilateral meetings, while Washington retaliated by labeling the East Turkestan Independence Movement – one of the focal points of China's own fight against “The Three Evils” (cf. Section 7.5) – as a terrorist group.\footnote{Swaine (2010).} Hence, although Beijing did harbor some reservations against the U.S.-War on Terror (see below), the Chinese at the same time saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate its more constructive role in the UNSC.
A final aspect of China’s far more engaged role in the UNSC pertains to the GWT-related efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). In its detached phase during the 1990s, China was subject to sustained Western criticism of being actively involved in the proliferation of missile technology and other critical weapons technologies to states like Iran, North Korea and Pakistan that posed a potential security risk to international society.\textsuperscript{952} The situation changed markedly in the 2000s, however, as China became increasingly involved in curbing WDS.\textsuperscript{953} Significantly, in a complete reversal of its earlier position, China actively supported one of the most critical UNSC resolutions on WMDs namely 1540 in 2004. The resolution, which calls the proliferation of WMDs “a threat to international peace and security”, created binding legal obligations on member states to have and enforce appropriate and effective measures against the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons (WMDs) as well as their delivery systems.\textsuperscript{954} Furthermore, China not only joined the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2004 but also took a far more involved and constructive part – according not least to Washington\textsuperscript{955} – in critical non-proliferation and arms-control forums such as the NPT-related Zangger Committee, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.\textsuperscript{956} Finally, China gradually allowed the UNSC to confront and impose limited sanctions (under Chapter VII of the UN charter) on Iran and North Korea for their continued nuclear development programs despite the fact that Beijing generally

\textsuperscript{952} Medeiros (2009b: 137-38). For instance, American distrust in China on the issue of WMDs provoked a direct crisis in 1993 (the Yinhe-incident) when the U.S. insisted on inspecting a Chinese vessel, the Yinhe, which according to erroneous U.S. intelligence was carrying chemical materials for WMDs bound for Iran.
\textsuperscript{953} For an in-depth analysis of China’s changing position on the proliferation-issue, see Medeiros (2009b).
\textsuperscript{954} Medeiros (2009a: 191). See also the UN’s homepage on UNSCR 1540: http://www.un.org/en/sc/1540/ [accessed 26.06.2015].
\textsuperscript{955} See Medeiros (2009b: 91).
\textsuperscript{956} Medeiros (2009a: 189; 2009b: chapter 2).
enjoyed close ties with these states.\textsuperscript{957} China even from 2003 assumed a leading role in initiating and facilitating the ongoing Six Party Talks on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.\textsuperscript{958} In the words of Evan Medeiros, an area specialist, “\textit{all of these actions represent stark breaks from past Chinese approaches to UNSC deliberations on nonproliferation}.”\textsuperscript{959}

While China’s willingness to mandate and participate actively in UNPKOs and its direct involvement in the curbing of WMDs all served to position China as a far more constructive and engaged member of international society in the 2000s, Beijing did, it should be stressed, maintain some distance to the Western core of the Liberal Order on several issues in the UNSC. On many draft resolutions on North Korea and Iran, for example, China – usually in collaboration with Russia – sought to tone down the severity of the resolution language to moderate proposed sanctions etc.\textsuperscript{960} What is more, both in 2007 and 2008 China wielded its (rarely used) veto power in the UNSC to block two Western-proposed resolutions aimed at censuring human rights violations and calling for political change in Myanmar and Zimbabwe respectively.\textsuperscript{961} According to Beijing, these human rights issues were not under the purview of the Security Council as they did not constitute a threat to international peace and security, in which case UNSC involvement would require an explicit approval from the government of the two countries in question.\textsuperscript{962} As such, China’s active engagement in the UNSC was still accompanied by certain reservations that displayed its non-Western outlook in a normative sense (see below).

\textsuperscript{957} Medeiros (2009a: 188). Wuthnow (2009: 2-3). For example, China has supported UNSC resolutions 1695 and 1718 in the case of North Korea and resolutions 1737, 1747 and 1803 in the case of Iran.
\textsuperscript{958} Gill (2010: 55-56); Zhu (2013: 8).
\textsuperscript{959} Medeiros (ibid.).
\textsuperscript{960} Wuthnow (2010: 57).
\textsuperscript{961} Wuthnow (2010: 58). Yet, Beijing did consent to a more moderate response from the UNSC in the form of “presidential statements” expressing criticism.
\textsuperscript{962} Medeiros (2009a: 187).
China’s increased engagement with multilateral institutions in the 2000s was also on display in regional settings especially in Southeast Asia where Beijing carried out quite a “charm offensive” towards its smaller ASEAN-affiliated neighbors. As noted in Section 10.1, China’s participation in ASEAN-based multilateral cooperation gained momentum already in the late 90s, but the character of its involvement seemed to undergo important changes in the early 2000s. Most importantly, China first (in late 2002) signed a Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea (SCS), which was to regulate the activities of the various claimants to overlapping territorial parts of the SCS in order to freeze the status quo, reduce tensions and promote confidence building measures. The following year, Beijing also – as the first non-ASEAN-country – acceded to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which among other things stipulates that the signatories “refrain from the threat or use of force and [...] at all times settle such disputes among themselves through friendly negotiations.” Both of these Chinese signatures were critical in reversing China’s traditional insistence on dealing with territorial issues in the SCS on a strictly bilateral basis and thus served to underline China’s growing commitment to multilateralism. More generally, China in the 2000s sought to engage the ASEAN through various multilateral forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN+3 (i.e. plus China, Japan and South Korea) and from 2005 also the East Asia Summit (EAS). Hence, while a detached China previously had

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963 The term “charm offensive” stems from Joshua Kurlantzick book (2007), where he argues that Southeast Asia has been the primary target of China’s new diplomatic strategy, combining the soft power of a shared history with increased political and economic engagement.

964 Storey (2011: 67, 90-91). To be sure, since the Declaration was not a binding treaty, it was supposed to be replaced later by a formal code of conduct.


966 Also at the beginning of the 2000s, China and the ASEAN-countries announced a plan for establishing a free trade area by 2012 and one for creating a strategic partnership between the two parties (Gill, 2010: 36).

dismissed multilateralism, both regionally and globally, out of fear of being constrained, Beijing now used it actively in a strategic manner to position itself as a central player in the existing regional architecture.⁹⁶⁸

In sum, China’s overall institutional behavior in the 2000s – as exemplified most strongly by its active involvement in the UNSC and its approach to multilateral cooperation – clearly suggested that Beijing was pursuing a grand strategy of engaged status quo (in terms of the operationalized criteria defined in Chapter 9).

**China’s power-related behavior in the 2000s**

When it comes to the power dimension of China’s grand strategy behavior in the 2000s, there are mainly three aspects to consider: China’s military modernization, its use of coercive power in foreign relations and its approach to American unipolarity (i.e. criteria O₄-O₆ in table 6). What I will attempt to show in the following is that China’s overall strategic behavior in this area was primarily status quo-oriented in the sense of not directly challenging U.S. unipolarity or the Western Liberal Order; China’s strategic behavior could furthermore be characterized as engaging as China’s armed forces undertook greater international responsibilities and joint operations with other countries. Even so, the evidence is certainly not unambiguous as some of China’s behavior contained conflicting tendencies especially in relation to China’s ongoing military modernization as well its approach to American unipolarity.

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⁹⁶⁸ To some observers, China’s regional institutional involvement should also be seen as part of a strategic rivalry with the United States (see below).
With regard first to China’s military modernization, it was during the 2000s that the outside world, not least the U.S. government, started to scrutinize the growing military capabilities of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). To be sure, if one takes a look at the annual growth rate of China’s SIPRI-adjusted military expenditures during the 2000s, the numbers are not exactly an indication of a status quo-oriented grand strategy (see table 8 and Figure Q). In fact, China’s defense budget saw an average increase of no less than 13.5% during the period, which meant that the PLA went from controlling merely the seventh largest military budget in the world in 2000 – outspent by the U.S., France, Japan, Germany, the UK and Italy – to the second largest budget in 2010, exceeded only by that of Pentagon. The magnitude of the budgetary transformation can be easily illustrated by noting, for instance, that China’s budget was about half the size of Japan’s back in 2000, whereas it had grown to more than twice the size a decade later. As such, the near quadrupling of the PLA’s budget over the decade provided plenty of resources for China’s military modernization to be carried out.

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969 As noted in Section 10.1, the Pentagon issued its first annual report on the “Military Power of the PRC” in 2002.

970 All numbers are based on SIPRI’s database for World Military Spending, widely seen as the most authoritative source on such data: [http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database) [accessed 30.06.2015]. Unfortunately, the database does not provide the annual growth rate in expenditures, so I have calculated those numbers myself. One could also have used the official Chinese government data, but to avoid criticism of misrepresented the real state of China’s military expenditure, I prefer to use the SIPRI-data, which tends to put China’s military expenditures 50% above the official figures (Perlo-Freeman, 2014). On the difference between the official and the SIPRI-data, see footnote 51 in the database.

971 In 2000, the numbers were as follows: the U.S. (394 billion USD), France (62 billion USD), Japan (60 billion USD), Germany (51 billion USD), the UK (48 billion USD) and Italy (43 billion USD). In 2010, the U.S. spend 720 billion USD, thus still by far ahead of China’s budget of 136 billion USD [all data collected from the SIPRI-database].

972 Indeed, all the other top-7 great powers (except the U.S., see below) experienced more or less stagnating growth rates in their military expenditures.
Despite the staggering growth rate of China’s military expenditures, there are a number of reasons why the pace is still basically compatible with a status quo-oriented grand strategy course.\textsuperscript{973} Firstly, the growth rate appears far less dra-

\textsuperscript{973} For a critical analysis of the official level of China’s military expenditures, see Liff & Erickson (2013).
matic when viewed in light of the overall growth of the Chinese economy during the same period, which amounted to an average growth rate of around 10%. That is, the PLA expanded along with the rest of the Chinese economy, receiving ample resources to address the significant modernization lag that still weighed down the PLA in the 2000s. As noted laconically in the 2003 Pentagon-report on the PLA, China “is looking for ways to target and exploit the perceived weaknesses of technologically superior adversaries” (i.e. the United States). Secondly, when viewed as a percentage of GDP, China’s military expenditures in the 2000s were actually not alarmingly high and at any rate significantly lower than those of the United States. Thus, whereas the U.S. military budget constituted 3.8% of GDP on average in the 2000s, the correspondent figure for the Chinese military budget was 2.1% of GDP. Thirdly, the PLA-budget has in reality received a declining percentage of total government spending in the 2000s, reflecting the fact that the Chinese state has expanded its overall budget at an even faster rate. Fourthly, owing to the Tiananmen-incident in 1989, China was – and still is – subject to a Western embargo on arms sales and other military-related equipment. It means that the Chinese have had to invest heavily in its own defense industry (and Russian weapons) to modernize the PLA. Fifthly, as the U.S. military was far superior to the PLA during the 2000s, even within

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975 This modernization lag and its impact on Chinese security is a specific worry in several government white papers on China’s military; see e.g. SCIO (2004: section III), “China’s National Defense”.

976 Pentagon (2003: executive summary). Moreover, in the 2009-report, Pentagon offered an assessment of the modernization level of selected PLA-forces, which showed that only the Chinese submarine fleet featured a significant number of modern units by 2008 (i.e. 47%), whereas the air force was down to merely 20% of its air units (2009: 36).

977 The numbers were calculated on the basis of SIPRI-data from the database entitled "Military expenditure by country as percentage of GDP": [http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database) [accessed 30.06.2015]. It should be noted that the Chinese government throughout the 2000s officially claimed that the China’s defense budget constituted around 1.4% of GDP; see for instance SCIO (2006: section IX), “China’s National Defense in 2006”.

978 For this point, see Liff & Erickson (2013: 808-809). According to official figures, China’s overall government expenditures thus rose 3 percentage points faster than the military ones.

979 Shambaugh (2013: 283).
China’s own regional neighborhood (see below), one would expect Zhongnanhai to devote far more resources to the PLA if China were striving to catch up with the U.S. military or harboring revisionist ambitions for that matter. Tellingly, prior to Deng Xiaoping’s take-over in the late 1970s – when Chinese grand strategy was categorized as revisionist (see Section 10.1) – military expenditures amounted to a much larger share of the Chinese economy.980

What is more, if one examines the overall trends of hard ware investments in the PLA during the 2000s, even from the critical perspective of Pentagon, there is – at least to begin with – only limited indication of China having embarked on a revisionist grand strategy. In 2005, for instance, Pentagon’s annual report to Congress on the military power of the PRC clearly states that although the PLA is “acquiring new foreign and domestic weapons systems and military technologies, promulgating new doctrine for modern warfare, reforming military institutions, personnel development and professionalization, and improving exercise and training standards, [w]e assess that China’s ability to project military power beyond its periphery remains limited.” Rather, in the short term at least, the PLA “appears focused on preventing Taiwan independence […] or building counters to third-party, including potential U.S. intervention, in cross-strait crises.” Thus, “PLA preparations, including an expanding force of ballistic missiles (long-range and short-range), cruise missiles, submarines, advanced aircraft, and other modern systems, come against the background of a policy toward Taiwan that espouses ‘peaceful reunification’.”981 In the second half of the 2000s, admittedly, the annual Pentagon-reports become more critical of China’s military modernization, now em-

981 Pentagon (2005: executive summary). The summary adds that “over the long turn, if current trends persist, PLA capabilities could pose a threat to other modern militaries operating in the region.” Yet, such a long-term assessment seems quite moderate. The Pentagon reports can be accessed here: http://www.defense.gov/pubs/china.html [accessed 01.07.2015].
phasizing the PLA’s growing ability to pose a military threat beyond a potential Taiwan-strait theater. The 2007-report, for instance, once again stresses China’s limited power projection capabilities and its near-term focus on preparing for military contingencies in the Taiwan Strait, but it also notes that the “expanding military capabilities of China’s armed forces are a major factor in changing East Asian military balances [and that China] has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages.”982 Yet, if one disregards the emerging concern about future eventualities, then the report itself offers little concrete evidence that China’s military modernization reflects a revisionist agenda.

China’s military modernization during the 2000s certainly did yield substantial improvements, including the introduction of less vulnerable, road-mobile intercontinental missiles, a massive deployment of indigenously developed ballistic missiles to garrisons opposite Taiwan, a large number of highly accurate (Russian-designed) cruise missiles developed for fighter aircraft, guided missile destroyers and attack submarines, the successful testing of an anti-satellite weapon in 2007, the gradual construction of a satellite-based communication and reconnaissance system, a major expansion of the naval fleet centered on submarines, amphibious vessels as well as surface combatants, a professionalization of the ground forces, the acquisition of modern tanks and finally the partial modernization of China’s air force featuring a fourth generation fighter aircraft, attack helicopters and several Russian-designed bomber and fighter planes.983 As argued in the Pentagon reports, most of this military hardware seemed targeted

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983 Pentagon (e.g. 2005: chapter 5; 2006: chapter 5; 2007: chapter 4; 2008: chapter 4; a good overview is provided by the 2009-report: vii-viii).
at strengthening the PLA’s position in a Taiwan Strait contingency, denying the U.S. fleet access to the area and, more broadly, developing asymmetric military capabilities to counter U.S. military supremacy in the region. However, the modernization of PLA at the same time contributed to increasing Beijing’s coercive power potential against its smaller regional neighbors, especially those not directly allied with Washington. As such, although the rapid pace of China’s military modernization did seem warranted for several reasons (as argued above), it nevertheless could also be viewed as an indication of a potentially revisionist grand strategy behavior by Beijing. If the Chinese leaders had wanted to leave no doubt about their status quo-oriented mindset, they could surely have aimed for a less rapid modernization of China’s military.

With regard next to China’s use of coercive power against other countries in the 2000s, a brief preliminary look at China’s outstanding territorial disputes seems in order. Whereas China in the 1990s managed, with one notable exception, to resolve its territorial disputes along its 22,117 kilometers long land border (see Section 10.1), there were no such breakthroughs when it came to China’s maritime borders. As a result, China’s traditional focus on potential territorial conflicts along its land borders gave way to an increased attention to maritime territorial disputes with its East and Southeast Asian neighbors. Geographically, these conflicts pertain mainly to the East China and South China Seas, which are subject to competing claims of sovereignty over various islands, islets and even reefs, only some of which are de facto controlled by China (to be elaborated in Section 10.3). Suffice to say at this point is that a number of simmering maritime

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984 On China’s development of asymmetric balancing power, see e.g. Pentagon (2007: 13; 2008: 20-21; 2009: 16-17); see also IR scholars like Goldstein (2008); Fravel (2008c: 131-34); Ross (2009: 59-60); Kaplan (2010: 34-36).
985 See e.g. Shambaugh (2004: 85-86); Goh (2008); see also Storey (2011: part II).
territorial conflicts existed at the beginning of the decade but also that many of these had been officially “shelved” by the PRC as part of its diplomatic outreach to especially the ASEAN-countries in the late 90s and early 2000s (see previous sub-section).987

On this background, what does the behavioral record tell us about the PLA’s use of coercive power or confrontational behavior in the 2000s? From an overall perspective, there are few revisionist tendencies to discern if one makes the assessment after 9/11, 2001.988 That is, trawling through the annual Pentagon-reports and other relevant sources989 reveal little in the way of “assertive incidents” where the PLA (or other law enforcing Chinese agencies) has employed coercive power against other countries. The first noteworthy incident takes place in 2005: “PLA navy vessels trained their weapons on Japanese aircraft monitoring the Chinese drilling and survey activity in the disputed area”990. Another incident (if it even qualifies as such) is reported in the 2007-edition: “In October 2006, a [PLA Navy] submarine broached the surface in close proximity to the USS Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier in waters near Japan.”991 The 2008-report contains a wider array of noteworthy incidents in 2007 such as the unannounced success-

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987 See e.g. Zhao (2008: 221-222); Swaine (2010: 96); Storey (2011: 263-267).
988 As argued at the beginning of Section 10.2, the emerging shift in Chinese grand strategy from detached to engaged status quo does not really set in until after 9/11. Tellingly, we see a major incident in April 2001, the so-called Hainan spy plane episode, as well as some minor incidents (such as the “confrontation” of USS Bowditch by PLA vessels) that follow the behavioral pattern of the 1990s when Beijing was defensively guarding its sovereignty against U.S. encroachments.
989 Probably the best alternative source is offered by Björn Jerdén’s meticulous study of recent examples of assertiveness in Chinese foreign policy (Jerdén, 2014).
990 Pentagon (2006: 2). Jerdén (2014: 73) mentions another quite dramatic incident the same year: “[Chinese] Civilian law enforcement vessel kills nine Vietnamese fishermen”. Yet, the episode is problematic as an indication of Chinese strategic behavior as it did not involve the PLA (which is probably why it is not mentioned in the Pentagon-reports).
991 Pentagon (2007: 2). Tellingly, the report merely goes on to argue the case for improving the safety of U.S. and Chinese military units operating near each other. Another similar incident from 2004, involving the surfacing of a Chinese submarine in undisputed Japanese waters, is mentioned by Jerdén (2014: 75)
ful testing of an anti-satellite weapon, the denial of a port call in Hong Kong made by the USS Kitty Hawk carrier strike group and the alleged sinking of a Vietnamese fishing boat by the PLA Navy in waters near the Spratly Islands. In 2008 there seems to have been two minor incidents taking place involving the PLA Navy: First observed passage through Japan’s Tsugaru Strait and longest stay so far in the disputed territorial waters of the Senkaku/Diaoyu isles in the East China Sea. Finally in March 2009, the Pentagon reports an incident, which is often singled out as the first in a series of incidents reflecting China’s assertive turn (see Section 10.3): several PLA Navy ships harasses a US surveillance ship, the USS Impeccable, operating in the vicinity of Hainan Island, off China’s southern coast in China’s EEZ. Taken together, the number and severity of incidents involving the PLA in the 2002-08 period is almost negligible, underlining the high degree of restraint exercised by the PLA (and Chinese government).

Instead, the PLA actually bolstered its profile during the 2000s by undertaking a range of activities that signaled China’s willingness to behave in a cooperative, engaged and responsible manner. Apart from the expanding contribution to various UNPKOs from 2002 onwards (see above), the PLA contributed to the international anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden by dispatching two destroyers and one support ship in late 2008 in what was the PLA Navy’s first operational

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992 Pentagon (2008: 3). The episode caused great commotion especially in the US media at the time (for an overview, see Zissis, 2007).
993 Pentagon (2008: 6). The Chinese authorities reversed the controversial denial of the port call the following day, though.
994 Pentagon (2008: 11). Normally, the Chinese coast guard would, at most, attempt to capture and detain the crew of foreign fishing boats operating in waters claimed by Beijing (see Swaine and Fravel, 2011: 6).
995 Jerdén (2014: 75).
deployment outside the immediate Western Pacific region.997 Around the same time, the PLA also launched its first large hospital ship targeted for humanitarian missions.998 More generally, China participated in a number of disaster relief operations around the world, spanning “28 urgent international humanitarian aid missions” since 2002, according to Zhongnanhai.999 Significantly, the 2000s furthermore witnessed the PLA engaging directly with the militaries of other countries in several ways. For one thing, the PLA lifted its self-imposed ban on participating in joint bilateral or multilateral military exercises with other countries, a ban stemming from China’s traditional adherence to the principle of being militarily non-aligned and non-confrontational.1000 As a result, the PLA from 2003 started conducting an increasing number of “soft” military exercises (such as search-and-rescue and counter-terrorism operations) with a broad array of other countries including the UK, France, Australia, Vietnam, Russia, Japan, India and the United States.1001 Another way the PLA demonstrated its new engaging profile in the 2000s was through the establishment of direct military-to-military ties with other countries to enhance mutual understanding and trust.1002 Finally, even though Zhongnanhai maintained a certain degree of secrecy about the modernization of the PLA, the biannual reports on China’s national defense in the 2000s represented a progressive, albeit slow-paced, march towards increased transparency.1003

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998 Pentagon (2009: 19).
999 SCIO (2010: section IV). Yet, the total costs of all these operations amounted to less than 1 billion RMB (approximately 150 million USD), it should be added.
1000 Shambaugh (2013: 300).
1001 SCIO (2010: section IV); according to Zhongnanhai, China had participated in 44 such joint operations by 2010. The first-ever was held with Pakistan in 2003 (ibid.).
1002 This dialogue mechanism included 22 countries in 2010 (SCIO, 2010: section IX). See also Medeiros (2009a: 133).
1003 See e.g. Lampton (2007: 61); Kardon (2010). As further noted by Kardon, Zhongnanhai had a rather selective way of increasing public transparency.
Against this backdrop, the actual behavioral pattern of the PLA in the 2000s clearly suggested that China was indeed pursuing a status quo-oriented grand strategy. It also suggested that China would stick to its official policies of pursuing a peaceful approach to its outstanding maritime territorial disputes with its East and Southeast Asian neighbors, shelving the disputes and even engaging in joint projects for exploiting underwater resources in the area.\(^\text{1004}\) Hence, by demonstrating restraint and engagement the PLA contributed to dissipating some of the fears that surrounded China’s controversial military modernization.

With respect to the final aspect of China’s power-related behavior, China’s approach to American unipolarity, the overall behavioral record seems to consolidate the impression of Chinese grand strategy as status quo oriented and also to some extent engaging. Actually, the affirmative behavioral evidence consists, on the one hand, of what can be termed Chinese “non-action”; that is, the absence of any overt or systematic attempt to challenge American unipolarity on the global stage in the 2000s (even though there are some indications that Beijing was, mostly behind the scene, seeking to limit U.S. influence in China’s own neighborhood, see below).\(^\text{1005}\) Instead, the Chinese leadership seemed to resign itself to an era of U.S. preponderance, publicly embracing it as a window of “strategic opportunity” for China itself to continue its modernization, as stated first by Jiang Zemin at the National Congress of the CCP in 2002 and later reiterated by Hu Jintao.\(^\text{1006}\) While the absence of balancing behavior demonstrated China’s status quo-orientation, Beijing did also somewhat more actively support American unipolarity in different ways, most of which have already been accounted for.

\(^{1004}\) Most notably, China in 2005 made a tripartite agreement with the Philippines and Vietnam about a Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking, but it was rather unsuccessful and finally abandoned in 2010 (Zhao, 2008: 221; Bower, 2010: 1-5).

\(^{1005}\) On the absence of Chinese balancing behavior, see e.g. Lanteigne (2005: 14); Lampton (2008: 143); Medeiros (2009a: 172); Sutter (2012: 64).

\(^{1006}\) See Li R. (2008: 300); Wang J. (2011: 70).
above. Most importantly, China endorsed the U.S. War on Terror by voting in favor of the two key resolutions on Afghanistan following 9/11 and by refraining from using the UNSC to attempt to block Washington’s controversial expansion of the War on Terror to Iraq even though several other UNSC-members, highly critical of the Bush-administration, were pursuing that option vocally. Furthermore, although China sought to shield its partners such as Iran and North Korea from Western criticism, Beijing at the same time accommodated itself to American pressure in the 2000s by accepting that the nuclear weapons programs of the two regimes constituted a threat to international security and that the international community should impose sanctions against both regimes.

However, the general picture of Chinese acquiescence to American unipolarity becomes partially blurred by what appears to be concomitant Chinese effort to curb U.S. strategic presence in China’s own neighborhood. Most conspicuously, Beijing was from 2001 the leading actor in building up, financing, hosting (the secretariat of) and defining the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Council (SCO), a Central Asian regional organization consisting of China, Russia and four Central Asian countries.\textsuperscript{1007} The SCO originally grew out of Chinese orchestrated efforts to legally demarcate its Central Asian borders, reduce military forces in the region and not least cooperate with its Central Asian neighbors on combating separatist and terrorist groups operating along and across China’s Central Asian borders.\textsuperscript{1008} Yet, while the struggle against terrorism and separatism continued to figure prominently on SCO’s agenda at the annual summits, the member states also gradually endowed the SCO with a strategic dimension seemingly directed

\textsuperscript{1007} On the leading role of China, see Lanteigne (2005: 115); Yuan (2010: 856). The SCO was built on the Shanghai Five, a looser cooperation forum initiated in 1996 with the signing of the “Treaty of Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions” by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In 2001, Uzbekistan was also included into the newly established SCO. On the early history of the SCO, see especially Lanteigne (2005: 120-24); for a primary focus on SCO in the second half of the 2000s, see Yuan (2010).

\textsuperscript{1008} Lanteigne (2005: 116-20).
against the United States. For instance, during the summit in Kazakhstan in 2005 the SCO issued a joint communiqué calling for the United States to withdraw its troops from Central Asia when “active” counterterrorism operations ended in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{1009} Moreover, from 2003 the SCO-members began undertaking large-scale joint military exercises, which were officially branded as anti-terrorism or peace operations but, given their magnitude, were more likely aimed at sending a message to the outside world (read: the United States) about an emerging strategic partnership in Central Asia.\textsuperscript{1010} Nevertheless, despite its leading role in the SCO Beijing was cautious, it should be stressed, in not turning the organization into an anti-American forum or taking the lead in activities that ran directly counter to the strategic interests of Washington.\textsuperscript{1011}

Another, far more covert, attempt at limiting the strategic influence of Washington in China’s own neighborhood took place in Southeast Asia where China in the 2000s worked, mainly on the sidelines, to ensure that strategically important cooperation forums such as the ASEAN-affiliated East Asian Summit would exclude non-Asian potential candidates for membership (i.e. the United States).\textsuperscript{1012} Even though the unilateralist tendencies of the United States, especially during the first term of the George W. Bush-administration, generated concern throughout Asia, Beijing failed in its endeavor as the ASEAN-countries preferred to hedge against rising Chinese power by keeping Washington close. Taken together, China’s aspirations in Central and Southeast Asia of keeping the United States at bay seem to qualify as behavioral evidence of a sort of regional balanc-

\textsuperscript{1009} Medeiros (2009a: 139); Wang D. (2015: 70). Also, in 2005 Washington’s request for observatory status in the SCO was rejected.
\textsuperscript{1010} Yuan (2010: 864-65).
\textsuperscript{1011} Medeiros (2009: 139); Wang D. (2015: 70-71). For example, Beijing deliberately desisted from playing a prominent role in the phrasing of the communiqué in 2005 calling for a withdrawal of U.S. troops from Central Asia.
\textsuperscript{1012} Christensen (2006: 100-01); Gill (2010: 150-51).
ing directed against the otherwise omnipotent strategic reach of the American unipole. However, not only was this “balancing” behavior limited to the regional level; it was also characterized by being deliberately indirect or covert in its manifestations.\textsuperscript{1013}

In sum, China’s power-related behavior in the 2000s reflected somewhat conflicting tendencies in light of the operationalized criteria set up in Chapter 9. On the one hand, the main behavioral tendency suggested a grand strategy of engaging status quo where China refrained from challenging American unipolarity, avoided the use of coercive power and was willing to involve itself (and the PLA) in tackling security issues at the global level. On the other hand, when it came to China’s military modernization and its regional strategic positioning, one could at the same time discern some diverging behavioral tendencies during the 2000s (i.e. rapid growth rates and indications of regional balancing respectively) that seemed to partially undermine the overall impression of Chinese grand strategy as one of engaged status quo.

\textbf{China’s normative positioning in the 2000s}

The last dimension of China’s grand strategy behavior in the 2000s concerns Beijing’s normative positioning in relation to the Liberal Order. In terms of the operationalized criteria (Chapter 9), China should have positioned itself as an “associate” of the Liberal Order, basically accepting the norms and values of the Liberal Order as legitimate universal standards even if adjusting them somewhat to a specific Chinese context.\textsuperscript{1014} In practice, however, China never really em-

\textsuperscript{1013} See also Foot (2006: 88-89).
\textsuperscript{1014} As argued in Section 9.3.
braced the normative framework of the Liberal Order during the 2000s, in effect refuting the notion of China as a normative associate (or insider) of the Liberal Order. In the following, I examine the normative dimension of China’s relations to the Liberal Order. Specifically, China’s normative positioning may be captured, firstly, by its approach to universal human rights standards, secondly, by a number of joint Sino-Russian statements on world order and, thirdly, by the struggle to develop Chinese soft power on a rather Sino-centric template. Unlike in the previous two sub-sections, the evidence examined in this sub-section is based not only on behavioral indicators but also on discursive material since China’s normative positioning primarily manifests itself in international statements, declarations and communiqués.\footnote{It should be noted that the investigated discursive material is completely separate from the discursive material used in Chapter 7.}

A good starting point for assessing China’s normative positioning in the 2000s is offered by its approach to international human rights.\footnote{The centrality of the human rights issue for China’s normative positioning has been well argued by Deng Yong (2008: chapter 3, esp. 69).} On the face of it, the PRC did on many occasions on the international stage subscribe to universal standards of human rights as illustrated by various international statements made by the PRC in conjunction with other countries. For example, the joint statements of the annual EU-China summits would always contain a paragraph dedicated to human rights usually phrased in the following way: “The two sides underlined their commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and continued to place high value on the EU-China human rights dialogue.”\footnote{See Joint Statement of the 8th EU-China Summit, 2005 (paragraph 10); downloaded from the homepage of EU External Action: http://eeas.europa.eu/china/previous_summits_en.htm [accessed 07.07.2015]. The almost exact same phrasing can be found in the Joint Statements of the 9th and 10th EU-China Summits.}

Even the partially anti-Western Sino-Russian joint statement on international order in 2005 (see below) included a paragraph stating that “Human rights are
universal. Countries should respect the human rights and basic freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...” Furthermore, China successfully strove to secure a seat at the table of the key international forum on international human rights, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), which replaced the Geneva-based human rights commission in 2006. Zhongnanhai also, as noted in Chapter 7, issued a series of white papers on human rights throughout the 2000s to convey China’s position on and measures taken in regard to human rights. All of this notwithstanding, China’s position on human rights did not at all resemble that of the Western powers, thus being a continuous source of political-normative friction between China and the West.

The normative chasm between China and the West on the issue of human rights can be illustrated in several ways. First of all, the PRC has in international forums offered a quite different understanding of the human rights concept itself, centered on collective socio-economic rights rather than individual liberal-political rights as advocated by the Western countries. Thus, even though the PRC recognizes the universality of human rights, its alternative socio-economic interpretation of these rights is shaped by its specific cultural heritage as well as its decades-long history as a developing country. Tellingly, the aforementioned joint Sino-Russian statement on world order continues the paragraph on human rights accordingly: “[Countries should...], promote efforts to guarantee and safeguard human rights in light of their own conditions and traditions.” Fur-

1020 For a grounding of China’s approach to human rights in its intellectual history, see Perry (2008).
1021 “China-Russia Joint Statement on 21st century World Order”, July 2, 2005 (paragraph 6; my own underlining): http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/1436001/posts [accessed 08.07.2015]. A similar phrasing is found in another joint China-Russian statement three years later: “The two sides reiterate their respect for the universality of human rights and believe all countries have the right to promote and protect human rights in light of their na-
thermore, while the PRC in the 1990s, in a deliberate attempt to lessen the critique from Western governments and NGOs in the wake of the Tiananmen incident, recognized some of the central pillars in the Western conception of human rights (notably by signing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1998), Beijing did little to further approach a Western conception of human rights during the 2000s. On the contrary, in response to the continuing Western critique of the human rights abuses in China, Zhongnanhai started in 2002 to publish its own equally unflattering assessment of the human rights situation in the United States, focusing on racial discrimination, neglect of the poor and homeless etc. Taken together, the normative gap between China and the West on human rights persisted throughout the 2000s, being a critical factor in maintaining China in the position of an outsider to the Liberal Order.

Another illustrative aspect of China’s normative positioning may be derived from the joint leadership statements on international order, which were published in connection with summits held between China and other non-Western powers during the 2000s. The by far most high-profiled joint summit statement came mid-way into the 2000s when China and Russia issued a sort of communiqué, expressing their shared views on international order in the new century. The gist of the text is an advocacy of a sovereignty-based, UN-governed world order and a thinly veiled criticism of the United States at the height of the Bush-administration’s interventionist policies. After an opening paragraph on the

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1022 For an overview, see the Human Rights Library, “Ratification of International Human Rights Treaties: China”, University of Minnesota: https://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/research/ratification-china.html [accessed 07.07.2015]. For example, despite its commitment to also ratify “as soon as possible” the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the PRC refrained from taking that step (see e.g. the joint EU-China statements on human rights, http://eeas.europa.eu/china/previous_summits_en.htm) [accessed 08.07.2015]. Admittedly, the PRC did in 2004 introduce a provision in its state constitution to respect and protect human rights, but this has not in itself changed anything (Perry, 2008: 38).

overall trends of international politics, the second paragraph reads: “The problems facing mankind can only be solved on the basis of universally recognized principles and norms [...] Countries in the world should strictly observe the principles of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. [...] The international community should thoroughly renounce the mentality of confrontation and alignment, should not pursue the right to monopolize or dominate world affairs, and should not divide countries into a leading camp and a subordinate camp.”1024 The third paragraph of the statement stresses that “The United Nations is the world’s most universal, representative, and authoritative organization, and its roles and functions are irreplaceable.”1025 On human rights, the statement adds to the abovementioned reservation about “specific national conditions” that “International human rights protections should be based on the principles of firmly safeguarding the sovereign equality of all countries and not interfering in each other's internal affairs.”1026 Subsequent paragraphs pay tribute to a world of diverse cultures and civilizations, pointing out that “Differences in the historical backgrounds, cultural traditions, social and political systems, value concepts and development paths of countries should not be an excuse for interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.”1027

Variations of this world view can be found in other (less comprehensive) joint Sino-Russian statements from the 2000s, some of which also include India.1028

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1025 Ibid. (paragraph 3).
1026 Ibid. (paragraph 6).
1027 Ibid. (paragraph 8).
As an indication of China’s normative positioning in relation to the Liberal Order in the 2000s, these statements on international order tell us, firstly, that the PRC did not really change its traditional outlook on what constitutes a legitimate international order, namely one based on the principle of sovereignty and the UN-charter. Secondly, that China strongly opposed the notion of legitimate statehood being defined in terms of specific norms and values and the concomitant idea of a hierarchization of the international society of states. Thirdly, that by making a strong normative stand together with the other major non-Western power (i.e. Russia) China distanced itself from leading members of the Western Liberal Order, notably the United States. Fourthly, and somewhat ironically, that China by virtue of its criticism came to stand out as a principal status quo power defying, along with many other countries, the new interventionist policies practiced by the United States (and its “coalition of the willing). On the other hand, while Beijing was sometimes vocal in its statements, it did not, as noted above, seek to directly obstruct Washington in its international agenda (e.g. in the UNSC). China’s normative positioning in the 2000s therefore reflected a delicate attempt to distance itself from, rather than confronting, a U.S.-dominated international order.

The third aspect of China’s normative positioning concerns a number of government initiatives from the mid-2000s to strengthen China’s cultural profile, build a positive image of Chinese civilization and altogether enhance the “soft power” of China abroad.1029 The most prominent part of this strategy involved

1029 These initiatives were set off by the Chinese government via “The National Planning Guidelines for Cultural Development” in 2006 as part of the 11th Five-Year-Plan for 2006-10 (Li, 2008: 303; Billioud, 2012: 220, 227).
the establishment of a series of Confucius Institutes and Classrooms (CICs) all over the world, starting in late 2004 with the official inauguration in Seoul, South Korea, of the first Confucius Institute. Since then, the number of CICs has expanded at a breakneck pace – with, for instance, a new inauguration taking place every fourth day on average during 2006.1030 – and a mere decade later the total number of Confucius Institutes and Classrooms stood at more than a thousand.1031 The two main purposes of the CICs are to introduce the outside world to Chinese culture (such as Chinese literature, philosophy, history, calligraphy, paper-cut, food, traditional medicine etc.) and to teach Chinese language courses, which is why almost all the CICs are directly affiliated with foreign educational institutions (and usually physically located therein).1032 While the CICs are supposed to finance their own activities after a couple of years, the Chinese state provides their start-up funding and lay down a number of principles and requirements for their subsequent operation.1033 Apart from the CICs, the Chinese state sought, especially in the late 2000s, to cultivate its soft power in other ways like sponsoring “Year-of-China” festivals in various countries, providing funds for English-language versions of Chinese media and hosting large-scale international events such as the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 and the World Expo in Shanghai in 2010.1034 Especially the Olympic Games have been emphasized by many scholars as a primary example of China’s strategy to enhance its soft power by showcasing the richness and depth of Chinese culture to

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1031 According to the official website for “Confucius Institute Online”, there were 1096 Confucius Institutes and Classrooms midway into 2015, most of which are Classrooms. 458 Institutes and Classrooms were located in the United States and 300 in Europe. See http://www.chinesecio.com/m/cio_wei [accessed 10.07.2015].
a worldwide audience in what was undoubtedly one of the most spectacular opening ceremonies in the Olympic history.\footnote{E.g. Callahan (2010: 1-8); Rozman (2011: 86); Shambaugh (2013: 241).}

Taken together, the different elements of Zhongnanhai’s cultural soft power strategy \textit{may} be seen as a third aspect of China’s normative positioning in relation to the prevailing international order. On the one hand, this strategy involved a wide range of very concrete manifestations of Chinese culture around the world, reminding the world of China’s great civilizational heritage and its historical role as “the Middle Kingdom”.\footnote{For a brief discussion of China’s cultural dissemination policies as part of a larger grand strategy, see e.g. Paradise (2009: 657-59).} Moreover, this attempt at developing Chinese soft power was deliberately Sino-centric, thereby indirectly heralding the rise of a particularistic China and suggesting that a Sino-centric international order would be very different from the Liberal Order in terms of its norms and values. On the other hand, compared to the first two aspects of China’s normative positioning (i.e. its approach to human rights and the Sino-Russian statements on world order) one should be careful not to overstate the relevance of China’s Sino-centric soft power strategy to its normative positioning in relation to the Liberal Order in the 2000s. For one thing, the Confucius Institutes and Classrooms are quite alike cultural institutes of other great powers (e.g. the Goethe Institutes of Germany or the Alliance Française of France), which are not directly managed by their mother countries and largely serve apolitical purposes of cultural dissemination.\footnote{Shambaugh (2013: 245-47).} For another, although Chinese leaders from around 2005 increasingly paid homage to China’s civilizational ideas and historical figures in their speeches (as demonstrated in Section 7.5), they did \textit{not} embrace or promote this Sino-centric cultural baggage as an alternative set of international norms and values that would compete with those of the Liberal Order. Rather,
the revival and dissemination of Chinese culture became yet another element pointing to China’s distinct normative position on the international stage.

In sum, China’s recalcitrant approach to (a Western conception of) human rights, its advocacy of a sovereignty-constrained international order and its promotion of a Sino-centric soft power profile all suggest that China did not attempt to position itself as a normative supporter (or insider) of the Liberal Order during the 2000s. Yet, neither did Beijing directly challenge the Liberal Order in a normative sense, which is why China’s normative positioning seems to reflect a grand strategy of detached, rather than engaged, status quo in this period.

**Overall assessment of Chinese grand strategy in the 2000s**

Based on a range of behavioral indicators Chinese grand strategy in the 2000s seems, on balance, to conform to the expected pattern of engaged status quo in line with my empirical hypotheses (operationalized in Section 9.3). The main behavioral pattern clearly manifested itself in the wake of 9/11 as Chinese grand strategy, already essentially status quo-oriented by then, furthermore became increasingly engaging. As demonstrated most unequivocally with respect to China’s institutional involvement in the Liberal Order, Beijing assumed a far more active and constructive role in international as well as regional multilateral organizations and allowed itself to become institutionally enmeshed and constrained in a way that differed fundamentally from the 1990s. While the PRC still basically adhered to a sovereignty-based international order, its prior absolutist stance was moderated considerable, thereby enabling Beijing to take part in handling some of the main challenges to international order, among which the PRC’s contribution to UN Peacekeeping Operations and its participation in the
curbing of weapons of mass destruction stood out. China’s expanding involvement in regional multilateralism, notably ASEAN-affiliated cooperation forums, also testified to a new pattern of strategic engagement. Crucially, as argued more fully in Chapter 11, the behavioral change towards a more engaged status quo course went hand-in-hand with Zhongnanhai’s official discursive framing of the PRC as “a responsible power” on the international stage.

When it comes to the power dimension of China’s strategic behavior, the main tendency likewise suggested a grand strategy of engaged status quo during the 2000s inasmuch as China accepted American unipolarity as well as the Global War on Terror, avoided the use of coercive power or confrontational behavior and was willing to involve itself (and the PLA) in tackling security issues at the global level. Yet, certain aspects of China’s military modernization (i.e. the rapid growth rates) and its regional strategic positioning (i.e. covert attempts at balancing the U.S.) seemed to partially undermine the overall impression of Chinese grand strategy as one of engaged status quo. Moreover, with regard to Beijing’s normative positioning in the 2000s the PRC remained aloof from the Liberal Order (as in the 1990s), not only distancing itself from Western understandings of human rights and aligning itself with Russia behind a traditional sovereignty-based conception of international order but also embarking on an ambitious program to develop a Sino-centric soft power profile. Yet, even though China was accordingly no supporter (or insider) of the Liberal Order in the 2000s, it was neither directly challenging its normative underpinnings. Instead, Chinese grand strategy displayed a pattern of detached, rather than engaged, status quo in a normative sense. Notwithstanding these behavioral divergences – which I will attempt to account for in Chapter 11 – I maintain that the overall behavioral
pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the 2000s can best be described as engaged status quo in support of my empirical hypothesis.

Finally, I have so far postponed the question of whether Chinese grand strategy behavior experienced a short-lived change from engaged status quo to detached revisionism in the 2007-09 period in line with my second empirical hypothesis (see Figure O). As noted at the beginning of Chapter 10, one may only find limited, tentative evidence reflecting such a behavioral shift in Chinese grand strategy. This “evidence” has actually already been presented as part of the empirical examination in Section 10.2, but let me briefly recapitulate what appear to be the three most relevant indications of a behavioral shift towards detached revisionism. Firstly, after a period of growing Chinese willingness to cooperate with the West in the UNSC on the international responsibility to protect populations from their own governments in the case of mass atrocities – with the UNSC-sanctioned peacekeeping mission to Sudan being a case in point – Beijing quite suddenly reverted to its traditional position in 2007, first vetoing a UNSC-resolution on Myanmar and then another resolution on Zimbabwe in 2008, both of which condemned human rights abuses. Secondly, one may also note how China’s contribution to UNPKOs stops growing at the beginning of 2008 after a five-year-period of rapid expansion. Thirdly, after witnessing virtually no incidents of Chinese assertiveness or confrontational behavior after 9/11 a number of minor such episodes were reported especially from 2007 leading up to the Impeccable-incident in early 2009 often identified as the starting point of China’s assertive turn (see Section 10.3).

However, these indications of a shift in Chinese grand strategy beginning in 2007 are in themselves far from substantial enough to support the second em-
pirical hypothesis (cf. Figure 0). That is, Chinese grand strategy was not transformed from engaged status quo to detached revisionism towards the end of the 2000s. Fortunately, one may offer at least three reasons why the hypothesized change after all did not take place without, more generally, calling the explanatory power of Chinese identity narratives into question. One reason could be the brevity of the period (2007-09), which would render it less likely that a new behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy were able to manifest itself in a clear-cut manner before the underlying (i.e. behavior-guiding) identity narrative changed once again. Another (less satisfactory) reason could be to point to the existence of alternative, seemingly stronger, causal factors, which during that specific period were able to negate the effects of the underlying narrative shift of Chinese identity (more on this in Chapter 11). My own preferred explanation, however, would be to view – as suggested in Section 5.1 – the 2007-09 period as a sort of juncture or transition phase of adjustment to the new realities of the global financial crisis. In other words, as long as the Chinese leaders grappled with assessing the consequences of the global financial crisis, they mainly stuck to the existing grand strategy course of engaged status quo instead of immediately adjusting it to the new particularistic logic of an emerging Sino-centric identity narrative.

10.3 Chinese grand strategy in the second decade of the 21st century
If we are looking for a juncture, marking the next main shift in Chinese grand strategy, then the global financial crisis appears to have constituted the single

1038 Apart from these reasons, I should also mention the possibility that the hypothesis itself is flawed due to methodological problems of validity or reliability (as discussed in Chapter 8).
most important “event” sowing the seeds for a break with the past. Beginning in July 2007 with the credit crunch and peaking in September 2008 with the collapse of Lehman Brothers, it was not until well into 2009 that some stabilization of the U.S. economy was achieved owing largely to the Obama-administration’s $1 trillion federal spending plan. By then, the U.S. economy was in a state of recession, contracting by no less than 2.8% in 2009, whereas the latest, almost inconceivable, macroeconomic data from the China’s statistical bureau suggested that the Chinese economy was continuing apace with its rapid expansion. As the impact of the financial meltdown on especially the U.S. economy dawned upon the outside world and as the measures taken by the Chinese government to mitigate the effects of the crisis turned out to be successful, Zhongnanhai grew more self-confident. I argue (more elaborately in Section 11.2) that the unfolding crisis eventually provoked a change of identity strategy by Zhongnanhai, bringing the ‘Rising China’ narrative to the fore and thereby also a new Chinese grand strategy. Indeed, as pointed out in Section 8.2, the first conspicuous signs of the ‘Rising China’ narrative appear mid-way into 2009, two years after the eruption of the crisis. Crucially, one may also notice the first indications of a changing Chinese grand strategy in 2009 and especially in 2010.

I will attempt to demonstrate in Section 10.3 that Chinese grand strategy from around the turn of the second decade of the 21st century experienced a gradual shift from engaged status quo to engaged revisionism (in line with my empirical hypotheses, see Figure 0). Since this is likely to raise some eyebrows – after all, I

1041 This change of attitude has been noted by several China scholars, see e.g. Callahan, (2012: 2); Zhao (2012: 378); Christensen (2015: 260); see also Schweller & Pu (2011: 59); Layne (2012: 3).
also labeled the revolutionary period of Chinese grand strategy in the 1950s and early 60s as engaged revisionism (see table 7) – I will start with some reservations. First of all, as I operate with binary ideal-typical categories to describe the dependent variable, each category (e.g. status quo or revisionism) of course covers a lot of variation. Hence, whereas the grand strategy behavior of the PRC during the early phase of Mao’s China – by fundamentally rejecting the prevailing international order and actively pursuing an alternative order via revolutionary means – surely qualifies as engaged revisionism, the sort of engaged revisionism practiced by Zhongnanhai in the current decade almost pales in comparison. It simply falls much closer to the threshold separating the analytical categories from each other. Moreover, as made clear in the following examination, revisionist tendencies are discernible within the institutional and power-related dimensions of Chinese grand strategy behavior, while there is no such evidence to be found when it comes to China’s normative positioning. That being said, I will still argue that, on balance, the pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the current decade of the 21st century displays sufficient change towards revisionism to warrant treating it as engaged revisionism rather than engaged status quo. Analytically, it means that the primary purpose of Section 10.3 is to investigate the revisionist tendencies in Chinese strategic behavior in order to determine the extent to which they have come to characterize Chinese grand strategy behavior.

With these reservations in mind, my claim about witnessing a revisionist shift in Chinese grand strategy is actually far from being controversial if one consults the scholarly literature and other relevant sources on Chinese foreign and security policy. In fact, the conventional view has been that an increasingly self-confident China changed its course markedly around 2009-10. The new foreign
policy line has been variously referred to as “China’s foreign policy revolution”,1042 “foreign policy muscle-flexing”,1043 “The Chinese tiger shows its claws”,1044 “Beijing’s abrasive diplomacy”1045, “The strident turn”,1046 “China’s new wave of aggressive assertiveness”1047 or merely “Chinese assertiveness”1048 with the latter gaining prominence as the standard term in the debate. Irrespective of conceptual variations, all these scholars argue that we have witnessed a shift in both the words and deeds from Beijing in what might reflect a more fundamental change of grand strategy. Conversely, a number of critical voices – notably from Michael Swaine, Alastair Johnston and Björn Jerdén – have scrutinized the alleged behavioral and discursive change in 2009-10, concluding that China did not really embark on a new course. At most, Beijing made some adjustments rather than an outright change of its policies and practices, they claim.1049 Since the critics have looked thoroughly into the “episodes” that most observers refer to as evidence of an “assertive turn”, I should address their criticism before presenting my own account of Chinese grand strategy.

To begin with, it is important to note how the critics acknowledge that Chinese foreign policy in 2009-10 displayed a considerable degree of assertiveness in various situations, including Beijing’s reactions to the detention by Japan of a Chinese fishing boat captain in September 2010, Beijing’s protests against a planned joint military exercise in the Yellow Sea by the United States and South Korea in June 2010 and the increased PLA Navy activism in the South China Sea

1042 Economy (2010: 142).
1043 Layne (2012: 3).
1044 Shambaugh (2010: single-page article).
1045 Christensen (2011: 54).
1046 Zhao (2013: 535).
1048 E.g. Wang J. (2011: 68); Friedberg (2011: xvi); Rozman (2011: 87); Yahuda (2013: 446).
throughout the period. Yet, the critics play down this finding by virtue mainly of three arguments. First of all, they point to the “ahistoricism” of the finding, that is, China has been equally assertive in previous years; secondly, they accuse other scholars of “selecting on the dependent variable”, that is, other scholars ignore that the selected episodes only constitute a fraction of China’s overall foreign policy; and thirdly, the critics suggest that the growing focus on Chinese assertiveness, instead of relying on a sober factual assessment, is a result of powerful American discursive entrepreneurs, vested academic interests and unreflective reproduction of what soon became “the conventional wisdom”.

Disregarding the third argument – by and large irrelevant here given my own comprehensive analysis – I will concentrate on the other two arguments by briefly stating why they are not entirely persuasive and by using the rest of Section 10.3 to indirectly back up my counterarguments.

With respect first to “ahistoricism”, Swaine, Johnston and Jerdén all undertake meticulous and enlightening studies of Chinese foreign policy to demonstrate that for nearly all the recent instances of Chinese assertiveness one may identify equally assertive precedents within the previous two decades. However, while it is true that Beijing’s behavior in 2009-10 in most cases was not unprecedented, the critics seem to overlook the fact that it was the intensity of Chinese asser-

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1050 In the words of Björn Jerdén (2014: 74): “...the above analysis makes clear that much of China’s international behavior in 2009-2010 quite closely fits our definition of assertiveness.” Likewise, Swaine & Fravel (2011: 8) for example states that “Beijing took a very aggressive diplomatic stance toward Tokyo in reaction to Japan’s arrest of a Chinese fishing boat captain”. And even Johnston (2013: 19) recognizes that China’s “diplomatic rhetoric and practice [in the South China Sea] did shift fairly sharply in a more hard-line direction in this period.”

1051 It is Johnston (2013: 32-34), who uses the term “ahistoricism”, but all the critics primarily seek to refute the notion of Chinese assertiveness by conducting a cross-temporal analysis of past Chinese foreign policy behavior.

1052 See especially Johnston (2013: 32-33) on this point.

1053 The third argument is made in different ways by Swaine (2010: 1-4); Johnston (2013: 7-9) and Jerdén (2014: 76-85). In addition to these three arguments, Johnston (2013: 35-45) also discusses the effect of “poor causal specification”. But unlike most other scholars analyzing China’s “assertive turn”, I do actually attempt to specify the causal mechanism of the observed behavioral shift (see Chapter 11).

1054 And my non-American academic affiliation, I might add.
tiveness in especially 2010 that caused most observers to proclaim a policy shift. Equally important, the critics only discuss the incidents that occurred during 2009-10, at the height of “China’s assertive turn”, but there have been several other examples of Chinese assertiveness in subsequent years (as shown below). As to “selecting on the dependent variable”, there is admittedly a tendency to blow some of the assertive incidents out of proportions and forget the larger picture of cooperatively engaging words and deeds from China on the international stage during the same period. Johnston himself provides a number of examples, which goes against the grain of the assertiveness thesis, and my own empirical examination certainly comprises this type of (status quo-oriented) behavioral evidence. Yet, if one seeks to depict the larger picture, it is important to bear in mind that China even during its engaging, supportive and responsible period in the 2000s was at odds with a U.S. dominated international order in several respects. Hence, it did not require that much of a change in behavior (and accompanying rhetoric), I will argue, to alter the overall impression of Chinese grand strategy as being in the domain of revisionism rather than status quo.

In the ensuing sub-sections, I examine the overall pattern of Chinese grand strategy behavior in the second decade of the 21st century (i.e. 2010-15). As suggested above, one may to some extent detect a behavioral change already in 2009, but following my argument at the end of Section 10.2 I will treat the 2007-09 period as a transition phase. Just like the previous section, Section 10.3 is divided into sub-sections that zoom in on each of the three dimensions of grand strategy behavior in relation to international order, namely an institutional, power-related and normative dimension. The discussion in each sub-section is more specifically organized in terms of the behavioral operationalization criteria summarized in table 6. The sub-section on China’s power-related behavior is the
most extensive simply because the main part of the observed change occurs within this area.

**China’s institutional engagement in the 2010s**

After having formally joined, but stayed on the sidelines of, the institutional framework of the Liberal Order during the 1980-90s, the PRC became increasingly involved in and actively supported the Liberal Order during the 2000s. What changed in the second decade of the 21st century was not China’s engagement strategy but rather its status quo-orientation. Instead of resigning itself with the (terms and conditions of the) existing multilateral institutions, Beijing started to push for reforms of these institutions and, more importantly, to pursue new – sometimes even competing – institutional platforms such as the BRICS forum, the G20 and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In the UNSC, which had constituted the central arena for China’s increasing willingness to support the Liberal Order during the 2000s, Beijing moreover started more directly to oppose Western security resolutions for how to handle international crisis situations notably in Syria. In short, China added a revisionist dimension to its institutional engagement in the 2010s. It is important to underline, however, that China did not, across the board, change its institutional engagement with the Liberal Order. In fact, China pretty much retained its membership profile of international organizations and treaties and continued its involvement in most international institutions without any marked change in its behavioral pattern. The reason why this sub-section nevertheless emphasizes the revisionist element in China’s recent institutional behavior is that the observed changes are far from negligible. They concern central pillars of the Liberal Order (e.g. the UNSC and the IMF/World Bank) as well as important institutional innovations (the
G20, the BRICS and the AIIB) that have become part and parcel of the debate on the future of the Liberal Order. My examination revolves around the first three operationalization criteria (O1-O3) with most of the attention devoted to China's institutional revisionism and its swing back to a more recalcitrant position on questions of state sovereignty in the UNSC.

In the aftermath of the global financial crisis, China became more vocal in voicing its discontent with the governance of the global economy, which since World War II had been dominated by the Bretton Woods institutions (the IMF and the World Bank) in conjunction with the OECD (from 1961) and the G7/G8 (from 1975). While China in the 2000s had moved closer to these institutions – e.g. becoming an observatory member of the OECD and the G8 – Beijing started instead to press for reforms of the global economic governance system following the financial crisis. With respect first to the IMF and the World Bank, in charge of regulating the international monetary order and assisting economic development, China together with other emerging powers demanded a larger share of the voting power in the decision making bodies of the two institutions, which still greatly favored the Western powers.\footnote{Jorgensen & Strube (2014).} In the case of the World Bank, a reform was carried out in 2010, securing China, among others, a significantly greater share of the votes.\footnote{See Reuters, April 25, "China Gains Clout in World Bank Vote Shift": \url{http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/04/25/us-worldbank-idUSTRE63O1RQ20100425} [accessed 21.07.2015].} Although a similar type of agreement was reached in 2010 about reforms of the IMF, the U.S. Congress blocked its implementation, thereby causing a stalemate that has yet to be broken despite consistent calls from China (and other emerging powers) for carrying out the reform.\footnote{See Reuters, April 2, "China Knocking on Door of IMF's Major League, U.S. Wavers": \url{http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/02/us-china-imf-sdr-insight-idUSKBN0MT0LB20150402} [accessed 21.07.2015]; see also overview of voting rights: \url{http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/memdir/members.aspx}.}
Another institutional innovation to appear on the international stage in the wake of the global financial crisis was the G20 summits, which comprised the head of states from 20 major economies of the world. The G20 soon became the lynchpin of China’s involvement in the governance of the global economy given that it represents the only economic governance institution where China enjoys equal status with the Western powers.\textsuperscript{1058} For this reason, Beijing has been eager to develop the role and function of the G20 from one of crisis management in 2007-10 to one of general macroeconomic coordination of the global economy in subsequent years.\textsuperscript{1059} Even though the G20 has so far not been able to manifest itself as the primary leadership forum for global macroeconomic coordination – being still complemented/rivaled by the G7 – China continues to strongly support the G20 and has even decided to host its annual meeting in 2016 in Hangzhou.\textsuperscript{1060}

Whereas the G20 seeks to bridge the different outlooks of the Western and the emerging powers on global order, China has also actively involved itself in another leadership forum that only encompasses the major emerging powers (plus Russia), namely the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and from 2011 also South-Africa).\textsuperscript{1061} Starting in 2009, the BRICS have held annual leadership summits to discuss economic, political and strategic issues of common concern, to coordinate their policies on certain issues, to promote mutual trade and investments and to announce their position on the existing international order via

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1058} See He (2014: 5).
\item \textsuperscript{1059} He (2014); Jørgensen & Strube (2014).
\item \textsuperscript{1061} The BRIC-term itself was invented in 2001 by Jim O’neill from Goldman Sachs in a report about emerging markets, but it was Russia who took initiative to translate the term into a concrete political grouping.
\end{itemize}
The BRICS may be easily dismissed as a strategically branded jumble of countries that defy most meaningful common denominators. They do not share a common geographical context, constitute a trading block or face similar developmental trajectories; nor are they united by cultural affinities, political systems or historical bonds of friendship. On top of that, the sometimes lofty declarations from their annual summits about wide-ranging cooperation and an extensive institutionalization of their joint initiatives have yet to fully materialize. Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons for taking the BRICS seriously as an international forum and, more specifically, as an important institutional platform in China’s overall strategic behavior. First of all, the BRICS-forum constitutes the principal international organ that consistently expresses non-Western, at times even anti-Western, views on international order centered on a staunch commitment to traditional Westphalian principles of sovereignty and non-interference (more on this below). Furthermore, the BRICS have also to some extent succeeded in coordinating their policies (in the G20 and elsewhere) on issues that run counter to Western interests (e.g. demanding reforms of the Bretton Woods institutions). Finally, the BRICS have actually managed to take action on some of their proposals for a revised international order. Most importantly, the five countries, on their 6th BRICS-meeting in Brazil, signed a long-anticipated document to establish The New Development

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1064 On the contrary, China has, as already noted, had significant border disputes with both India and Russia in the recent past.
1065 See Forsby & Kristensen (2013) for a more elaborate account of this argument.
1066 One recent example stems from March 2014 when the BRICS foreign ministers issued a joint statement strongly opposing an Australian suggestion of banning Russia from the next G20-meeting in Brisbane due to Russia’s annexation of Crimea (see Keck, 2014b: single-page article).
Bank with $100 billion investment capital and Shanghai as the headquarters of the bank.\textsuperscript{1067}

Yet another international bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), has become the most recent, and probably also most controversial, example of China’s institutional innovation on the international stage. In June 2015, 50 founding members of the AIIB signed the charter of the new bank, which like the NDB will have $100 billion in investment capital and be headquartered in China (Beijing).\textsuperscript{1068} Importantly, although China is likely to dominate the bank – holding enough votes to veto any proposal – many prominent Western countries (e.g. Germany, the UK, France and Australia) are found among the founding members and top investors of the AIIB.\textsuperscript{1069} Conspicuously absent from the bank, though, are Japan and the United States with the latter publicly raising concerns about the standards of the AIIB and even voicing its frustration that key allies (like the UK) have joined the bank.\textsuperscript{1070} As noted by several observers, the AIIB is meant to assume a key role in securing investment capital for the broad range of infrastructure projects proposed by Beijing – officially branded the “One Belt, One Road”, the “Maritime Silk Road” or the “Silk Road Economic Belt” – to better connect China to the rest of the Asian region via new highways, express railroads, pipelines and ports.\textsuperscript{1071} Hence, the AIIB in more than one sense represents a crucial institutional innovation, not only paving the way for China to assume


\textsuperscript{1069} For an overview, see Tiezzi (2015c: single-page article).


\textsuperscript{1071} E.g. Tiezzi (2014b: single-page article); Wang Z. (2015: single-page article); Li & Xu (2015: single-page article).
an institutional leadership position in Asia but also greatly facilitating (via infra-structural means) China’s increasingly overt strategic ambitions of reclaiming its historical position as “the Middle Kingdom”.

Turning from China’s institutional revisionism to its strategic behavior in the most critical institution for the prevailing international order, the UN Security Council, one also witnesses change here that add to the overall impression of a behavioral shift in Chinese grand strategy. Above all, China has in several important respects assumed a pronouncedly more oppositional role in the UNSC, directly blocking the security agenda of the West in close collaboration with Russia. The behavioral shift first became evident in 2011 as the UNSC-mandated NATO mission to enforce a no-fly-zone over Libya – in response to the Gadhafi-regime’s heavy-handed measures to quell a rebellion – soon turned into one-sided support for the opposition forces in their struggle to overthrow the regime.1072 While China had abstained in the UNSC-voting on resolution 1973 that authorized the no-fly-zone, Beijing subsequently started criticizing the NATO mission in increasingly stark terms, claiming that it went far beyond the stipulated mandate.1073 In more diplomatic parlance, China’s UN ambassador Li Baodong in a statement in the UNSC in May 2011 stressed that “There must be no attempt at regime change or involvement in civil war by any party under the guise of protecting civilians. [...] We are opposed to any attempt to willfully interpret the resolutions or to take actions that exceed those mandated by the resolutions.”1074

1072 On China’s reactions to the Libyan crisis, see e.g. Sun (2012: single-page article); Holland (2012: 35-37).
Yet, Western bombardments persisted until the eventual ousting of the Gadhafi-regime in August 2011.1075

Meanwhile, another Arab Spring uprising, this time against the Assad-regime in Syria, was receiving growing attention as reports about massive human rights violations reached the international media. This prompted several Western countries, headed by France and the UK, to propose a resolution in the UNSC in October 2011, threatening sanctions against Syria.1076 Unsurprisingly, given their strong criticism of the NATO-intervention in Libya, China and Russia decided to make a stand in the UNSC by vetoing the resolution – and citing the need to respect Syria’s sovereignty1077 – while their fellow BRICS-colleagues India, Brazil and South Africa (non-permanent UNSC-members at the time) chose to abstain rather than support the resolution.1078 As the Assad-regime continued unabashed with its human rights violations, the Western UNSC-members in February 2012 pressed for a new draft resolution, based on a peace plan from the Arab League, demanding that the Syrian regime cease all violence, allow unhindered access in Syria to an Arab League observer mission and accept a timetable for a political transition to a democratic system.1079 Again, however, the draft resolution was met by a double veto from China and Russia, even though all other 13 members of the UNSC – notably including India and South Africa1080 – voted in favor of the resolution.

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1075 It should be noted that the Chinese government had considerable economic (mainly oil-related) interests in Libya under Gadhafi, as illustrated by its evacuation of 35,000 Chinese citizens prior to the NATO-mission.
1080 Brazil, the fifth BRICS-country, was no longer a non-permanent member by then.
Western reactions to the second double veto spoke volumes to the disillusionment with China (and Russia) and heralded a more confrontational period in the UNSC.\(^{1081}\) Susan Rice, U.S. ambassador to the UN, went as far as to term the veto “disgusting and shameful” and added that “Those that have blocked the potentially last effort to resolve this peacefully will have any future blood spill on their hands.”\(^{1082}\) In a justificatory statement, China’s UN ambassador Li Baodong stressed that Syria’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity must be respected and that it was irresponsible by the Western powers to push through a draft resolution in the UNSC when the council was still “seriously divided.”\(^{1083}\) Less than half a year later in July 2012, a third UNSC draft resolution on Syria, threatening with sanctions against the Syrian regime, was likewise veto-blocked by China and Russia.\(^{1084}\) While the Western powers once again deplored the veto,\(^{1085}\) Li Baodong in a statement underlined the indispensability of the principle of state sovereignty, declaring that “the destiny of Syria should be independently determined by the Syrian people, rather than imposed by outside forces.”\(^{1086}\) He added that the Western UNSC-members sponsoring the resolution (notably the United States, the United Kingdom and France) “failed to show any will of political cooperation. They adopted a rigid and arrogant approach to the reasonable...
core concerns of relevant countries”. Finally in May 2014, a fourth draft resolution on Syria, aiming to refer the crisis to the International Criminal Court, was also blocked by a Sino-Russian double veto.¹⁰⁸⁷

For a number of reasons, the four Chinese vetoes on Syria-resolutions appear to be an important indication of a shift in Chinese strategic behavior away from the generally accommodating line in the 2000s and towards a more assertive posture in the UNSC. First, the Syrian conflict has been one of the most high-profiled international crises in the 2010s with devastating effects in Syria as well as in neighboring countries, thus significantly raising the political costs to China – i.e. its international image – of persistently preventing the UNSC from taking action and at the same time underscoring China’s determination to withstand Western pressure.¹⁰⁸⁸ Second, whereas China and Russia were backed by the other BRICS in the first UNSC-vote in 2011, they were subsequently completely isolated in their opposition, again testifying to their willingness to bear the costs of opposing the West.¹⁰⁸⁹ Third, in itself the four vetoes constituted a dramatic behavioral change inasmuch as the PRC prior to 2011 had only exercised its veto right five times in total since its accession to the UNSC in 1971 (with two of these vetoes taking place in the transition phase 2007-09, see above).¹⁰⁹⁰ Fourth, after experiencing how the West completely ignored Chinese (and Russian) objections to the NATO-mission in Libya, Beijing wanted to draw a line in the sand in order to show that the West should not take Chinese accommodation for granted.¹⁰⁹¹

¹⁰⁸⁸ See Yan (2012: single-page article).
¹⁰⁸⁹ See also Wuthnow (2012a: single-page article).
¹⁰⁹⁰ For an overview of China’s vetoes in the UNSC, see the following link: [http://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/veto](http://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/veto) [accessed 23.07.2015].
¹⁰⁹¹ For this point, see also Holland (2012: 39); Sun (2012: single-page article); see also Yan (2012: single-page article).
Fifth, China had no crucial material interests at stake in the Syrian conflict but was nevertheless willing to make a strong principled stand in the UNSC.\textsuperscript{1092} For all these reasons, China’s vetoes demonstrated not only that it had reverted to a more uncompromising advocacy of state sovereignty but also that Beijing was increasingly inclined to defy the security agenda of the Western powers in the UNSC.

Apart from the confrontations over the Syria-conflict, China also clashed with the Western countries in the UNSC on other issues such as UN-mandated country-specific reports of systematic human rights abuses.\textsuperscript{1093} China also indirectly undermined Western attempts to condemn and isolate Russia following its annexation of Crimea even though Russia’s breach of Ukraine’s territorial integrity could hardly be seen as anything but a violation of Beijing’s cherished principle of state sovereignty.\textsuperscript{1094} At the same time, however, China, Russia and the Western powers have managed to cooperate, to some extent, on central security issues such as the tightening of sanctions against Iran and North Korea in response to their (in the case of Iran alleged) nuclear weapons programs.\textsuperscript{1095} Moreover, on a broad range of less controversial security issues, the UNSC-members have acted in concert as easily illustrated by reviewing the annual accounts of the UNSC-votes.\textsuperscript{1096} Furthermore, China has roughly maintained its

\textsuperscript{1092} China’s material interests in Syria primarily concern the oil sector, see Wuthnow (2012b: single-page article).

\textsuperscript{1093} For example, China attempted to block such a report on North Korea from reaching the UNSC in 2014; see Reuters, December 22, 2014, “UN Security Council Puts Human Rights Abuses in North Korea on Agenda”: \url{http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/22/north-korea-human-rights-un_n_6368516.html} [accessed 24.07.2015].

\textsuperscript{1094} See Keck (2014b: single-page article).

\textsuperscript{1095} For example, China voted in favor of resolutions 2087 and 2094 in 2013 to oppose Pyongyang’s drive to expand its nuclear delivery capabilities (2013: single-page article).

\textsuperscript{1096} For example in the year of 2012, an examination of the voting list reveals that all 15 UNSC-members voted in concert on 46 out of 52 votes following council meetings (with two votes blocked by vetoes and four votes marked by abstentions). The list can be accessed here: \url{http://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/meetings/2012} [accessed 24.07.2015].
high level of commitment to the UN peacekeeping operations with around 2000 personnel deployed to nine different UN peacekeeping operations as of late 2014. In other words, Beijing certainly remained actively involved in the UNSC and also cooperatively engaging in many issue areas, but the overall impression of a hardened Chinese attitude is only partially moderated by these examples of continued cooperation in the UNSC. What had changed was, above all, Beijing’s willingness to oppose the West on key issues in the UNSC.

One final area of China’s institutional engagement to consider is its involvement in regional multilateralism. In Central Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization remained the institutional cornerstone in China’s diplomatic strategy in the region, securing China an influential position on regional matters while entailing few institutional constraints on Chinese behavior. Most notably, in this context, Beijing used the SCO as a bridgehead for launching its ambitious infrastructural investment plan, the “One Road, One Belt”, seeking to draw Central Asia closer into Beijing’s zone of strategic influence. Yet, as an indication of Chinese strategic behavior in an institutional sense, China’s relationship to ASEAN in Southeast Asia seems far more relevant since it involves a stronger test of China’s multilateral disposition and approach to institutional constraints. Whereas the late 90s and especially the early zeroes had seen unprecedented Chinese accommodation to ASEAN’s institutional framework and an engagingly cooperative attitude (cf. Section 10.2), China has seemingly adopted a more assertive line in the second decade. Not only have there been several reports of direct and indirect...

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1098 See e.g. Tiezzi (2014c: single-page article).
1099 The most well-known example stems from an ARF-meeting in July 2010 when Yang Jiechi reacted sharply against plans of involving the U.S. in conflict mediation and reportedly declared that “China is a big country and

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rect confrontations between China and the ASEAN-states in institutional settings, one also notes a change in Beijing’s attitude to multilateral constraints. Most strikingly, China’s leaders have evaded serious multilateral negotiations with the ASEAN on a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea, to replace the non-binding DoC (Declaration on the conduct of parties in South China Sea), instead putting increasing emphasis on bilateral negotiations as the favored option. To be sure, China is still involved in several ASEAN-affiliated institutions (such as the ARF and the), but Beijing increasingly seems intent on engaging the Southeast Asian states on a new set of terms, being defined by China-dominated platforms such as the AIIB and the “Maritime Silk Road”.

In sum, the PRC’s overall institutional behavior in the second decade of the 21st century has shown substantial signs of change toward what may be categorized as – in terms of my operationalization criteria – engaged revisionism. On the one hand, China has remained involved in the same array of international institutions as back in the 2000s, acted in concert with the other great powers on a broad range of security issues, maintained its UNPKO-contributions and kept on participating in regional multilateral institutions. At the same time, however, Beijing has added a revisionist element to its institutional engagement as witnessed most clearly in its quest for institutional innovation via a set of new institutional platforms, but also discernible in its willingness to oppose the Western great powers on key security issues in the UN Security Council.


For example, at the biannual ASEAN-meeting in July 2012, the members were unable to reach a joint statement for the first time in ASEAN’s 45-year history due to a stalemate between the Philippines and Cambodia (the latter usually considered a close ally of Beijing) on whether to mention the Scarborough Shoal, which is disputed by China and the Philippines (see Emmerson, 2012: single-page article).  

See e.g. Pal (2013: single-page article); Tiezzi (2014a: single-page article).
China’s power-related behavior in the 2010s

With respect to the power dimension of China’s grand strategy behavior in the 2010s, there are mainly three areas of relevance: China’s military modernization, its use of coercive power in foreign relations and its approach to American unipolarity (i.e. criteria O₄-O₆ in table 6). I will seek to demonstrate in this subsection that a partial shift towards a more assertive Chinese posture can be seen in the first two of these areas whereas Beijing’s approach to American unipolarity has remained much the same. Most notably, the tendency of China to resort to confrontational behavior has become more pronounced in recent years, including the willingness to use force or to threaten with the use of force in order to further China’s strategic aims. Taken together, the changes indicate a partial shift of grand strategy towards a more revisionist behavioral course, most clearly illustrated by China’s behavior towards some of its maritime neighbors.

Beginning with the military modernization of the PRC, the first thing to note is that the growth rate of China’s military expenditures actually decreases a bit in the first five years of the second decade of the 21st century as compared to the first decade. While the average rate of growth was 13.5% during the 2000s, the corresponding figure for the 2010s had dropped to 10%, according to SIPRI-based data.¹¹⁰² Yet, as the overall expansion of the Chinese economy has likewise slowed down during the same period – from around 10% to around 8% on average, according to World Bank data¹¹⁰³ – the PLA’s military budget still grows at a

somewhat faster rate than the overall Chinese economy. As such, the limited drop in the growth rate of military expenditures – rather than signaling changed strategic priorities – indicates that Zhongnanhai is willing to continue investing heavily in the modernization of the PLA despite the overall deceleration of the economy. As a result of the continuous double-digit growth in China’s military expenditures, the PLA has grown significantly larger over the past decade, especially in relative terms. Today, the PLA has the second largest military budget in the world at its disposal, dwarfed only by that of the Pentagon and by far outspending the militaries of other regional great powers such as Japan, Russia and India (see Figure R).

Although it is certainly possible to read revisionist intentions into the trajectory of China’s military budget, one should keep in mind that the development is still basically a corollary of the overall modernization that China is undergoing. Therefore, to better determine if a revisionist element has been added in the
growth rate of the Chinese economy is based on constant (2005) $US and encompasses the period from 2010 to 2014.

1104 For a similar conclusion based on the official Chinese figures, see Andrew Erickson, March 5, 2015, The Wall Street Journal, online article: http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2015/03/05/chinas-military-spending-swells-again-despite-domestic-headwinds/ [accessed 27.07.2015]; see also Liff & Ikenberry (2014: 66-67).
2010s to the continuing modernization of the PLA one needs to take a look at the military hardware that the PLA is currently acquiring. On the one hand, the general pattern of investments remains much the same as in the 2000s; that is, targeted at further developing China’s military supremacy over Taiwan and at fielding asymmetric capabilities that will enable the PLA to deter the U.S. military from intervening in a conflict situation in China’s immediate neighborhood. Indeed, as stated in the executive summary of the latest Pentagon-report on China’s military modernization “Preparing for potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait remains the focus and primary driver of China’s military investment”.\textsuperscript{1105} In order to achieve these related strategic aims the PLA keeps investing heavily in military capabilities like short- and medium-range conventional ballistic missiles (directed at Taiwan), anti-ship medium-range ballistic missiles (to deter the U.S. fleet from intervening), a large number of attack submarines (to deter the U.S. fleet from intervening), an increasingly large and modern (i.e. fourth generation) air force within unrefueled range of Taiwan (to conduct air superiority over and strategic bombing of Taiwan) and scores of multi-purpose, cruise-missile-guided surface combatant ships like destroyers and frigates (to conduct local air superiority).\textsuperscript{1106} These investment patterns largely represent “business as usual” for the PLA.

At the same time, however, the PLA has recently acquired some capabilities that are clearly intended to augment the PLA’s power projection capabilities beyond a potential Taiwan Strait contingency.\textsuperscript{1107} Most conspicuously, China sent its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, on a maiden voyage in 2011 to great public fanfare

\textsuperscript{1105} Pentagon (2015: i). Later, the executive summary states that “China is investing in capabilities designed to defeat adversary power projection and counter third-party – including U.S. – intervention during a crisis or conflict.” For a similar scholar-based assessment, see Christensen (2015: 96-98).

\textsuperscript{1106} Pentagon (2015: chapter 3-5).

\textsuperscript{1107} Pentagon (2015: chapter 3); see also Liff & Ikenberry (2014: 67).
and enthusiasm. Although the Liaoning is certainly no match for the U.S. Nimitz-class aircraft carriers and is likely to function partially as a training platform, its commissioning does potentially expand the radius of action of the PLA Navy to more distant waters, thus signaling to maritime neighbors that the PRC is increasingly capable of enforcing its territorial claims far from the Chinese mainland. Equally importantly, the Liaoning, in reality a Ukrainian-built vessel completely refurbished in China, is the first physical manifestation of China’s own indigenous aircraft carrier program, which is likely to play a key role in realizing Zhongnanhai’s openly stated ambitions of developing a blue-water navy. Another high-profiled example of the PLA’s determination to ramp up its power projection capability is the indigenous development of a long-range stealth fighter plane, the J-20 and the J-31, the former of which captured the world’s attention in early 2011 as it was (deliberately?) tested hours before U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates made an important visit to Beijing. In itself, the stealth plane signifies a desire to be able to conduct offensive out-of-area air operations and to close the gap to the prevailing U.S. fifth generation fighter aircraft.

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1109 Pentagon (2015: 40); see also Holmes (2015: single-page article).


1111 Especially the most recent white paper on “China’s military strategy” is very explicit in stating the importance of being able to conduct “open seas protection” rather than just “offshore defense” and of developing “a modern maritime military force” (SCIO, 2015: section IV; see Appendix B+).


1113 Pentagon (2015: 11-12).
In addition to these high-profiled military acquisitions, two other key elements of China’s growing power projection capacity in the 2010s should be noted. One is the organizational streamlining and rapid expansion of the white-hulled China Coast Guard fleet, which is in charge of law enforcement in Chinese waters, including those areas in the East and South China Sea that are disputed by other countries. Since 2011, the coast guard fleet has seen a dramatic expansion in both the number of vessels and the size of the vessels, in effect enabling the coast guard to progressively extend its reach and thereby complement the likewise expanding PLA Navy. Crucially, the China Coast Guard is also increasingly taking part in rights protection missions by declaring Chinese sovereignty to foreign ships, denying them (e.g. fishing boats) access to alleged Chinese waters or even protecting Chinese ships (e.g. fishing boats) that operate in contested areas. The second, far more controversial, key element in China’s recent endeavor to increase its power projection capabilities is the quite recent endeavor to construct, by means of land reclamation, an artificial islet around the Fiery Cross reef in the Spratlys, big enough to support a 3 km long airstrip (as well as a harbor). The unprecedented scale and speed of the construction work, which is accompanied by other building activities on Chinese-controlled reefs in the Spratlys, is widely seen as part of China’s increasingly assertive strategy in the South China Sea. Hence, by creating new land features on the map (entitled to an EEZ of its own) and by furnishing them with power projection platforms,

1114 See Martinson (2015: single-page article); see also Holmes (2013a: single-page article).
1117 According to the law of the sea (defined by UNCLOS), islands are entitled to an Exclusive Economic Zone of 200 nautical miles.
these building activities aim at strengthening China’s claim to sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, including the Spratlys.\textsuperscript{1118}

Taken together, China’s military modernization in the 2010s shows multiple signs of seeking to expand China’s power projection capabilities, thus seemingly preparing the ground for a more assertive Chinese grand strategy. While some scholars have all along viewed China’s rapid military modernization as proof of a revisionist grand strategy (cf. Section 10.2), such judgements are more easily supported by current patterns of investments in power projection capabilities.

Turning subsequently to the second aspect of China’s behavioral record in the 2010s, its use of coercive power, confrontational actions and territorial assertiveness in China’s foreign policy, there seems to be an even better case for demonstrating a behavioral shift. As argued at the beginning of Section 10.3, even though China had also occasionally engaged in assertive activities in the 2000s, the number, intensity and broad scope of such “incidents” from 2010 onwards testify to a new behavioral course. In the following, I will briefly account for the most prominent (in terms of media coverage and scholarly attention) examples of assertive incidents. In light of the critique by Swaine, Johnston and Jerdén, I have omitted several (and kept some) of the incidents from 2009-10 often cited as evidence of China’s turn to assertiveness and furthermore extended the list with a number of more recent examples, most of which have occurred in 2012-2014.\textsuperscript{1119} It is important to note from the outset that most of the

\textsuperscript{1118} See e.g. Lee (2015: single-page article); Tiezzi (2015d: single-page article). On China’s claim to the South China Sea, see below.

\textsuperscript{1119} I have omitted alleged Chinese assertiveness with respect to the status of the \$US as the primary reserve currency (March 2009), at the COP-15 climate conference in Copenhagen (December 2009), in response to the Dalai Lama’s visit to the U.S. (February 2010), in response to North Korea’s alleged sinking of the South Korean navy vessel \textit{Cheonan} (March 2010) and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, South Korea (November 2010) and with respect to the designation of the South China Sea as “a core interest” (March 2010).
incidents have been at least partially provoked by what Zhongnanhai views as assertive or infringing actions by other countries (briefly mentioned below), in that sense eliciting a sort of reactionary assertiveness from China.\textsuperscript{1120} My purpose here, however, is not to judge whether China’s behavior was justified in each instance but merely to describe the overall pattern of incidents of Chinese assertiveness and leave aside any explanatory attempts until Chapter 11. It should also be stressed that although China’s harsh, intimidating language constituted a critical aspect of most of the listed incidents of assertiveness, I stick here to my behavioral focus and only mention threats that were out of the ordinary.

- **January 2010**: In response to the authorization by the Obama-administration of a new package of arms sales to Taiwan, China not only suspended Sino-American military-to-military contacts but also made an unprecedented threat of targeting American companies involved in the arms sales with sanctions.\textsuperscript{1121}

- **June 2010**: In response to a planned joint U.S.-South Korean military exercise in international waters in the Yellow Sea (itself a reaction to the sinking of the *Cheonan*, a South Korean vessel, in March 2010), Beijing issued an unprecedented warning against conducting military exercises in China’s coastal waters and furthermore staged its own large-scale military exercises in the area.\textsuperscript{1122}

- **September 2010**: In response to the Japanese coast guard’s temporary detention and planned prosecution of a Chinese fishing boat captain (for ramming the Japanese coast guard vessels), China arrested four Japanese citizens (on

\textsuperscript{1120} See especially Swaine & Fravel (2011) for this point.

\textsuperscript{1121} Johnston (2013: 15-16). The threat was never realized, though.

\textsuperscript{1122} Swaine & Fravel (2011: 12-14); Johnston (2013: 20-21). China moderates its warning in November, clarifying that the warning only pertains to China’s EEZ.
allegations of being spies), demanded an official apology as well as compensation and threatened to impose restrictions on its export of raw earth minerals to Japan.1123

- December 2010: In response to the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s decision to award the Peace Prize to Chinese dissident and human rights activist Liu Xiaobo, Beijing severed all political ties to Norway, cancelled ongoing negotiations on a free-trade agreement, placed restrictions on selected Norwegian exports and made an unprecedented request to other countries about not participating in the award ceremony.1124

- April 2011 (2009-20101125): In response to submissions made by Malaysia and Vietnam to a UN commission concerning their territorial claims in the South China Sea, Beijing issued a verbal note to the UN for the first time detailing its extensive claims to the South China Sea and all its land features, specifically claiming rights of territorial sea, EEZs and continental shelf for all the islands.1126

- April 2012: In response to the attempted arrest by the Philippine navy of Chinese fishermen operating near the Scarborough Shoal located in the South China Sea within the EEZ of the Philippines, China first intervened with various types of vessels in what evolved into a standoff with the Philippine Navy, then negotiated a mutual withdrawal from the area, only to return later with enough ships to exercise effective control over the shoal ever since.1127

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1123 Swaine & Fravel (2011: 8-10); Johnston (2013: 21-31); Jerdén (2014: 57-61). China subsequently backs down on its demands for an apology and compensation while the threat about export restrictions is only partially and temporarily implemented.

1124 Jerdén (2014: 65-69). China has still not abandoned its political isolation of Norway; the import restrictions primarily targeted Norwegian salmon.

1125 China also forwarded less specific documents to the UN commission in 2009 and 2010.

1126 Swaine & Fravel (2011: 2-5); Jerdén (2014: 72). Prior to that, China’s claims to sovereignty over the South China Sea had merely been stated, not fleshed out.

➢ September 2012: In response to the Japanese government’s decision to nationalize the main islands of Senkaku/Diaoyu in the East China Sea, the Chinese government not only allowed large-scale (at times violent) demonstrations directed at Japanese targets (e.g. property) in China but also mobilized a large number of (both military and non-military) ships and aircraft making repeated incursions into the territorial waters of the islands to dispute the decades-long *de facto* administration of the islands by Japan.\textsuperscript{1128}

➢ December 2012: In response to a Vietnamese exploratory mission for potential oil fields in contested waters within the EEZ of Vietnam and the Paracels (occupied by China since 1974), Chinese ships allegedly cut the seismic cable of the Vietnamese vessel (used for exploring the seabed).\textsuperscript{1129}

➢ April 2013: In response to India’s alleged construction of military infrastructure in the disputed border region between China and India, Chinese PLA-troops made a week-long incursion deep into the disputed territory followed up by another incursion in June when PLA-troops smashed some of the Indian infrastructure.\textsuperscript{1130}

➢ November 2013: In response to the ongoing territorial conflict about Senkaku/Diaoyu (see above), China unilaterally declared the establishment of an Air Defense Identification Zone, covering a large area of the East China Sea (including the disputed islands), in effect demanding foreign planes to

\textsuperscript{1128} Swaine (2013: 1-2); see also Kazianis (2013: single-page article); Hobart (2013: single-page article). The Chinese incursions into the territorial waters of Senkaku/Diaoyu have persisted albeit not as frequently as in the immediate aftermath of the crisis.


\textsuperscript{1130} Gokhale (2013: single-page article); Pratyush (2013: single-page article).
comply with a number of identification rules, some of which went beyond customary international law.\textsuperscript{1131}

- **December 2013:** In response to the USS Cowpens’ tailing 45 km after PLA Navy ships during a military exercise in international waters (involving China’s new aircraft carrier, the Liaoning), the PLA Navy forced the USS Cowpens to stop its monitoring activity.\textsuperscript{1132}

- **March 2014:** In response to the Philippines’ referral of its South China Sea territorial disputes with China to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Hague (based on the UNCLOS), Beijing has since March 2014 continuously officially rejected to take any part in the legal process (despite having ratified the UNCLOS), calling for direct bilateral negotiations with the Philippines instead.\textsuperscript{1133}

- **March 2014:** In response to alleged Philippine attempts to provide construction materials to the Second Thomas Shoal in contested waters (within the EEZ of the Philippines), the PLA Navy made an unprecedented move to block Philippine ships from resupplying Philippine marines operating in the area.\textsuperscript{1134}

- **May 2014:** In response to Vietnamese ships seeking to prevent a Chinese oil rig from operating in contested waters within the EEZ of both Vietnam and the Paracels (occupied by China since 1974), Chinese coast guard vessels used force (water cannons and ramming) to protect the oil rig.\textsuperscript{1135}

- **August 2014:** In response to ongoing monitoring activities by U.S. surveillance planes in China’s EEZ, a Chinese fighter jet made a dangerously close in-

\textsuperscript{1131} Waxman (2014: single-page article); Panda (2015b: single-page article). The Chinese government did not, however, enforce compliance with the rules of its ADIZ as the United States, Japan and others deliberately ignored it quickly after its inception.

\textsuperscript{1132} Thayer (2013: single-page article); Holmes (2013b: single-page article).

\textsuperscript{1133} Tiezzi (2015b: single-page article); Li Xue (2015: single-page article).

\textsuperscript{1134} Keck (2014c: single-page article); Emmerson (2014: single-page article). The Philippines instead airlifted provisions to its marines, and China eventually gave up its blockade.

\textsuperscript{1135} Stout (2014: single-page article); Tiezzi (2014d: single-page article).
terception to scare off the American plane (135 miles east of China’s Hainan Island).\textsuperscript{1136}

- May 2015: In response to a U.S. surveillance plane monitoring Chinese building activities around the Fiery Cross Reef in the South China Sea in international waters, Chinese personnel on the ground for the first time issued repeated warnings to the surveillance plane, requesting it to leave the area.\textsuperscript{1137}

Compared to the 2000s, the frequency as well as severity of incidents that involve Chinese assertiveness in the first half of the 2010s together forms a new behavioral pattern. While Chinese assertiveness in many cases appeared reactionary, it does not change the fact that \textit{Zhongnanhai} has recently shown a growing willingness to undertake confrontational practices – sometimes even resorting to the use of force – in order to assert its claims and interests. To be sure, China has at the same time – via the PLA – carried on many of its confidence-building activities from the 2000s such as engaging with the militaries of other countries, conducting joint military exercises, participating in international humanitarian operations, prolonging its anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden and continuing its contribution to UN peace-keeping operations.\textsuperscript{1138} Yet, continuation (plus some minor set-backs\textsuperscript{1139}) in these areas has been largely overshadowed by many incidents of Chinese assertiveness.

\textsuperscript{1136} Keck (2014d: single-page article). The episode resembled an episode back in 2001 when a Chinese fighter intercepted and collided with an American surveillance plane (see Section 10.1). The U.S. and China differs as to whether the monitoring activity is legal according to international law.


\textsuperscript{1138} SCIO (2015: section VI; see Appendix B+); Pentagon (2015: 16-19).

\textsuperscript{1139} One such setback concerns the gradually increasing transparency about China’s military modernization, a trend which has been partially reversed since 2010; see Erickson (2015).
The third aspect of China’s power-related behavior in the 2010s pertains more directly to its relationship to the United States as encapsulated in Beijing’s approach to American unipolarity. While China in the 2000s primarily pursued an engaged relationship of status quo containing some, mostly covert, elements of regional balancing against U.S. dominance, the Sino-American relationship has become markedly tenser in the 2010s. Although Beijing has so far not openly challenged U.S. global leadership, Chinese leaders have recently been somewhat more vocal in indirectly questioning U.S. strategic dominance in China’s own regional backyard. One of the most controversial examples stems from Xi Jinping’s speech in May 2014 at the CICA summit, in which he stated that “it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia”.1140 To many observers, Xi’s statement thus signifies a change towards a more defiant Chinese approach to American unipolarity.1141 Furthermore, ever since the Obama-administration launched its so-called “pivot (or re-balancing) to Asia” in late 2011,1142 Zhongnanhai has indirectly aired its frustrations with what could be seen as an emerging strategic encirclement or containment of China.1143 It is important to stress, however, that not only are we still not witnessing any direct criticism of U.S. strategic preponderance in Asia, nor have we seen any substantial behavioral challenge to American unipolarity. Some of the cases of Chinese assertiveness listed above – notably the recent encounters with U.S. surveillance planes or ships – may be construed as embryonic

1141 See e.g. Pei (2014a: single-page article); Tiezzi (2014e: single-page article); for a critical assessment that tones down the policy shift, see Wang D. (2015: single-page article).
1142 On the US Pivot to Asia, see Clinton (2011); for an introduction to the background of the US Pivot, see e.g. Campbell & Andrews (2013); Christensen (2015: 247-51).
1143 See especially Swaine (2012b: 4-11), who demonstrates how official Chinese criticism of the US Pivot has been limited to spokespersons from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, the biannual Chinese defense white papers have also criticized the US Pivot in indirect terms. For example the one from 2013 states that “some country has strengthened its Asia-Pacific military alliances, expanded its military presence in the region and frequently makes the situation here tenser” (SCIO, 2013a: section i; see Appendix B+).
indication of balancing behavior, but the overall picture remains much the same as in the 2000s. That is, in its deeds – if not quite so in its words – Beijing still basically accommodates itself to U.S. unipolarity.

**China’s normative positioning in the 2010s**

The final dimension of Chinese grand strategy behavior in the 2010s is concerned with China’s normative positioning in relation to the Liberal Order. Whereas Chinese strategic behavior in the 2010s (as compared to the 2000s) displays discernible change within the institutional and power dimension, there is no such clear-cut change to observe with respect to China’s normative positioning. Indeed, China remains normatively detached from the Liberal Order, but in a status quo rather than revisionist manner. In terms of the operationalized behavioral criteria (i.e. O7), China should have positioned itself as a normative contender to the Liberal Order in the 2010s – that is, pursued a strategic course of engaged revisionism in line with my empirical hypothesis – but there is little evidence of China directly challenging the normative underpinnings of the Liberal Order in the wake of the global financial crisis. Rather, China’s normative positioning can still best be described as that of a “skeptic”, distancing itself from the prevailing order without advancing a competing set of norms and values. Again (as in Section 10.2), there are three relevant aspects to consider when analyzing the empirical evidence of China’s normative positioning in the 2010s, namely Beijing’s approach to universal human rights standards, its joint (BRICS-associated) statements about the Liberal Order and its ongoing endeavor to develop China’s soft power on a Sino-centric template. My examination below is rather brief as China, broadly speaking, continues along the same path as in the 2000s within all three areas.
With respect, firstly, to China’s approach to universal human rights standards, there is hardly any substantial change to report since 2010. On the one hand, China still nominally subscribes to universal human rights standards by virtue of its existing affiliation with some of the key international human rights conventions, its ongoing membership of the UN Human Rights Council (reelected in late 2013) and Zhongnanhai’s issuing of national actions plans for the implementation of human rights (the current plan being from 2012). On the other hand, China has made no further substantive “progress” since the early 2000s in committing itself to and implementing the human rights ideals of the Western Liberal Order, and Beijing actively attempts to prevent the UN (both in the UNHRC and in the Security Council) from censuring human rights violations in member states. For example, in 2014 China used its UNHRC-membership to vote down resolutions spotlighting human rights abuses in North Korea, Iran, Sri Lanka, Belarus, Ukraine and Syria. Equally importantly, China continues to advocate a different understanding of universal human rights than the West, privileging collective socio-economic rights to subsistence, employment and welfare rather than civil and political rights. This divergence was once again amply illustrated during the UNHRC-hearing on the human rights situation in China itself in 2014 (as part of the Universal Periodic Review) seeing that China

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1144 As made abundantly clear in Human Rights Watch’s reports on China, the domestic situation in China has actually deteriorated especially since Xi Jinping’s takeover, but my aim here is only to track China’s international normative positioning on the human rights issue; see e.g. Human Rights Watch, Report on China in 2014, downloaded from: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/china-and-tibet [accessed 03.08.2015].


1147 For instance, Beijing has still not ratified the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights despite having signed it back in 1998.

accepted the recommendations on issues ranging from poverty alleviation to a stronger welfare system but rejected those pertaining to the protection of political and civil rights.\footnote{See Voice of America, March 20, 2014, “Chinese Human Rights under UN-Scrutiny”: \url{http://www.voanews.com/content/chinese-human-rights-record-under-un-scrutiny/1875146.html} [accessed 03.08.2015].} Taken together, China’s normative position on (not to forget practical application of) human rights still places it in indirect opposition to the Western Liberal Order (i.e. in a detached position) even if Beijing does not renounce the human rights ideals \textit{per se}.

Secondly, when it comes to official Chinese views on the legitimacy of the Liberal Order, the Sino-Russian statements of the 2000s have been replaced by the joint annual BRICS-statements since 2009.\footnote{For access to all the joint statements, see BRICS Information Center: \url{http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/} [accessed 03.08.2015].} Going through these statements, one quickly realizes that they are generally rather vague, probably reflecting the fact that they need to encompass substantial differences in normative outlooks among the five (initially four) member states. In fact, one searches in vain for anti-Western rhetoric, criticism of liberal-democratic norms and values or even any accusations of Western hegemonic practices.\footnote{One merely finds statements such as “the voice of emerging and developing countries in international affairs should be enhanced”, \textit{Sanya-declaration} (paragraph 7), Third BRICS Summit, Hainan China, April 14, 2011: \url{http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/110414-leaders.html} [accessed 03.08.2015].} Instead, the few paragraphs from the statements that address the legitimacy of the prevailing order merely place strong emphasis on the UN system as well as traditional international norms of sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity, which at most amounts to an indirect warning to the West against pursuing a human rights-legitimated interventionist agenda in Syria and elsewhere.\footnote{See e.g. the \textit{Sanya-declaration} (Paragraph 9), ibid.} In other words, while the BRICS and their joint summit statements serve as a reminder to the West that the emerging great powers do not see themselves as intimately affil-
ated with the Liberal Order, there are, on the other hand, few indications of any revisionist normative aspirations in the official statements.\footnote{1153} Rather, by taking part in the BRICS, China primarily demonstrates its normative detachment from the Western Liberal Order.

Third and lastly, China has continued its endeavor in the 2010s to develop a cultural soft power profile by cultivating its civilizational roots, by disseminating Chinese language and culture and by building up international media platforms that offer a Chinese perspective to the outside world. Some argue that this Sino-centric trend has actually intensified since Xi Jinping became the head of Zhongnanhai.\footnote{1154} Indeed, the number of Confucius Institutes and Classrooms in the world is rising steadily,\footnote{1155} China is pouring massive resources into its own cultural industry (not least the film industry)\footnote{1156} and China’s recent large-scale infrastructural investments in Asia such as the Maritime Silk Road are being couched in Sino-centric language. Moreover, remarks made recently by Chinese leaders in unofficial domestic forums could indicate that the current revival of Chinese culture is at least partially directed against Western cultural and ideological dominance.\footnote{1157} Crucially, however, Chinese leaders have so far completely refrained from publicly framing China’s civilizational heritage as a set of competing norms and values that could vie with those of the Liberal Order.

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{1153}{For a scholar, who conversely emphasizes the Western-critical, even revisionist tendencies of the BRICS-forum, see e.g. Laidi (2012); for a discussion, see also Forsby & Kristensen (2013).}
\item \footnote{1154}{See e.g. Lam (2015: 270); see also Dynon (2013: single-page article).}
\item \footnote{1155}{According to the official homepage for Confucius Institutes, the total number of institutes and classrooms stood at 554 by the end of 2009, whereas the current total number has passed 1000 (in 2015); see Hanban News, \url{http://english.hanban.org/article/2010-07/02/content_153910.htm} [accessed 03.08.2015].}
\item \footnote{1156}{See Shambaugh (2013: chapter 6).}
\item \footnote{1157}{Both Hu Jintao in 2012 and Xi Jinping in 2013 have reportedly warned fellow party members about the threat of Westernization (see Dynon, 2013: single-page article).}
\end{itemize}
In sum, China has clearly not positioned itself in the 2010s as a contender to the Liberal Order, given that Beijing has refrained from seeking to actively challenge or revise the prevailing order in a normative sense. Instead, the Chinese leadership maintains the right to have a different understanding of “universal” human rights than the West, moderately criticizes the legitimacy of the prevailing international order (together with the BRICS) and pursues a Sino-centric revival aimed at increasing Chinese soft power abroad rather than establishing a competing set of international norms and values.

**Overall assessment of Chinese grand strategy in the 2010s**

Based on a wide range of behavioral (and a few discursive) indicators, Chinese grand strategy in the wake of the global financial crisis seems, on balance, to have taken a turn from engaged status quo to engaged revisionism in line with my empirical hypothesis (cf. Section 9.3). Yet, as pointed out at the beginning of the section, Chinese grand strategy in the 2010s is analytically situated far closer to the binary dividing line separating revisionism from status quo than the type of engaged revisionism practiced during the early revolutionary years of the Mao era. Most problematically, analytically speaking, China’s normative positioning in relation to the Liberal Order did not display any openly revisionist tendencies. Rather, Beijing merely continued the pattern from the 2000s of distancing itself from the prevailing Western conception of human rights, indirectly questioning the legitimacy of a Western dominated international order and cultivating a distinct, but low-key, Sino-centric profile in the outside world. Still, the behavioral evidence from the two other analytical dimensions tips the balance in favor of my overall categorization of Chinese grand strategy in the current decade as engaged revisionism.
As demonstrated first by virtue of China’s institutional involvement in the 2010s, Beijing has not only pushed for reforms of global financial governance institutions but also, more importantly, pursued new institutional platforms that may cater better to China’s strategic interests. Hence, Beijing has been actively promoting new international institutions such as the G20 and the BRICS forum and even recently set the stage as a leading institutional architect of the AIIB. In addition, China has recently proposed several ambitious infrastructural initiatives – such as the Maritime Silk Road and the Silk Road Economic Belt – which are supposed to ensure Beijing an increasingly prominent regional role by creating a revised Asian order with China at the center. In the UNSC, China has furthermore demonstrated an increased willingness to directly oppose Western-backed resolutions for how to handle one of the key international security crises, namely the conflict in Syria, despite the costs of being isolated (with Russia) in international society on this question. To be sure, China does work in concert with the Western UNSC-members on many other security issues and Beijing still maintains much the same membership profile of international organizations and treaties as in the 2000s, but the new aspects of China’s institutional behavior are sufficiently high-profiled to suggest a shifting pattern.

When it comes to the power dimension of Chinese grand strategy, the recent behavioral pattern even more clearly indicates a shift towards a course of engaged revisionism. Admittedly, China’s military modernization has not witnessed a budgetary surge, and many investments in military hardware are still targeted narrowly at a Taiwan contingency and, somewhat broader, at being able to deter the United States from intervening militarily if such a contingency were to arise. However, several other recent investments – including the aircraft carrier and
stealth fighter programs, the dramatic expansion of the rights-enforcing coast
guard fleet and the land relocations/building activities in the South China Sea –
all suggest that the PLA is seriously expanding its power projection capabilities,
thus seemingly preparing the ground for a more assertive grand strategy. It is
against this backdrop that we have recently witnessed a markedly increased
frequency as well as severity of assertive incidents involving China, which
amounts to a new behavioral pattern. While Chinese assertiveness in many cases
appeared reactionary, it does not change the fact that Zhongnanhai has shown a
growing willingness to undertake confrontational practices – sometimes even
resort to the use of force – in order to assert its claims and interests. The only
aspect of China’s power-related behavior that has not changed since the 2000s is
Beijing’s continuous accommodation to U.S. unipolarity in the sense of not di-
rectly attempting to balance U.S. military preponderance.

Taken together, therefore, it seems reasonable to describe Chinese strategic be-
havior in the first half of the current decade as having taken a turn towards en-
gaged revisionism.
Chapter 11:
Explaining Chinese grand strategy

Chapter 10 not only mapped and described the main features of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century, it also managed to show that the overall behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy has seen two major shifts in the 21st century. The first shift was clearly manifested in the wake of 9/11, when Chinese grand strategy changed from detached to engaged status quo, while the second shift took place after the global financial crisis, when Chinese grand strategy took another turn towards engaged revisionism. The observed behavioral pattern broadly conforms to my empirical hypotheses on the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy (with one notable exception discussed below in Section 11.2). Let me briefly recapitulate my findings in causal terms (Figure S in Section 11.2 provides a graphical overview): Chapter 8 traced the evolution of the independent variable, demonstrating how the `Globalist China´ and `Rising China´ narratives have dominated the first and the second decade of the 21st century respectively with the `Sino-centric China´ narrative holding a prominent position during the juncture period of the global financial crisis. Chapter 9 defined the dependent variable and connected it to the narrative identity logics of the independent variable by virtue of a set of empirical hypotheses. Finally, Chapter 10 described the behavioral pattern of the dependent variable from engaged status quo in the first decade of the 21st century to engaged revisionism in the second, which I find to be broadly in line with the empirical hypotheses. What I have been able to demonstrate so far, in other words, is the existence of an empirical pattern of co-variation between the independent and dependent variable in line with my theoretically guided hypothesis about the relationship between state identity and grand strategy.
However, as noted in Chapter 10, the finding of an empirical pattern of co-variation between Chinese identity and Chinese grand strategy is not sufficient to establish a causal relationship between the two variables. I still have to show that the logic of Chinese identity was in fact a key motivational driver of the observed behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy. To plausibly explain Chinese grand strategy, I therefore need to pinpoint how the narrative logic of the dominant Chinese identity conception was a critical motivational driver in shaping the observed pattern of China’s grand strategy in the 21st century. Chapter 11 seeks to establish “the missing link” between the two variables. As I have already pointed out, it is far from straightforward to identify the link between Chinese identity and grand strategy given the non-democratic, even secretive nature of Chinese politics, which strongly limits our access to key aspects of the political process and thus our ability to trace how Zhongnanhai legitimizes and justifies Chinese politics (see Section 5.1). This is why I have gone to great lengths to indirectly corroborate the causal relationship by hypothetically linking the two variables and establishing a pattern of co-variation.

Yet, it is, at least to some extent, possible to trace a link between Chinese identity and grand strategy by means of openly accessible discursive sources. The first section of Chapter 11 thus attempts to identify the causal link between the narrative logic of the dominant Chinese identity conceptions and China’s grand strategy in the 21st century. To this end, I draw on a limited number of official government texts which directly discuss the direction of China’s grand strategy in the 21st century and contain some references to the dominant conception of Chinese state identity at the time. The second section presents a more comprehensive account of the evolution of Chinese identity and grand strategy since the
late 1990s in order to specify my overall argument about the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy. In the third section, I discuss the plausibility of my identity-based theoretical framework by taking a critical look at its underlying theoretical premises and I subsequently concentrate on the empirical plausibility probe of the proposed relationship, notably a number of validity and reliability issues. Finally, the last section concentrates on realism, the dominant theoretical approach in the IR debate on the rise of China, in order to compare my own explanatory account of Chinese grand strategy to that of realism.

11.1 Tracing a direct link between Chinese identity and grand strategy
Having thoroughly mapped the variation in, traced the evolution of and proposed a hypothetical relationship between Chinese identity and Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century, my intention in this and the next section is to establish a link more directly between the two main variables. From a theoretical perspective, the logic of social identity affects state grand strategy in a both generative and discursive-structural sense, as argued in Chapter 3 and 4.1158 In reality, however, the generative and discursive-structural logic of social identity constitute overlapping perspectives, which is why the distinction is difficult to maintain and illustrate empirically. In stating the proposed relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy, I have deliberately concentrated on the generative logic of social identity, since this is the crux of my theoretical argument. My claim was that any state’s prevailing narrative conception of state identity is

1158 It was pointed out in Section 2.3 that the structural logic of social identity is often treated as a constitutive – rather than causal – logic by mainstream IR constructivists.
predicated on a particular identity strategy – for framing the salient in-group/out-group distinction(s) and satisfying the basic dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem – which at the same time generates the grand strategy of the state in question. Even so, as the link traced below in the texts may just as well be regarded as a discursive-structural one, I will use the next section to specify how I see Chinese state identity as a generative motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy.

Ideally, to establish the causal effect of Chinese identity on Chinese grand strategy persuasively, I would need access to ample discursive material in which representatives of Zhongnanhai explicitly discuss, frame and justify Chinese grand strategy in order to determine to what extent these representatives refer to the narrative logic of the dominant Chinese identity conception. In practice, however, there are only a few available texts on Chinese grand strategy that are relevant for tracing the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy. These texts include first of all two white papers on China’s “Peaceful Development” from 2005 and 2011, both of which adopt a comprehensive approach to China’s grand strategy encompassing many of the same areas as my own empirical examination in Chapter 10. Crucially, the white papers not only discuss China’s grand strategy but also directly relate it to the official conception of Chinese identity. Yet, as these two texts have some limitations (to be elaborated below), I introduce additional discursive sources that are somewhat more narrowly focused on specific dimensions of Chinese grand strategy, such as the biannual white papers on China’s military defense/strategy. I should mention that some of the discursive sources employed here were used previously in Chapter 7 as part of my mapping of the discourse on Chinese identity to derive the independent variable. While I dismissed the idea of also using these discursive sources to
examine the dependent variable, preferring instead behavioral evidence to avoid the risk of conflating my independent and dependent variable (see Section 9.2), this discursive material is conversely well-suited to subsequently establishing a link between the two variables.

The white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development Road” from 2005 offers a perfect starting point for tracing the link between Chinese identity and grand strategy. As already shown in Section 7.2, the text is littered with references to ‘Globalist China’, thus leaving no doubt about the dominance of this narrative in the white paper. One illustrative example from the opening lines should suffice here: “Peace, opening-up, cooperation, harmony and win-win are our policy, our idea, our principle and our pursuit. To take the road of peaceful development is to unify domestic development with opening to the outside world, linking the development of China with that of the rest of the world, and combining the fundamental interests of the Chinese people with the common interests of all peoples throughout the world [...] the two aspects, closely linked and organically united, are an integrated whole and will help to build a harmonious world of sustained peace and common prosperity.”

As stated numerous times in the white paper, China’s destiny is inextricably intertwined with that of the international society of states, in effect spurring the ongoing opening-up of the PRC and creating a universal in-group, which is why I categorized ‘Globalist China’ as an extrovert/universalistic narrative. The underlying identity strategy of social affiliation implies that China will tone down its own distinctiveness while seeking peer recognition from its salient out-group(s) to raise its self-esteem. The gist of this strategy is spelled out later in the first section of the white paper: “[China] shares with all other countries the fruits of mankind’s civilization, respects and

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1159 SCIO (2005e: section I; see Appendix B+ for all the following references to SCIO).
gives consideration to other’s interests, works with other countries to solve the disputes and problems cropping up in cooperation and strives to achieve mutual benefit and common development, abides by its international obligations and commitments, actively participates in international systems and world affairs, and endeavors to play a constructive and locomotive role”.

It was argued in Section 9.3 that a state identity narrative like ‘Globalist China’ – predicated on an identity strategy of social affiliation, which tones down the distinctiveness of the in-group state in favor of a more universalistic conception of inter-state community, and which strives to achieve positive self-esteem in an extrovert manner by means of peer recognition from salient out-group states – should translate itself into a state grand strategy of engaged status quo. The white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development Road” contains plenty of evidence that this is in fact the grand strategy proposed by the Chinese leadership. The main elements of such a grand strategy are fleshed out in a later section of the white paper: “China has joined more than 130 inter-governmental international organizations including […], is committed to 267 international multilateral treaties such as […] and actively participates in international cooperation in such fields as anti-terrorism, arms control, non-proliferation, peacekeeping, economy and trade, development, human rights, law-enforcement and the environment.”

The section subsequently goes on to list more or less all the specific elements of a grand strategy of engaged status quo, which I identified in Section 10.2 as key aspects of the observed behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the 2000s. These include, among other things, China’s contribution to UN peacekeeping operations, its participation in the curbing of WMDs, its involvement in regional multilateralism and its signing of dispute settlement treaties with

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1160 SCIO (ibid.).
1161 SCIO (2005e: section V).
neighboring countries.1162 Importantly, the meticulous account of Chinese grand strategy is punctuated by phrases such as “China actively promotes dialogue and cooperation”, “China plays a constructive role”, “China is expanding its participation” and “the Chinese people, taking the road of peaceful development, undoubtedly play a critical and positive role in the lofty pursuit of peace and development of mankind”, all of which reflect the esteem-enhancing aspect of China’s international engagement.1163 Taken together, the white paper presents China as an open, active and responsible country fully committed to international society and makes a strong case for pursuing a grand strategy of engaged status quo, thereby establishing a direct link between the `Globalist China´ identity narrative and Chinese grand strategy in the 2000s.

Inasmuch as the 2005-white paper on “China’s Peace Development Road” showcases the link between Chinese identity and grand strategy in the 2000s, the existence of another white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development” from 2011 should provide a good opportunity to demonstrate the shift in Chinese identity and grand strategy taking place in the second decade of the 21st century. Yet, the updated white paper unfortunately falls short of demonstrating that shift. As it turns out, the 2011-version is still imbued with references to `Globalist China´, and it therefore comes as no surprise that the white paper prescribes the same kind of grand strategy as its predecessor, that is, engaged status quo.1164 While this further corroborates the link between the `Globalist China´ narrative and a grand strategy of engaged status quo, it is odd that one finds barely no discursive traces of the `Rising China´ narrative in “China’s Peaceful Development”, even though the white paper was published in 2011, at a time when `Rising Chi-

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1162 SCIO (ibid.)
1164 SCIO (2011: see especially section I).
na´ was gaining prominence (according to my assessment of the narrative evolution in Chapter 8). As such, it suggests that Zhongnanhai’s official discourse also plays an instrumental role (cf. Section 5.2), as China’s leaders in 2011 wanted to explicitly reaffirm their pledge from 2005 about China’s strategy of engaged status quo amid growing international concern about a new more assertive turn in Chinese foreign policy. Although this may serve as a warning against relying too heavily on a discursive approach, there are a number of reasons why the second white paper is not as problematic as it first appears. First, there are other official texts from later in the 2010s that yield some insight into the proposed shift in both Chinese identity and grand strategy (see below). Secondly, and more fundamentally, as already suggested in Sections 7.6-7.7 I will argue that `Rising China´ did not clearly manifest itself as the dominant narrative of Chinese identity before Xi Jinping took over the reins in Zhongnanhai (I will return to this point in Section 11.2).

It thus makes more sense to explore the changed relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy in the 2010s by virtue of an official text on grand strategy from well into Xi Jinping’s time in office. The most relevant text in that regard seems to be “China’s Military Strategy” from May 2015.1165 Unlike similar white papers on China’s military strategy from the 2000s, the 2015 version contains virtually no references to the `Globalist China´ narrative but several references to `Rising China´, thereby making it a good candidate for probing whether its strategic guidance reflects this narrative shift of identity.1166 The central position of the `Rising China´ narrative in the 2015-white paper may be illustrated

1165 SCIO (2015). The only disadvantage of using this type of white paper is that it more narrowly addresses military and strategic issues or what I have referred to as the power dimension of Chinese grand strategy.

1166 Conversely, the 2006-edition, contains no references to the `Rising China´ narrative but plenty references to `Globalist China`. For example, the opening lines stress in various ways that "China pursues a road of peaceful development" and "Never before has China been so closely bound up with the rest of the world as today" (SCIO, 2006: preface).
with some examples: “China’s comprehensive national strength, core competitiveness and risk-resistance capacity are notably increasing, and China enjoys growing international standing and influence [...] the world economic and strategic center of gravity is shifting ever more rapidly to the Asia-Pacific region [...] It is a Chinese dream of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The Chinese dream is to make the country strong. China’s armed forces take their dream of making the military strong as part of the Chinese dream. Without a strong military, a country can be neither safe, nor strong.”¹¹⁶⁷ What emerges from these few lines is a more particularistic Chinese identity narrative centered on China’s emerging great power status. Significantly, one also sees some indications in the paper of how the ‘Rising China’ narrative is guided by an identity strategy of social competition (cf. Section 7.6). “[T]he U.S. carries on its ‘rebalancing’ strategy and enhances its military presence and military alliances in the region. Japan is sparing no effort to dodge the post-war mechanism, overhauling its military and security policies [...] some of [China’s] offshore neighbors take provocative actions and reinforce their military presence on China’s reefs and islands that they have illegally occupied.”¹¹⁶⁸ In other words, the white paper not only engages in in-group/out-group framing far more explicitly and competitively than previous editions, it also seems to derive some positive self-esteem from asserting China as a great power by virtue of its military rejuvenation.¹¹⁶⁹

As I argued in Section 9.3, a state identity narrative such as ‘Rising China’ – predicated on an identity strategy of social competition, which articulates a particularistic conception of the in-group and seeks respect and recognition from

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¹¹⁶⁷ SCIO (2015: sections I-II). On the contrary, I have found only one indirect reference to ‘Globalist China’ in the first two sections of the paper that situates China in the international context.

¹¹⁶⁸ SCIO (2015: section I).

¹¹⁶⁹ Interestingly, the 2013-edition also targets some of these out-group states but not quite as explicitly or competitively as in the most recent edition (SCIO, 2013a: section I).
salient out-groups states by asserting itself in an *extrovert* manner – should translate itself into a grand strategy of engaged revisionism. Do we see any evidence of such a grand strategy in the white paper on “China’s Military Strategy” from 2015? If one takes into account that Zhongnanhai remains very cautious not to stoke fears that China will rise into an assertive hegemonic power – and that Zhongnanhai therefore carefully weighs its wording – there is in fact some evidence to be found in the white paper. Most importantly, as an indication of a changing strategic mindset, the white paper features *new* phrases such as “overseas interests”, “protecting maritime rights and interests” and “open seas protection” that signals an expanding as well as a more assertive line in China’s maritime affairs.¹¹⁷⁰ For example, “*The traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interest. It is necessary for China to develop a modern maritime military force structure commensurate with its national security and developmental interests, safeguard its national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, protect the security of strategic SLOCs and overseas interests, and participate in international maritime cooperation, so as to provide strategic support for building itself into a maritime power.*”¹¹⁷¹ Another passage is likewise illustrative of how China’s growing willingness to assert its maritime rights may undermine the status quo: “*China’s armed forces [should] strike a balance between rights protection [i.e. assertiveness] and stability maintenance [i.e. status quo], and make overall planning for both, safeguard na-

¹¹⁷⁰ Some of these phrases – and the underlying idea of being able to assert China’s maritime interests – are not completely new (see e.g. Blasko, 2015: single-page article), but the white paper represents the first comprehensive articulation of this perspective.

¹¹⁷¹ SCIO (2015: section IV).
tional territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests [i.e. assertiveness] and maintain security and stability along China’s periphery [i.e. status quo].”

Owing to its exclusive military focus, the white paper on “China’s Military Strategy” offers a rather narrow discussion of Chinese grand strategy in the 2010s. I should therefore include another more broadly scoped discussion of current Chinese grand strategy to better establish the link between the ‘China Rising’ narrative and a grand strategy of engaged revisionism. To this end, the speech given in late 2014 by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at a New Year’s reception for diplomatic envoys and other international representatives is probably the best choice. This is not so much because the speech delivers a broad and stocktaking assessment of Chinese foreign policy – other speeches do much the same – but rather because it summarizes the main points from a very important CCP conference on Chinese foreign policy and diplomacy, which was convened in November 2014 to issue overall guidance for all the practitioners of Chinese foreign policy at a critical time in China’s development. According to Wang, “China is now standing at a new historical starting point in its diplomatic work and will write a new chapter in its relations with the rest of the world.” Crucially, the speech contains several passages that enable one to trace a link between ‘Rising China’ and a grand strategy of engaged revisionism. In a critical passage of the speech summing up the key message of the November conference, Wang points out that “The conference was convened when China has entered a crucial stage of achieving the great revival of the Chinese nation and when China’s inte-

\textsuperscript{1172} SCIO (2015: section IV). It should be mentioned that the final section of the paper as usual – but quite briefly this time – accounts for the PLA’s active international involvement in, among other things, UN-mandated peacekeeping operations, anti-piracy missions and humanitarian disaster relief (ibid: section V).

\textsuperscript{1173} The CCP-conference, attended by the entire foreign policy elite of Zhongnanhai, was the fourth of its kind since 1971 (see Swaine, 2015: 1-2). Unfortunately, only excerpts from the main speech by Xi Jinping have been made available by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see Xi, 2014i; see Appendix B+), which is one of the reasons why I prefer to use the New Year’s Toast speech instead. Another reason is that I cannot access the main speech by Hu Jintao at the 2006 conference either.
actions with the international community have become increasingly close. It has been made clear that China should develop a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role as a major country.” Indeed, China’s role as `major country´ – a Chinese euphemism for `great power´ – puts it on a par with the United States as testified by the recurrent calls to build “a new model of major country relationship with the United States.” Some of the main elements of this new distinctive great power approach are spelled out in Wang’s speech: “[We have] put forward and promoted the initiative of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. To date, over 50 countries along the Belt and the Road have responded and joined the initiative. The Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank is on the horizon and the Silk Road Fund has been launched, offering strong support for progress in the Belt and Road initiative.” As illustrated above in Section 10.3, these words have been matched by deeds, and the institutional initiatives constitute a sort of engaged revisionism according to the terminology developed here. It is also quite evident that Zhongnanhai takes great pride in asserting China internationally through this new distinctive great power role as manifested in phrases such as “2014 is a bumper harvest for China’s diplomacy”, “scoring major achievements” and “all these efforts have enabled China to make an indelible contribution”. All in all, Wang’s “New Year’s Toast” further corroborates the existence of a direct link between the `Rising China´ narrative (extrovert/particularistic) and the more self-assertive line Chinese grand strategy (engaged/revisionist).

1174 Wang (2014b; my own underlining; see Appendix B+). To emphasize the point the message is reiterated later in the speech: “[We will] actively practice a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting China’s role as a major country to provide strong support for realizing the Chinese dream of national renewal and make new contribution to peace and development of the world.”

1175 Ibid. As noted by Michael Swaine (2015: 13), “The concept of major-power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, first coined in the first half of 2013 [...] encapsulates this more ambitious form of Chinese foreign policy.”

1176 Ibid.

1177 For a far more detailed account of the discursive shift in Chinese grand strategy, based on an analysis of the above-mentioned CCP-conference on foreign policy, see Swaine (2015: esp. 13). Swaine’s analysis largely sup-
By attempting to pinpoint more directly the link between Chinese identity and grand strategy, this section has lent further credence to my claim that Chinese identity constitutes an important motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. The next section seeks to further specify the generative aspect of the link by providing a more comprehensive evolutionary account of the relationship between Chinese identity and Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century.

11.2 The evolution of China’s identity-driven grand strategy
My case study of China has first of all concentrated on specific narratives of Chinese identity, specific dimensions of Chinese grand strategy and (in the preceding section) specific texts on the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy. Such a rather compartmentalized approach has been necessary to fully establish the two variables, describe their main patterns and trace a link between them. Yet, to better discern and appreciate the plausibility of an identity-based argument, this section lifts the gaze and provides a more comprehensive account that explicates the overall evolution of Chinese identity and grand strategy in the 21st century. My evolutionary account of the observed shifts in Chinese identity and grand strategy is furthermore theoretically guided as it revisits some of the key arguments presented in Chapter 3 concerning a state’s adoption of an identity strategy. That is, although the main purpose of the dissertation has been to pinpoint the different logics of Chinese identity and to es-

ports my own assessment of a shift although Swaine uses concepts such as ‘activist’ and ‘ambitious’ rather than ‘engaged revisionism’ to categorize the new line.
tablish a relation from these logics to Chinese grand strategy, I also introduced some theoretical arguments to explain why a state is likely to adopt one type of identity strategy rather than another. These arguments pertain firstly to China’s international position as a low-status state in relation to its salient out-group(s), secondly to the relative malleability of the material and social hierarchy between the low-status state and its salient out-group(s) and thirdly to the three main types of identity strategies, which the low-status state may adopt to meet its dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem, namely social affiliation, social creativity and social competition. As already suggested in Section 4.3, the evolution of Chinese identity cannot be reduced to underlying identity strategies – narratives of identity may be shaped by other factors as well (more on this in Section 11.3) – but I will stay within the confines of my overall theoretical framework here.

My evolutionary account will take its starting point in the late 1990s, even though my mapping of Chinese identity only comprises the 21st century while my examination of Chinese grand strategy in the 1990s is sketchy rather than exhaustive. Even so, I tentatively include the late 1990s in order to cover some of the period ahead of the first observed shift of Chinese identity and grand strategy in the 21st century. I rely on my analysis in Section 10.1 to categorize Chinese grand strategy in the late 1990s as detached status quo. With respect to the official conception of Chinese identity in the 1990s, I will argue here that it was most likely dominated by an identity narrative of ‘Sovereign China’. This argument is predicated firstly on the observation made in Section 7.3 that the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative was especially prominent during Jiang Zemin’s brief reign in the 2000s (i.e. 2000-2002/03) and was therefore probably also quite strong during his time in office in the late 1990s. Secondly, I have conducted a
coded discourse analysis of what is undoubtedly the single-most authoritative source of China’s foreign and security policy in the late 1990s, Jiang’s report to the 15th National Congress of Chinese Communist Party. Just as expected, I found Section IX of the report (“The International Situation and Our Foreign Policy”) to be deeply and almost exclusively informed by the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative. Thirdly, I have furthermore analyzed some of Jiang’s other prominent foreign policy speeches from the late 1990s, which provide additional empirical support for the claim that ‘Sovereign China’ was indeed the strongest narrative in the late 1990s. Figure S presents a graphical illustration of how Chinese identity and grand strategy have evolved in the post-Cold War era.

1178 There are few relevant (available) speeches by Jiang on foreign policy from the late 1990s. What appears to be the second-most important speech was given by Jiang at a meeting of China’s diplomatic envoys in 1998 (Jiang, 1998). Apart from this, I have included two other speeches, both of which were held in front of an international audience (Jiang, 1999a; Jiang, 1999b); see Appendix B+ for a bibliographical overview of the sources.
The international situation faced by the PRC in the late 1990s was to a large extent shaped by the critical juncture of 1989 when China, due to the violent crackdown on students-led protesters on the Tiananmen Square, found itself politically isolated and subject to massive human rights critique from the Western-dominated international society (see Section 9.1). Even though China, after a
brief hiatus, continued with its economic integration into the world economy, the communist regime did not undertake any liberal-democratic reforms, and China was accordingly treated as an outlier of international society in a social sense. It meant that one of the three main identity strategies available to Zhongnanhai, i.e. social affiliation, was out of the question. Yet, it was not only the social but also the material hierarchy of international society that appeared rigid, thereby making an identity strategy of social competition seem unattractive as well. Despite witnessing its second decade of impressive growth rates the PRC was still, in relative material terms, so far behind the West that it would be extremely risky to engage in any form of direct competition. For one thing, China was no longer – since Deng’s reform program – so ideologically motivated as to pursue an identity strategy of social competition from a position of material inferiority; for another, the very success of China’s vital modernization process, initiated by Deng’s reforms, depended in large part on maintaining tolerable relations with the West. As seen from Zhongnanhai, an identity strategy of social creativity therefore offered the best perspective for satisfying the need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem given the prevailing social and material hierarchy. Being unwilling as much as unable to either associate itself or compete with the West, China had to rely on a strategy of social creativity to manage its in-group/out-group distinction with the West.

Against this backdrop, Zhongnanhai opted, I argue, for a specific identity strategy of moral high-grounding (as one of three variants of social creativity) since it allowed China to satisfy its basic identity needs in a self-reserved and self-righteous way by remaining distinct from its salient out-group (the West) while claiming moral superiority on selective dimensions of comparison. Specifically, this identity strategy of moral high-grounding was articulated by the ‘Sovereign
China’s narrative, which tells the story about China being part of a diversified world of sovereign states where all states, regardless of their specific political character, enjoy sovereignty, equal status and the right to independently manage their own affairs. By referring to such universalistic principles – based on the UN charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence – the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative vigorously defends China’s right to political as well as territorial sovereignty and claims the moral high-ground in the face of potential encroachments by in particular the United States (e.g. its human rights critique or its military assistance to Taiwan). Given the prominence of ‘Sovereign China’ (introvert/universalistic narrative) and its underlying identity strategy of moral high-grounding in the (late) 1990s, it should come as no surprise that China was pursuing a grand strategy of detached status quo, aptly encapsulated by Deng’s dictum of “keeping a low (but self-righteous) profile” in international society. That is, Chinese grand strategy demonstrated, on the one side, a basic acceptance of the prevailing unipolar international order (status quo) and, on the other, a basic reservation of becoming actively involved in the Western-dominated Liberal Order (detachment). Despite its ongoing integration into the global economy and nominal participation in most international institutions, China’s involvement in the Liberal Order remained shallow as Beijing shielded itself behind the principle of sovereignty and stayed on the sidelines in most international institutions. And while China did not seek to challenge U.S. unipolarity, Beijing defensively guarded its political and territorial sovereignty against potential violations from “American hegemon”.

The identified relationship between the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative and a Chinese grand strategy of engaged status quo started to unravel in the early 2000s, giving way to a new constellation. It is difficult to pinpoint the precise time of
transition (owing to the complexity of the analytical categories), but I have argued that the terrorist attacks in 2001 constituted a critical juncture as the West, and in particular the United States, suddenly zoomed in on Islamic fundamentalists as its overriding out-group. Critically, 9/11 represented a moment of strategic opportunity for Zhongnanhai, markedly expanding China’s strategic maneuvering room as the stigmatization of China as a non-liberal, peripheral member of the Liberal Order was replaced by a far more favorable view of China as a potential strategic partner. The juncture thus precipitated a “softening” of the social hierarchy between China and its salient out-groups, which allowed the Chinese leadership to pursue a new identity strategy of social affiliation. By toning down China’s adherence to its sovereignty and actively engage the West, Zhongnanhai could position China within a larger in-group as an integral part of international society, thereby garnering outside recognition and generating positive self-esteem. Such an identity strategy of social affiliation furthermore appeared attractive since closer relations with the West would facilitate China’s ongoing modernization, in effect further reducing the material gap between China and the West.

It is on this background that we see `Globalist China´, in the wake of 9/11, emerge as the dominant Chinese identity narrative, predicated on an underlying identity strategy of social affiliation. Specifically, `Globalist China´ (extrovert/universalistic narrative) tells the story about a new era of international peace and stability where China has opened itself up to the outside world, embraced the trends of economic globalization, become an integral part of international society and in the process toned down its distinctiveness as a state community. Importantly, the narrative not only envisions an active Chinese involvement in international society but directly seeks outside recognition of Chi-
na’s contribution to international peace, order and prosperity in order to raise China’s self-esteem. Fully in line with the dominant position of ‘Globalist China’ in the official discourse (until the outbreak of the global financial crisis) we saw a Chinese grand strategy of engaged status quo in the 2000s that went hand-in-hand with Zhongnanhai’s framing of the PRC as “a responsible power” on the international stage. In practice, Chinese grand strategy behavior demonstrated that China’s prior absolutist stance on the sanctity of sovereignty was moderated considerably, thereby enabling Beijing to take part in handling some of the main challenges to international order, among which the PRC’s far more active and constructive role in the UN Security Council and its expanding involvement in regional multilateralism stood out. Furthermore, China basically accepted American unipolarity as well as the U.S.-orchestrated Global War on Terror, largely avoided the use of coercive power or confrontational behavior and was increasingly willing to contribute boots on the ground to various UN peacekeeping operations. As such, China increasingly in the mid-2000s came to position itself as a responsible partner, if not quite a core member, of the Liberal Order.

The relationship between ‘Globalist China’, an identity strategy of social affiliation, and a Chinese grand strategy of engaged status quo is gradually weakened in the second half of the 2000s due to the emergence of a new Chinese identity narrative, ‘Sino-centric China’, which eventually replaced ‘Globalist China’ as the dominant identity narrative during the financial crisis. It begs the question of why ‘Sino-centric China’ – an introvert/particularistic identity narrative predicated on the self-absorbed cultivation of China’s civilizational heritage as an identity strategy of social creativity – was able to rise to prominence. One reason was that the ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative, by cultivating (and taking pride in) China’s cultural and historical distinctiveness, could satisfy the need for social
distinctiveness far better than the `Globalist China´ narrative. Another reason was that the attractiveness of an identity strategy of social affiliation (`Globalist China´) seemed less obvious as China’s salient out-group (the West) became fundamentally crisis-stricken. Next, the prominent position of the `Sino-centric China´ narrative also begs the question of why there were barely any indications of a concomitant shift towards a detached revisionist Chinese grand strategy in line with my hypotheses. As already argued, one may account for the absence of any direct effect of `Sino-centric China´ on Chinese grand strategy by treating the 2007-09 period as a relatively brief transition phase, marked by the global financial crisis. Hence, as long as the Chinese leaders grappled with the implications of the crisis, they preferred to stick to the existing grand strategy course of engaged status quo rather than adjusting it to the new introvert, particularistic logic of the `Sino-centric China´ narrative.1179

While the global financial crisis contributed to a relatively short-lived period of discursive dominance by the `Sino-centric China´ narrative, the crisis eventually triggered a more fundamental shift of Chinese identity and grand strategy. That is, the global financial crisis constituted yet another critical juncture that induced Zhongnanhai to adopt a new identity strategy. As the global financial crisis accelerated the narrowing material gap between a rising China and the West, China’s leaders grew more self-confident and accordingly seemed to change their perceptions of China (as no longer a low-status state) and its salient out-groups (as no longer clearly superior). In other words, the increasingly flexible and evenly distributed material hierarchy between China and the West opened up the possibility of pursuing an identity strategy of social competition as China raced apace into the 2010s. Such an identity strategy appeared attractive to

1179 As noted in Section 10.2, another plausible explanation would be that other causal factors were exerting a stronger influence on Chinese grand strategy during that period (see Section 11.4).
*Zhongnanhai* inasmuch as it, by asserting China as a distinct great power at a par with the other great powers and even the United States, promised to fulfill both the need for social distinctiveness and especially the need for positive self-esteem. Even so, the Chinese leadership has only to some extent (as observed in Section 7.6) embraced an identity strategy of social competition in the 2010s given that such a strategy may easily have a disruptive side-effect on China’s modernization insofar as the relations between China and its salient out-groups become overly competitive.

What we have seen in the 2010s, and especially during the reign of Xi Jinping, is the discursive prominence of `Rising China`, which is informed by an identity strategy of social competition. `Rising China` (an extrovert/particularistic narrative) tells the story about an ascending China, rooted in a unique civilization and poised for resuming its historical position as a leading great power after a prolonged and humiliating period as a low-status state. In that sense, `Rising China` articulates the dream about the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the desire for asserting China’s status as a great power. Importantly, the narrative wants not only to provide China with a stronger voice on the international arena, thus enabling Beijing to further its core interests, but also to use the emerging great power profile to elicit respect and recognition from the outside world. The dominant position of the `Rising China` narrative in the official government discourse has been accompanied by sufficient discernible change in the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy to constitute a shift from engaged status quo to engaged revisionism. Importantly, *Zhongnanhai* has actively pursued new institutional platforms – such as G20, BRICS and the AIIB – and proposed ambitious infrastructural initiatives – such as the Maritime Silk Road and the Silk Road Economic Belt – to gradually revise the existing international order and
assume a more prominent international role. Furthermore, China has become far more willing not only to bear the costs of opposing the security agenda of the Western great powers in the UNSC but also to undertake assertive and even confrontational practices in order to pursue Chinese claims and interests in the South China Sea and elsewhere. Taken together, this new Chinese grand strategy pattern of engaged revisionism is shaped, I have argued, by the ’Rising China’ narrative that dominates Zhongnanhai’s official identity discourse.

My evolutionary account has shed further light on the relationship between Chinese identity and Chinese grand strategy in the post-Cold War era. China – i.e. Zhongnanhai – may adopt different strategies for satisfying the collective desire of the Chinese for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem, and the attractiveness of each of these strategies is determined by a range of factors, some of which have been directly incorporated into my theoretical framework (in the form of China’s position as a low-status state, the relative malleability of the social and material hierarchy and the discrete characteristics of the five identity strategies). Once a specific identity strategy has become discursively adopted by Zhongnanhai as part of the dominant official identity narrative, it furthermore exerts a generative effect on the overall behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy. The stability and effect of any such causal relationship may, however, be undermined by a range of other factors, some of which I have figuratively encapsulated here as critical junctures. Broadly speaking, the main argument of this dissertation – that the way a state categorizes its salient in-group/out-group relations also affects its overall strategy for approaching the outside world – seems to have been corroborated by the empirical case study of China’s rise in recent years.
While the two first sections of Chapter 11 have concentrated on further demonstrating the plausibility of the proposed relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy, the last two sections delivers a critical evaluation of it based on a recapitulation of all the reservations and weaknesses accounted for in the preceding chapters (Section 11.3) as well as on a direct assessment of my bounded constructivist approach in comparison to a realist approach to Chinese grand strategy (Section 11.4).

11.3 A critical assessment of the overall argument
So far, I have striven to build up as strong an argument as possible and to preempt what I have perceived to be the main thrusts of criticism. In this section, however, I deliberately problematize the overall argument by exposing it to various lines of attack. To begin with, I want to critically assess the plausibility of the theoretical framework itself, that is, to discuss the relative plausibility of the main theoretical premises, on which the proposed relationship between state identity and state grand strategy hinge. Subsequently, the main part of the section concentrates on the empirical plausibility probe of the hypothesized relationship between Chinese state identity and Chinese grand strategy, which I have carried out in part II and III of the dissertation to establish the main variables and tease out the suggested relationship between them. I take a critical look at the way I have designed the plausibility probe and focuses in particular on the reliability and validity of the empirical analyses. At the end of the section, I gauge the seriousness of the criticism and the extent to which it weakens the overall plausibility of my argument.
At the most basic level, one may start by asking whether it makes sense to study social identities in a causal sense. I have answered the question affirmatively by pointing to the universality and irreducibility of social identity dynamics, by proposing a bounded constructivist approach to the study of social identity centered on its cognitive, material and structural properties (Chapter 2) and by more specifically taking Social Identity Theory as a point of departure for studying the causal effects of state identity on state grand strategy (Chapter 3). Yet, one may come up with several grounds for being skeptical of such an approach nevertheless. Firstly, are cognitively derived social categorization dynamics – defining the in-group in relation to its primary out-groups and generating the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem – sufficiently salient and distinct at the state level to function as a causal driver of a state’s grand strategy? Even if we accept that social identities may have generative (i.e. causal) effects on social behavior, it does not necessarily imply that these effects are strong or clear-cut enough exert a discernible effect on state grand strategy. In fact, one may contend that it requires a far more comprehensive process tracing type of analysis and, perhaps more importantly, access to better sources of key decision-making processes among Zhongnanhai to be able to determine whether such identity dynamics really affect the formulation of China’s grand strategy.

Secondly, do these cognitively derived identity dynamics represent an exhaustive, or even the best, way to pinpoint the logic of social identities given the existence of other, more or less competing, approaches to social identity? I have already introduced one of the most popular identity theories among IR scholars, Role Theory, which has informed the work of prominent constructivist IR schol-
ars. Had I chosen to ground my theoretical framework in Role Theory, instead of SIT, it would likely have had several major ramifications for the way I have theorized and studied state identity. With Role Theory at the center of my analysis I would not have adopted an inside-out perspective on state identity constitution, centered on the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem, since Role Theory is generally more preoccupied with social recognition, role taking in international society, the mirroring process between ‘self’ and ‘other’ and the socializing effect of the wider international system (i.e. an outside-in perspective). More specifically, if Chinese state identity is not primarily generated from within, then I should have placed greater emphasis not only on China’s international identity constructions (like ‘Globalist China’) but also on the identity images of China constructed by other states (alter casting such as the “China Threat Theory” in the U.S.) and how these images reflect back on Zhongnanhai’s narrative construction. Apart from Role Theory, IR scholars have also recently given increased attention to the emotional, rather than cognitive, dimension of state identity constitution. While collective emotions undoubtedly play a supportive role for generating a sense of positive self-esteem (as recognized but left aside in Chapter 3), one might also have focused on the role played by negative emotions such as fear, shame, anger and hatred. Indeed, at least one of the proposed five main identity strategies, moral high-grounding (social creativity), seems to be driven as much by negative emotions as by the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem (cf. Section 7.3).

Thirdly, one may also ask if social identities, even at the state level, are sufficiently stable, structured and coherent to warrant treating them as an inde-

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1180 See e.g. Wendt (1992; 1999); Cronin (1999); Reus-Smit (1999); Mitzen (2006); Harnisch (2011); for Role Theory applied to the rise of China, see especially Harnisch et al (2016).

1181 See e.g. Ross (2006); Mercer (2006); Bleiker & Hutchison (2008); Fierke (2012).
ependent variable, from which to derive a distinct logic of social identity? On the one hand, positivist inclined IR scholars would generally find state identities to be too ephemeral and inaccessible to constitute a productive source of causal analysis. On the other hand, IR scholars steeped in the critical tradition would seriously question my ability to reduce the complexity and control the changeability of state identities in a way that would render them fit for causal analysis. What is more, from their different perspectives both positivist and critical scholars would dismiss the underlying ambition of isolating state identity (independent variable) from state grand strategy (dependent variable), the former group because of the volatility of the identity variable and the latter because of their basic understanding of state identity and state behavior as mutually constitutive. More generally, the fact that few other mainstream IR constructivists have framed their approach to social identity as explicitly in causality terms, as I have, may in itself testify to the inherent difficulties of doing so, even if critical realism, in my view, offers a potential metatheoretical foundation for studying social identities from a causal perspective (cf. Chapter 2).

When it comes to the empirical plausibility probe of my overall theoretical hypothesis – that state identity affects state grand strategy – there are a number of weaknesses of the discourse, content and behavioral analyses in part II and III of the dissertation, which seem to affect the relative plausibility of the proposed hypothesis. These weaknesses pertain to the validity and reliability of both the independent and dependent variable as well as to the relative strength of the established explanatory link between the two variables.

\(^{1182}\) For a notable exception, see Fearon (1999).

\(^{1183}\) For critical IR scholarship on social identity as an analytical concept, see e.g. Neumann (1996); Zehfuss (2001); Guzzini & Leander (2005); Hansen (2006); Epstein (2010).
Beginning with the validity of Chinese state identity (independent variable), the main weakness arises from the theory-driven character of my discourse and content analysis of the five main narratives: `Globalist China´, `Sovereign China´, `Unified China´, `Sino-centric China´ and `Rising China´. By projecting theoretically derived, ideal-typical identity categories onto the primary sources of Chinese state identity – to reduce and order the discursive complexity – I become liable to the criticism that the suggested narrative categories do not “really exist” in Zhongnanhai’s official discourse. In other words, the representatives of Zhongnanhai certainly do not think, nor speak directly in terms of the five proposed narrative categories when they evoke the reference object of China as a state community. This is the price paid for employing a primarily deductive approach instead of a fully inductive one where the identity categories are created directly from frequently observed narrative articulations in the discursive material. I have justified this deductive approach in several ways arguing, on the one hand, that it serves my overall explanatory agenda (cf. Section 6.2) and, on the other hand, that the five narratives do actually turn out to represent more or less discrete and exhaustive identity categories, which are empirically discernible in the official discourse (cf. Section 7.7). Yet, any “outsider’s perspective” on (Chinese) state identity (cf. Section 5.2) will be vulnerable to such validity-directed criticism of having blinded oneself beforehand to the way China’s state representatives construct their own irreducible (or “indigenous”) categories and logic of Chinese state identity.

Another validity aspect concerns my use of Zhongnanhai’s public discursive statements on Chinese state identity. One may thus contend that other sources of Chinese state identity, such as private identity conceptions among Zhongnanhai or public identity manifestations among ordinary Chinese citizens are equal-
ly (or perhaps more) important than those studied here. While I have legit-
mized my specific focus in light of both accessibility to and relevance of sources
(cf. Section 5.2), one might still argue that a more comprehensive discourse
analysis, including a broader range of public manifestations of Chinese state
identity (than those of Zhongnanhai), would be better able to capture notably
the nationalist sentiments in the Chinese population, observed by many China
scholars.\footnote{See especially Zhao (2000; 2013); Gries (2004); He (2007); Shirk (2007); Ross (2009).} Indeed, one could make the argument that some of the more recent
examples of assertiveness in Chinese foreign policy (cf. Section 10.3) are driven
mainly by popular Chinese nationalist sentiments, forcing Zhongnanhai to react
in an assertive manner to perceived violations of Chinese sovereignty. I have
downplayed the importance of public lay conceptions of Chinese identity by
pointing to the general top-down nature of Chinese politics and by moreover ar-
guing that nationalist conceptions are already to some extent incorporated into
the main narratives. However, had I been able to undertake a discourse analysis
of public lay conceptions as well, it could at the very least have provided an al-
ternative, popular mapping of Chinese identity, which could have been set
against the official Zhongnanhai-based mapping when discussing the issue of va-

\footnote{The potential benefit of drawing also on private elite identity conceptions is discussed below.}

With respect to the reliability of how I have measured the independent variable
(Chinese state identity), I will merely recapitulate what I perceive to be the main
weaknesses of the data material employed in the discourse and content analysis.
The discourse analysis has to some extent suffered from the difficulties of gain-
ing access to relevant speeches before 2007 and from the limited number of the
highly authoritative and relevant Zhongnanhai-reports to the National Congress
of the CCP.\footnote{Yet, I have compensated for these deficiencies in other ways as pointed out in Section 7.1} Another, and more fundamental, weakness stems from the overall heterogeneity of the discursive material, which means that the five narratives do not draw evenly on each of the three main primary sources of Chinese state identity (i.e. speeches, white papers and reports). Although I have argued that there is in fact a rather high degree of consistency not only between the different primary sources (in terms of the distribution of observed narratives) but also over time (in terms of the discursive evolution of each narrative), one may nevertheless discern some variance in how Zhongnanhai articulates Chinese state identity depending primarily on the audience targeted by the statement. That is, while Zhongnanhai tends to enunciate some narratives in front of a domestic audience, other narratives seem to be somewhat privileged when addressing a foreign audience. Crucially, I have not found these differences of targeted audience to be thorough and systematic enough to warrant teasing out their effects in the discourse analysis, but instead of merely claiming this, it would have strengthened the reliability of the discourse analysis had I explicitly accounted for the audience aspect along the way.

As to the reliability of the content analysis, measuring the discursive strength of five main narratives over time, the main challenge is the somewhat limited data material. Since I have, for practical reasons (cf. Section 8.1), chosen (only) to analyze six out of twelve available volumes of Beijing Review,\footnote{Recall that the first available volume of Beijing Review is the 2003-volume since there are no editorials prior to that.} the content analysis is weakened by a number of gaps in the evolutionary mapping, which I have tentatively covered by straight-line projections (drawn between the analyzed volumes/years, cf. Section 9.3). I have offered several reasons for selecting the specific volumes (cf. Section 8.1), but the bottom line is that the reliability of the
content analysis would have been higher, had I been able to include all twelve
volumes. One might furthermore argue that the editorials of *Beijing Review* at
any rate provide an insufficient data material for hierarchizing the five main
identity narratives in a fully reliable manner. Even though I have claimed to have
enough observations to establish a ranking of the five narratives for each ana-
lyzed volume (i.e. around 20 “affirmative” narrative references per volume, cf.
table 2), it is obvious that a more fine-grained and reliable hierarchization would
require additional sources of a similar homogeneous character. One potential –
but very time-consuming – way of expanding the analysis along the suggested
lines would be to include the editorials of the leading Chinese (English language)
daily newspaper, namely the *People’s Daily (Renmin Ribao)*. As the editorial
line of the *People’s Daily* seems to be as closely monitored by Zhongnanhai as
that of the *Beijing Review*, there would hardly be any validity issues at stake in
drawing upon this far more extensive data material.

Turning then to the dependent variable (Chinese grand strategy), I once again
start by questioning its validity. Given my definition of state grand strategy (as a
set of principles for the strategic employment of a state’s resources to pursue its
overall goals in relation to the existing international order) there seems to be
two specific validity-related aspects of relevance in this context. The first one
concerns a potential discrepancy between, on the one hand, defining state grand
strategy as a set of principles (or overarching guidelines) and, on the other hand,
capturing Chinese grand strategy empirically via a *behavioral* analysis of Chinese
foreign and security policy. How do I know that the examined behavioral pattern
of China’s overall foreign and security policy is reflective of a set of underlying

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1188 As a matter of fact, I first started my content analysis by examining the editorials of the People’s Daily, but it
turned out to be far too complicated for various practical reasons (not least the difficulties of gaining online ac-
cess to previous years).
principles that constitutes a grand strategy proper? In fact, there are several China scholars who altogether reject the notion of a Chinese grand strategy as pointed out in Section 9.2. I have suggested several reasons for why it is reasonable to infer a Chinese grand strategy from the observed behavioral patterns, including the argument that China as a strong, resourceful and not least semi-authoritarian state surely has the capacity to adopt a strategic perspective on its foreign and security policy; that most China scholars readily point to previous grand strategy principles such as Deng Xiaoping’s dictum of “keeping a low profile”; and perhaps most importantly that there is sufficient consistency in the examined behavioral patterns of China’s overall foreign and security policy to assume that it is indeed guided by some underlying grand strategy. Notwithstanding these arguments, I cannot completely dismiss the contention that my empirical examination of Chinese grand strategy is not necessarily entirely valid as long as I study behavioral patterns rather than official documents stating China’s grand strategy principles explicitly (the latter option was rejected for other reasons, cf. Section 5.1 and 9.2).

The second validity-related aspect concerns my selection of specific focus areas that are pertinent for studying Chinese grand strategy. In particular, I have zoomed in on the institutional, normative and power dimension of China’s grand strategy behavior and furthermore operationalized these three dimensions into a number of more specific strategic aspects of China’s foreign and security policy in relation to the existing international order (i.e. operationalization criteria O1-O7, cf. table 6). As I have not been very explicit about why the selected aspects are the most pertinent ones, it opens another flank for raising validity concerns. That is, should I have included other aspects of Chinese grand strategy behavior
to be able to present a fully valid picture?\textsuperscript{1189} Actually, my selection of specific criteria is based on my reading of the IR literature on Chinese grand strategy and therefore on what is singled out here as the most important focus areas. Yet, one may contend that such an approach entails a risk of overemphasizing the more controversial aspects of Chinese grand strategy (e.g. China’s military modernization or its use of coercive power) as they are likely to figure more prominently in the IR literature. Specifically, it could be argued that I have largely ignored the economic dimension of China’s grand strategy behavior in relation to the international order, and that its inclusion would probably add a strong element of both engagement and status quo-orientation to the overall assessment of Chinese grand strategy. While the overall explanatory agenda could reasonably be taken into account to justify my omission of the economic dimension,\textsuperscript{1190} the underlying validity issue does not really disappear unless I specifically exclude the economic dimension from the definition of state grand strategy.

With regard to the reliability of my measurement of Chinese grand strategy, the main issue concerns the type of sources used for tracing the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy.\textsuperscript{1191} I have employed a wide range of predominantly secondary sources, taken from books, journal and magazine articles, newspapers and news agencies, institutional and governmental reports as well as databases of international organizations and research institutions. Although I have taken great care to find the most authoritative secondary sources (and to generally back up a given reference with at least one additional confirming source), I am well aware of the inherent risk of biased sources given the controversy sur-

\textsuperscript{1189} One may also ask why I assign three criteria each for the institutional and power dimension but only one criterion for the normative dimension, thereby indirectly reducing its relative weight in the overall assessment.\textsuperscript{1190} That is, I find it less likely to be able use identity logics to explain the economic dimension of Chinese grand strategy than the other three dimensions.\textsuperscript{1191} I have only cursorily touched upon this issue in Chapter 10.
rounding the rise of China. The risk seems by far the highest when it comes to Chinese sources (of which I have used very few) but it also pertains to American sources owing to the central position of the United States in managing the international order and accommodating the rise of China. Still, as especially American scholars, newspapers and research institutions dominate the behavioral mapping of Chinese foreign and security policy, there is no easy way to eliminate this potential reliability problem. Another reliability issue that bears mentioning concerns the relative consistency of sources used for tracing the various aspects of China’s grand strategy behavior over time. Since few individual sources cover the behavioral evolution throughout the entire examined period, I often have to rely on disparate types of sources to cover the same behavioral aspect at different points in time. While I acknowledge the potential reliability problem of such an approach, the given availability of relevant sources does not seem to leave me much in the way of alternative options.

Turning, finally, to the proposed explanatory relationship between the logic of Chinese state identity and the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy, one may question its plausibility in at least three ways. Firstly, neither the identity variable, nor the grand strategy variable appears quite as clear-cut as desired in order to lay the foundation for a strong causal relation. As to the former, the evolutionary mapping of the discourse on Chinese state identity in the 21st century showed that even though it was possible to identify a dominant identity narrative for each examined period, the dominant narrative was never truly hegemonic in the sense of excluding all other narrative logics. Likewise, the examination of the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century demonstrated some inconsistency in the dependent variable as not all behavioral indicators pointed in the same direction, thereby making it difficult to fully
ascertain the observed shifts of the dependent variable (cf. the overall assessments of Section 10.2 and 10.3). While it is unsurprising that notably the dependent variable is not entirely consistent – given the more or less conflicting effect exerted by other explanatory factors – the unpleasant fact remains that any ambiguity of the main variables tends to reduce the plausibility of the observed pattern of co-variation.

Secondly, one may contend that the 21st century constitutes a too narrow time frame for establishing a solid pattern of co-variation between independent and dependent variable. In fact, the regular empirical analysis only involves one main shift of the observed variables (i.e. following the global financial crisis), and the subsequent extension of the empirical analysis into the 1990s to cover an additional shift (following 9/11) is merely of a preliminary character. In designing the case study I have chosen to cover a shorter time span more thoroughly – to be better able to tease out and trace the evolution of the two main variables – but one might also have opted for a more extensive, if less thorough, empirical analysis to increase the variation in both the identity and grand strategy variables. Interestingly, my introductory mapping of Chinese grand strategy in the 20th century clearly suggests that the dependent variable has witnessed several shifts when Mao and Deng were in charge of Zhongnanhai. One obvious way to further strengthen or weaken the plausibility of the observed pattern of co-variation would therefore be to extend the empirical analysis to encompass the entire history of the People’s Republic of China.

Thirdly, one may also point a critical finger at the relative plausibility of the causal linkage per se between Chinese identity and grand strategy. Although Section 11.1 attempted more directly to link the two variables via a number of key
discursive texts, I have certainly not uncovered any “smoking gun” type of ev-
dence. It begs the question what a “smoking gun” would look like? Ideally, I
would have had full access to the policy-making meetings of Zhongnanhai (i.e. in
the Politburo, in the State Council or in the leading small groups on foreign and
security policy) in order to trace the way major decisions on foreign and security
policy are being justified and the way different priorities are being set against
each other. In that case, I would have been far better able to determine the ex-
tent to which identity logics play a prominent role in the decision-making pro-
cess and whether they are even strong enough to trump other causal factors. In-
stead, I have had to rely on available public sources, which are generally not
very suitable – given their non-argumentative and polished style – for directly
pinpointing (or rejecting) the proposed link between Chinese identity and grand
strategy.

Against the backdrop of this critical assessment, I will nevertheless maintain the
overall theoretical and empirical plausibility of the suggested relationship be-
tween Chinese identity and grand strategy. In my view, none of the critical
points raised above are serious enough to warrant dismissing the basic proposi-
tion that states are driven by the logic of social identity when it comes to their
overall strategic positioning in the international arena. The theoretically related
critique is largely about the reasonableness (or not) of pursuing a causal agenda
from an IR constructivist perspective informed by Social Identity Theory. The
critical discussion of the validity and reliability of the two main variables points
to a number of weaknesses, which in some cases could have been remedied (by
expanding the analyses), but none of these weaknesses are so grave as to more
fundamentally compromise my mapping of Chinese identity and grand strategy.
Finally, the proposed causal relationship itself can be rightly criticized for not
being as convincingly strong and clear-cut as one would have desired given the overall plausibility probing design of my case study analysis. Yet, most of this criticism could be met by expanding the analyses and by gaining access to better sources. Ultimately, one may furthermore argue that the relative plausibility of the proposed explanation of Chinese grand strategy hinges on the existence of alternative explanations that may be more or less plausible. That is, if other IR theories fare no better in explaining Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century, the relative plausibility of my own identity-based hypothesis is indirectly strengthened.

11.4 Alternative explanations of Chinese grand strategy
There is no shortage of attempts by IR scholars to explain the direction of Chinese grand strategy. In Section 9.1, I reviewed the literature and grouped the various approaches into three mainstream IR schools – realism, liberalism and constructivism – each of which may be broadly distinguished from the other two schools by virtue of its core assumptions about the subject matter of international relations and what constitutes the motivating drivers of state behavior. As noted in the review, several individual IR scholars are not easily subjected to such a crude tripartite classification, but the disciplinary labeling nevertheless serves the purpose of rendering some of the central dividing lines in IR more explicit and drawing attention to, among other things, different ways of explaining the behavior of states. Having developed a novel (bounded) constructivist IR approach to shed light on Chinese grand strategy, I should, as part of the plausibility probe (cf. Section 5.1), furthermore assess its relative plausibility by comparing it directly to existing constructivist, liberalist or realist China studies. Here, I
will concentrate only on realism primarily because realist IR approaches already figure prominently in the IR debate on state grand strategy in general and Chinese grand strategy in particular. As such, there is a well-established practice among both liberalist and constructivist scholars of pointing to the shortcomings of realism when proposing their own alternative approaches.

How do I then compare the explanatory power of my own approach to that of realism? There are several reasons why such a comparison is quite difficult and why I will have to resort to more indirect means. To begin with the least difficult aspect, the realist IR paradigm comprises at least two discrete sub-schools that take an active part in theorizing the rise of China, namely structural realism and neoclassical realism. As to the former, its proponents single out the anarchical structure of the international system as the overriding factor in explaining state behavior, and structural realists are themselves furthermore divided into a so-called offensive and a defensive variant as they emphasize either power- or security related structural dynamics respectively. Neoclassical realists, on the other hand, point to a range of factors located at the state (or unit) level – such as the perceptions of key decision-makers, the relative unity of the state and domestic politics – which mediate the systemic-structural pressure and thereby the relative explanatory weight of power and security dynamics.

1192 Moreover, I already did compare my own approach to the most directly comparable constructivist IR study of Chinese grand strategy, namely that of Debora Welch Larson (see Section 3.3 and 9.1).

1193 In their recent Realism Reader, an anthology on IR realism comprising the key texts of the realist canon, Colin Elman and Michael Jensen (2014: 17-19) single out four (out of seven) realist approaches, which contribute to the IR debate on the rise of China: Offensive structural realism, defensive structural realism, rise and fall realism and neoclassical realism. Yet, they only cite a very limited number of realist contributions to support their claim. My own review of the realist literature (in Section 9.1) indirectly shows (in terms of referenced scholars) that especially offensive realism and neo-classical realism are prominent in the debate on Chinese grand strategy.


1195 Neoclassical realists, who study the rise of China, include Christensen (2006, 2015); Ross (2009); Schweller & Pu (2011); Nathan & Scobell (2012); Schweller (2014). A more classical realist contribution has furthermore been made by Kirshner (2012).
Since my purpose here is to compare the logic of social identity to the main explanatory logic of realism, it seems most obvious to concentrate on the systemic-structurally derived power and security dynamics favored by structural realists. After all, even most neoclassical realists acknowledge the structural logic of power and security dynamics; only, neoclassical realists are more interested in studying how these dynamics are filtered or mediated domestically.

Secondly, while I have been able to establish a pattern of co-variation in the 21st century between the logic of Chinese state identity (independent variable) and Chinese grand strategy (dependent variable), one may do much the same from a structural realist IR perspective (as suggested in the second sub-section of 9.1). For instance, structural (offensive) realists would argue that a rising China in the 1990s and 2000s had to adopt a low-profiled reassurance strategy towards the outside world, simply because it was not yet powerful enough to directly challenge in particular the United States and the Liberal Order. As China’s relative power vis-à-vis the West (not least Chinese perceptions of it) improved markedly during the global financial crisis, structural realists are unsurprised that we have witnessed an increasingly assertive China, being willing to pursue a more revisionist agenda.\(^\text{1196}\) In other words, my depiction of the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy evolving from detached status quo, over engaged status quo, to engaged revisionism (see Section 11.2, Figure S) does not really run counter to realist expectations. At most, one could argue that the intensity of China’s engagement in the 2000s seems somewhat odd if one sticks only to structural realist tenets. That is, why did China not just maintain a grand strategy of detached status quo instead of becoming far more actively involved in the Liberal Order in the 2000s? Yet, as structural (defensive) realists might contend

\(^{1196}\) For an argument along these lines, see e.g. Mearsheimer (2010: 385); Wang Y. (2011: 196–97); Layne (2012: 3).
that China’s active engagement should simply be perceived as a borderline case of a reassurance strategy to alleviate growing concerns about the implications of China’s impressive rise, I will refrain here from pursuing this difference between my own approach and realism any further.

Thirdly, and most fundamentally, I have deliberately avoided framing the relationship between the main IR schools in terms of mutually exclusive paradigms (cf. Section 2.3 and 5.1). Rather, I have suggested that several causal factors co-exist to explain the direction of Chinese grand strategy, including from an IR perspective a constructivist logic of social identity, norms and culture, a realist logic of power and security dynamics and a liberalist logic of institutional and economic incentives. Indeed, my own theoretical framework indirectly grants some explanatory power to realism inasmuch as both the overall material (or power) hierarchy of international society and the relative power position of the rising low-status state itself are attributed a central role in accounting for the adoption of a specific identity strategy. What is more, even though it is obvious that some causal factors exert a stronger effect than others, thus inviting us to attempt to rank these factors, one may still be skeptical about the ability to directly isolate different factors from each other and tease out their respective effects when the data material consists of discursive sources. In fact, it seems particularly unfeasible in this particular context given the difficulties of gaining access to relevant authoritative sources.

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1197 Andrew Bennett (2013: 460-61) has recently – from a critical realist metatheoretical perspective like the one adopted here (cf. Chapter 2) – suggested that IR scholars study the interplay of causal mechanisms instead of barricading themselves behind inter-paradigmatic IR boundaries. For a similar point, see also Sil & Katzenstein (2010).

1198 One might also emphasize how purely domestic factors – say, the survival of the communist regime or bureaucratic/business interests – can affect Chinese grand strategy. Moreover, one may adopt a constitutive rather than a causal perspective (cf. Section 2.1).
On this background, my objective here is not to repudiate structural realism or its favorite explanatory logics. Instead, I want to show that structural realism does not provide sufficient explanatory power to fully account for Chinese grand strategy, and that the shortcomings of structural realism can be overcome by virtue of a constructivist IR approach centered on the logic of social identity.\footnote{Identifying the shortcomings of realism is necessary since the overall course of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century seems to be almost equally well accounted for by realism as by my own approach.}

The best way, then, to demonstrate the insufficiency of structural realism seems to be to narrow my focus somewhat to more particular aspects of Chinese grand strategy. Specifically, I want to provide three critical, if not quite exhaustive, examples of how China in its strategic behavior has been driven by identity-generated logics in ways that make little sense from a realist perspective of power and security dynamics. These examples are critical inasmuch as they concern key episodes and aspects of China’s strategic behavior, which furthermore pertain to the most salient out-group states of China: the Sino-Soviet split during the Cold War, the Sino-Japanese relationship in the post-Cold War era and China’s clashes with the United States in 1999 and 2001.

The Sino-Soviet split was the progressive deterioration of political ties between the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union from the late 1950s through the outbreak of outright military clashes along their common border in 1969.\footnote{For an introduction to the Sino-Soviet split, see especially Lüthi (2008); see also Zagoria (1962); Lowenthal (1971); Radchenko (2009).}

The separation between the two biggest communist countries was undoubtedly one of the single most important events of the Cold War, and it has always appeared somewhat puzzling from a structural realist perspective. Conversely, structural realists have a much easier time accounting for the comprehensive cooperation between the PRC and the Soviet Union, which preceded the split. At the time of its establishment in 1949 the reunified PRC was first of all threat-
ened specifically by a Shang Kai-shek-led counter-revolution from U.S.-backed Kuomintang-forces at Taiwan and, more generally, by the strong presence of American troops in China’s immediate backyard as Washington was already becoming increasingly anti-communist in both words and deeds. Thus, it made perfect sense for the Chinese to fraternize with their (far more powerful) ideological compatriots of the Soviet Union both in terms of power and security, as the close relationship facilitated China’s agrarian, industrial, infrastructural as well as military modernization and provided a far more credible balancing against the United States and its emerging strategy of containment. Now, what is puzzling to structural realism is the absence in the 1960s of any discernible change in what realists would depict as the objective (i.e. material) power and security dynamics (e.g. relative power, offensive/defensive balance, proximity to power) that might bring about the Sino-Soviet split.\textsuperscript{1201} If anything, the United States actually enhanced its relative position of power in several ways during that decade, which should only have brought the two communist countries closer together. So why did Mao allow China to become separated from its most important ally, leaving it in a very vulnerable position virtually surrounded by enemies\textsuperscript{1202} and with no one to assist its much-needed modernization?\textsuperscript{1203} 

I will argue here that the logic of social identity offers a plausible explanation of the Sino-Soviet split. In fact, one does not have to dig deep into the early Cold War history of the People’s Republic of China to realize that social identity dy-

\textsuperscript{1201} See Hopf (2009: 294). Moreover, as pointed out by Lüthi (2008: 2, 5) there is no evidence that the split was caused by a conflict of national interests or bilateral security issues between the PRC and the Soviet Union.
\textsuperscript{1202} Apart from the offshore containment by the United States and the mounting tensions with the Soviet Union, the PRC in the mid-60s now also faced a hostile India (due to the Sino-Indian War in 1962).
\textsuperscript{1203} For example, as a result of the split, Khrushchev ordered the recall of all Soviet specialists in 1960, including technological assistance for China’s critical nuclear weapons program (see Radchenko, 2009: 14).
namics played a pivotal role in provoking the split. Ever since its founding, the PRC had had to resign itself to a secondary role as a junior partner of the Soviet Union in the global struggle for advancing the communist revolution. In the terminology developed here, China had thus adopted an identity strategy of social affiliation towards the Soviet Union (a salient out-group), which instilled in the Chinese a sense of positive self-esteem (being part of an international communist revolution) but toned down Chinese distinctiveness in the communist bloc. Crucially, however, from the late 1950s the two communist great powers began publicly to quarrel over the proper ideological path of international communism with the Chinese formally denouncing the Soviets as “revisionist traitors”. While growing ideological dividing lines thus constituted an immediate catalyst of the split, it seems at the same time rather obvious that the break-up was at least partially triggered by identity dynamics, more specifically China’s unwillingness to play second fiddle to the Soviets. Hence, Maoist China abandoned its identity strategy of social affiliation in favor of one of social competition with the Soviet out-group. By proclaiming to be the true avant-garde of international communism, the Chinese leadership could build up a rivaling communist identity, in effect satisfying not only the need for positive self-esteem but also the need for social distinctiveness. Without dismissing the effect of other potential factors, the logic of social identity appears to be critical for ex-

1204 For a similar reading of the split – as being driven by identity dynamics – from another type of (“societal”) constructivist perspective, see Hopf (2009).
1205 At the same time, it should be noted, China pursued an identity strategy of social competition towards the other salient out-group, namely the Western countries headed by the United States.
1206 See Lowenthal (1971: 513); (Chen (2001: 82). For a detailed account of the ideological discord between the two parties, see Lüthi (2008).
1207 See e.g. Radchenko (2009: 11-13); Chen (2001: 212). Especially Lorenz Lüthi (2008: 8-12) has – based on comprehensive archival research – pointed to ideological dividing lines as the crux of the matter. I agree but would emphasize how ideology can be a decisive social identity category for differentiating between in- and out-groups and thereby a constituent element of social identity dynamics.
plaining the Sino-Soviet split whereas the realist logic of power and security does not.¹²⁰⁸

I turn next to the Sino-Japanese relationship, which is often characterized as “cold politics, hot economics”.¹²⁰⁹ In light of the recurring confrontations between Beijing and Tokyo especially in the past decade, it might be tempting to see their relationship as permeated by the realist logic of power and security dynamics. Yet, I will contend that the conflict-ridden Sino-Japanese relationship is first of all driven by the logic of social identity, and that the realist logic of power and security – together with the liberalist logic of economic interdependence – has primarily exerted a strong moderating effect on the bilateral relationship, preventing the crises situations from escalating out of control. To begin with the liberalist logic, the high degree of economic interdependence between the two countries is often emphasized as the single most important stabilizing factor in the Sino-Japanese relationship.¹²¹⁰ Not only does China currently constitute Japan’s largest trading partner while Japan is China’s second largest,¹²¹¹ Japan has also invested heavily in several key sectors of the Chinese economy and the two countries have furthermore become closely connected in terms of people-to-people exchanges such as tourists and students.¹²¹² As such, strong common interests exist to keep the relationship on a cooperative track. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, the realist logic has generally had the same positive, stabilizing effect on the Sino-Japanese relationship. By virtue of its preponderant

¹²⁰⁸ Some scholars have focused specifically on Chairman Mao, his psychological mind-set and ideological preferences (e.g. Chen and Yang, 1998; Westad, 1998).
¹²¹⁰ See e.g. Wan (2006: 45-80); Alvstam et al. (2009); Buszynski (2009); Koo (2009: 211-16).
¹²¹² For instance, during the 1990s, China rose to become the most important production location for Japanese manufacturing industries (Alvstam et al., 2009: 202-03).
strategic position in East Asia as a provider of Japanese security and as an off-shore balancer of China, the United States and its unipolar position of power in the post-Cold War era has strongly mitigated the security dilemma between China and Japan as well as effectively curbed potential revisionist ambitions from either side.\textsuperscript{1214} In other words, power and security dynamics have simply not been very pertinent to the Sino-Japanese relationship inasmuch as such dynamics have been kept at bay by American unipolarity. Although structural realists might contend that the recent significant improvement of China’s relative power – following the global financial crisis – is reintroducing power and security dynamics as a destabilizing factor in the Sino-Japanese relationship, such dynamics still only plays a secondary role given the Japanese security alliance with the United States and the far higher quality of both U.S. and Japanese military forces.

This begs the question why we continually see Beijing and Tokyo ending up in political clashes that on several occasions have threatened to seriously disrupt the regional balance and to brand China (and also Japan!) as a revisionist power? In line with my own (as well as structural realism’s) overall hypothesis about the direction of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century, the most serious examples of confrontational incidents have occurred in the present decade when the ‘Rising China’ narrative has been dominating the official Chinese identity discourse. I already briefly presented three of these incidents involving the detention of a Chinese fishing boat captain near Senkaku/Diaoyu (September 2010), Japan’s nationalization of Senkaku/Diaoyu (September 2012) and China’s establishment of an Air Defense Identification Zone in the East China Sea (November 2013). However, several other rounds of confrontations have taken place back in the 1990s and 2000s, including the Senkaku/Diaoyu light house

\textsuperscript{1214} See e.g. Christensen (1999); Lind (2004); Goh (2008); Glaser (2011).
construction incidents (1990, 1996 and 2005) and the large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations all over China in 2005 aimed at the approval of a new history textbook in Japan as well as Japan’s campaign to win a seat in the UN Security Council.\textsuperscript{1215} Without being able here to delve into any of the listed episodes, I argue that the academic literature provides ample evidence of how the logic of social identity is a main driver of all these confrontations. Some scholars focus specifically on the role of popular nationalism in both countries, other scholars on how Chinese and Japanese leaders are utilizing sovereignty disputes to mobilize nationalist support for their leadership, and yet other scholars look at how the Chinese and Japanese educational systems, media and other institutions create negative identity images of each other or manipulate the past to construct powerful narratives of moral high-grounding.\textsuperscript{1216} Although none of these scholars phrase their arguments in terms of the logic of social identity the way I do, they all indirectly demonstrate how the Sino-Japanese confrontations are shaped by what I have termed the need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem. Even so, a structural realist might counter that the sovereignty issue over Senkaku/Diaoyu, to which most of the confrontations pertain, is \textit{in reality} about strategic (or perhaps economic\textsuperscript{1217}) interests notwithstanding nationalist rhetoric. Yet, the small barren rocks that make up Senkaku/Diaoyu hold little intrinsic strategic value, and it is altogether hard to see that sovereignty over them would yield any substantial positive effect on Chinese security or China’s position of power given not least the broader strategic premises of Sino-Japanese-American relations.

\textsuperscript{1215} See e.g. Qiu (2006: 25-26); Koo (2009: 219-27). Note that as these examples did not involve the use of coercive power by the Chinese authorities or in other ways could reasonably be categorized as incidents of Chinese assertiveness, I did not account for them in the second sub-section of 10.2.

\textsuperscript{1216} See e.g. Gries (2004: chapter 5); Suzuki (2007); Gustafsson (2011); Wang Z. (2012: chapter 8); Park (2013).

\textsuperscript{1217} As the waters are rich on fish and underwater resources (such as oil and gas), the sovereignty issue could be depicted as a zero-sum economic conflict. Yet, such an argument is undermined by the fact that the conflict itself threatens to damage far higher economic stakes on either side and that the current situation largely prevents the two sides from fully exploiting the natural resources in the area.
The final example concerns China’s relations with the United States in the post-Cold War era. Most observers would readily agree that the realist logic of power and security dynamics, as well as the liberalist logic of economic interdependence, is relevant for explaining how China behaves towards the United States. Hence, China has, on the one hand, become deeply dependent on the U.S. export market and U.S. investments in China while, on the other hand, found itself strategically contained (cf. offensive structural realism) and vulnerable (cf. defensive structural realism) due to the forward position of U.S. military forces in China’s neighborhood.1218 My intention here is to briefly illustrate how the logic of social identity – and notably the desire for positive self-esteem – constitutes a third key driver of Chinese behavior towards the United States. Specifically, I claim that China’s low-status identity shapes Beijing’s interaction with Washington in important ways, not least in matters of grand strategic impact. I have already shown (in Chapter 7) how Zhongnanhai’s concern with equality and mutual respect weighs heavily on its official discursive statements on Sino-American relations with Xi Jinping’s proposal for constructing a new type of “major-power relations” being the most recent manifestation of this preoccupation (cf. Section 7.6). One may also point to the Chinese penchant – along with rather detailed requests – for pageantry and ceremonial grandeur whenever top Chinese politicians are being invited to the United States given that the Chinese perceive such symbolic gestures to be highly reflective of social status. However, in order to fully realize the effect of the logic of social identity on China’s relations with the U.S. one should take a look at some of the principle clashes between the two countries in the post-Cold War era.

1218 For an overview of the Sino-American strategic relationship in the post-Cold War era, see e.g. Zhao (2012);
Although we have witnessed a number of Sino-American encounters in recent years (see Section 10.3), two of the most serious ones occurred around the turn of the century, namely in 1999 and 2001.\textsuperscript{1219} Let me briefly describe each of these episodes in turn. On May 7, 1999, U.S. military aircraft bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade as part of the NATO “Operation Allied Force” against Yugoslavia, killing three Chinese citizens and injuring more than 20 others.\textsuperscript{1220} The raid, though quickly labeled an “accident” by the U.S. authorities, provoked a huge outcry in the Chinese population with several days of massive demonstrations in front of U.S. embassy and consular buildings around China. Chinese leaders publicly supported the protests, condemning the “barbaric” and “criminal conduct” of NATO, and waited four days before broadcasting President Bill Clinton’s official apology, after which the demonstrations finally subsided. It furthermore took another half year for the two governments to reach a formal settlement of the episode, involving U.S. compensations for the loss of life on the Chinese side. The second clash was triggered on April 1, 2001, when a Chinese fighter aircraft intercepted and collided with a U.S. surveillance plane operating off the coast of Chinese territory (i.e. Hainan Island).\textsuperscript{1221} The mid-air collision resulted in the death of the Chinese pilot and forced the U.S. plane to conduct an unauthorized emergency landing on Hainan Island where its crew (of 24 members) was detained and interrogated. Once again, the Chinese population was in uproar over the incident, and the Chinese government demanded an official apology from the United States while this time preventing the Chinese population from taking to the streets in large numbers. The crisis developed into a standoff – Beijing refusing to release the American aircraft crew and Washington refusing to apologize – and it took another ten days before the crisis was finally

\textsuperscript{1219} A third one, “the Taiwan Strait Crisis” took place in 1995-96. I have already briefly mentioned all three episodes in Section 10.1 where they were treated as driven by the identity logic of the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative.

\textsuperscript{1220} For a detailed account of the episode, see Myers (2000); Gries (2001); Parsons & Xu (2001).

\textsuperscript{1221} For a detailed account of the episode, see Kan et al. (2001); Donnelly (2004).
resolved when the White House issued a letter of “the two sorries” to the Chinese.\footnote{1222}

What is striking about these two episodes is first of all that Zhongnanhai was willing to let the crisis situations escalate to a point where they threatened to seriously disrupt the Sino-American relationship by alienating the two sides from each other. As several China scholars have made abundantly clear, the reason why the two episodes escalated so dramatically is to be found in identity-related dynamics.\footnote{1223} In both cases, the Chinese saw themselves as victims of aggression in what they perceived as a modern reenactment of the `century of humiliation´, this time at the hands of the morally depraved American imperialists. And in both cases was an official American apology seemingly the only thing that could defuse the crisis situations by “saving face” and thus restoring China’s dignity. Or to phrase it in terms of the logic of social identity: China’s desire for positive self-esteem prompted the Chinese to engage in crisis-escalating behavior, which entailed great risks. Indeed, one could even argue that the desire for positive self-esteem was so strong that it compromised China’s security as well as its potential power inasmuch as the two crises further pitted China against the American unipole at a vulnerable time in China’s modernization process.

\footnote{1222} The two sides held – and still hold – diverging views of whether the U.S. has the right to conduct surveillance activities within China’s Exclusive Economic Zone off the coast of China, which is why each side saw the other as responsible for provoking the incident in the first place.
\footnote{1223} See especially Gries (2001, 2005: chapter 1 & 6); Callahan (2004); Wang Z (chapter 7); see also Zhao (2005).
Chapter 12: Conclusion

This dissertation has sought to provide an answer to the following research question:

How can we theorize the logic of social identity in IR, and to what extent does the logic of Chinese identity constitute a motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century?

The research question was broken further down into three main questions that have guided the dissertation:

- What is the logic of social identity in IR, and how can we theorize the logic of social identity as a motivational driver of state grand strategy?
- What are the main narratives of China’s identity as a state community in the 21st century, and how does each narrative articulate the logic of social identity?
- What is the main pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century, and to what extent is this pattern generated by the logic of Chinese identity?

I have dealt with each of these questions in a separate part of the dissertation (respectively Part I, II and III). By way of conclusion, I will attempt to clarify the answers offered by this dissertation, with each of the following three sections addressing one of the main questions.1224

1224 The conclusion should also have included a couple of sections on the implications and perspectives of this dissertation, but I simply ran out of time!
To begin with, however, I briefly want to recapitulate what I consider to be the main contributions of this dissertation. Even though the identity concept has by now been firmly established in IR as one of the key concepts of especially constructivist scholarship, the concept still contains a significant unrealized potential for theorizing the basic motivational drivers of state behavior. Specifically, I propose the logic of social identity – based primarily on cognitively derived insights from Social Identity Theory – as a necessary, if insufficient motivational driver of state grand strategy. My theoretical approach is novel in its way of theorizing the logic of social identity in a state-centric context as the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem; translating this dual need into a limited number of identity strategies for framing the distinction between the in-group state and its salient out-group states, which at the same time generate the grand strategy of states; and finally developing a narrative-centered, discursive structuralist framework that allows me to systematically study and hierarchize the different narrative logics of state identity.

With this theoretical framework to hand, I have been able to study the rise of China in the 21st century from a new perspective. My overall claim has been that the prevailing narrative conception of Chinese state identity is predicated on a particular way of framing the distinction between the Chinese in-group and its salient out-group states, which in turn generates China’s grand strategy. I have therefore conducted a comprehensive discourse and content analysis of the official Chinese government conception of China’s identity as a state community in order to derive its main narrative logics. One of the principle findings of this dissertation is the identification of five main narratives of Chinese identity – ‘Globalist China’, ‘Sovereign China’, ‘Unified China’, ‘Sino-centric China’ and ‘Rising China’ – which constitute a set of valid, distinct and more or less exhaustive em-
pirical categories, discernible in the official government discourse. This is an important finding, since existing studies tend either to focus on a single narrative logic or to cultivate the complexity and seeming inconsistencies of Chinese state identity. Another main finding is the evolutionary ranking of the five main identity narratives in terms of their relative discursive strength, without which Chinese identity as a motivational driver would contain too much variation to be any useful for explaining a particular course of Chinese grand strategy. Indeed, the hierarchical mapping shows that notably two narratives of Chinese state identity have held sway over the official discourse in the 21st century, namely ‘Globalist China’ until the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2007 and ‘Rising China’ since 2009.

With respect to Chinese grand strategy, the dissertation has systematically examined and categorized its behavioral patterns. On the basis of this examination, I have demonstrated that Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century has displayed two distinct behavioral patterns: engaged status quo in the 2000s and engaged revisionism in the 2010s. This finding is significant inasmuch as it has allowed me to establish a pattern of co-variation between the narrative logics of Chinese state identity and the behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy in line with my underlying hypotheses. Furthermore, the finding of this pattern of co-variation has been extended to also cover the late 1990s. Crucially, the dissertation has subsequently been able to pinpoint more directly how the narrative logic of Chinese identity generates Chinese grand strategy. That is, I have shown how a given pattern of Chinese grand strategy can be seen as a specific identity strategy, writ large, for positioning the Chinese in-group in relation to its salient out-group states in order to satisfy the basic collective need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem. The dissertation has thus shown that China’s
identity as a state community constitutes a key motivational driver of its grand strategy, a relationship that has so far received limited attention in the existing IR literature on the rise of China.

12.1 On the logic of social identity as a motivational driver
For several decades now, the concept of identity has been part and parcel of the study of IR, being spearheaded by mainstream constructivist as well as critical scholars. Yet, the popularity of the concept of identity has led many IR scholars to use it in a commonsensical manner without any explicit theoretical grounding, which in turn has prompted critics to accuse the concept of being too ambiguous to offer a solid basis for social science. While some IR scholars may not really lament this development insofar as they denounce any disciplinary endeavor to force identity into a “conceptual straitjacket”, this dissertation has set out to endow the concept of identity with some analytical rigor. To this end, I have adopted a rather narrow conceptualization of identity in order to be able to tease out what I regard as its core logics.

I started by distinguishing between individual and social identities, jettisoning the individual perspective to avoid conflating distinct aspects of identity constitution. Social identities can be theorized in various ways, and IR scholars have found inspiration in a broad range of sociological and social psychological theories. Some IR scholars have highlighted alter-casting and the constitutional role of “the Other” as an existential threat to the Self; other IR scholars have focused on social roles, social status, social recognition (or stigmatization) and how the social system may socialize the group; still other IR scholars have studied the
ontological insecurity of social groups or the intensity and role of collective emotions in group life. My own theorization of social identities, however, has been based on the primarily cognitive social psychological insights of Social Identity Theory (SIT), which rests on the universal and irreducible predisposition of the human mind to categorize and divide the social world into in-groups and salient out-groups. Specifically, I derived two basic theoretical propositions from SIT pertaining to all social groups, namely the need for social distinctiveness and for positive self-esteem. While a number of IR scholars have likewise drawn on SIT in recent years, none of them have explicitly pinpointed and theorized both of these identity needs. Rather, these scholars have generally concentrated either on the need for social distinctiveness (e.g. how it generates security-seeking states) or on the need for positive self-esteem (e.g. how it generates status-seeking states), thereby largely neglecting one side of social identity constitution.

It is against the backdrop of Social Identity Theory that I have built a framework for theorizing the logic of social identity in IR. Or more accurately, the dissertation has proposed a logic of social identity, which hardly exhausts the potential for theorizing the logic of social identity in IR. Yet, in the broader context of the dissertation, namely in relating state identity to grand strategy, I claim to have identified the central components of the logic of social identity. In order to translate the social psychological logic of identity to the state-centric social system of international relations – something that is mostly done in an unreflective manner by IR scholars – I elucidated those features that are of particular relevance to the states system such as the relative fixity of state borders, limitations to the interaction capacity of states and the materially stratified hierarchy of the international society of states. Furthermore, in perceiving the state as a social group –
albeit a highly institutionalized one with corporate features – subject to the same identity needs as other social groups, I deliberately avoided adopting either an individualized or an anthropomorphized approach, instead treating the state as a referent object that may be invoked to harness the collective need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem. Finally, I argued that the referent object of the state can be understood as a discursively reified frame for state-centric identity constitution, and that the identity of the state thus can be analyzed as a discursive formation, defining the shared social categories of the in-group in relation to salient out-groups.

Given these theoretical premises, I have investigated how the logic of state identity is constructed and manifested within a three-layered hierarchical formation of discursive structures. Such a structural underpinning of state identity is a necessary corrective, I claimed, to the excessively constructivist (or instrumentalist) implications of Social Identity Theory, which tends to treat the social in-group as a nearly empty shell that can be injected with any sort of social categories as long as the dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem is satisfied. A number of IR scholars have likewise conceptualized and analyzed state identity as a hierarchical discursive formation, but not in conjunction with a SIT-based framework, nor in the specific context of Chinese state identity. Specifically, I proposed a hierarchical formation of state identity comprising three levels of discursive depth with the referent object of the state located at the first (deepest) structural layer. The second layer was conceptualized as a limited number of highly entrenched discursive building blocks that represent the historical consciousness or collective memory of the state community and that exert a constraining and enabling effect on the narrative construction of state identity. Finally, the third (top-most) layer of discursive structures contains the spe-
cific identity narratives. These were defined as bounded and coherent articulations of the state’s identity discourse, specifying not only the social categories for distinguishing between in-group and out-groups, but also a set of guidelines for collective action. Accordingly, I demonstrated how these identity narratives can be analytically separated from each other in terms of how they discursively frame the logic of the state’s identity.

In order, then, to employ the logic of state identity as a motivational driver of state grand strategy, I introduced another theoretical component of Social Identity Theory, namely the identity strategies that low-status states adopt to satisfy their basic identity needs. I argued that despite being a great power in almost every meaning of the term, the People’s Republic of China can still reasonably be treated as a low-status state in relative terms inasmuch as its salient out-groups – above all the United States – enjoy a higher rank in the materially conditioned hierarchy of international society. Adjusting the original SIT-derived identity strategies somewhat to fit my specific explanatory agenda, I proposed five ideal-typical identity strategies, each of which represents a particular way the low-status state may distinguish between the in-group and salient out-group states in order to satisfy the dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem. Social affiliation where the in-group state tones down its own distinctiveness in relation to salient out-groups in order to become part of, as well as to derive self-esteem from, a larger community of states; social competition where the in-group state engages in direct competition with salient out-groups to assert its own distinctive identity and thereby elicit respect and recognition from these out-group states; moral high-grounding (i.e. social creativity) where the in-group state distances itself from salient out-groups and claims moral superiority on selective dimensions of comparison; downward retargeting (i.e. social crea-
tivity) where the in-group state systematically ignores the most salient out-groups and instead directs attention towards other inferior out-groups to enhance its self-esteem; and finally *self-cultivation* (i.e. social creativity) where the in-group state deliberately cultivates its own distinctiveness and systematically reframes any negative value associated with its low status into a source of positive self-esteem.

On this background, I have claimed that *state grand strategy* may be viewed as the identity strategy of the state writ large. That is, each identity strategy, by framing the relationship between the in-group state and its salient out-group states in a distinct way, has wider strategic implications for how the in-group state approaches the outside world and positions itself on the international stage. This is what I mean by the *generative* logic of social identity. While I am not the only IR scholar to suggest such a SIT-based link between the identity strategy of low-status states and their grand strategy, I am the first scholar to propose a comprehensive theoretical framework for pinpointing and studying this link as well as being the first scholar to conduct extensive empirical analysis to assess the plausibility of the link.

To embed the SIT-derived logic of social identity in the narrative-centered discursive-structuralist framework, I have suggested how the identity narratives of any low status state can be ordered and distinguished from each other according to the discrete logics of the five ideal-typical identity strategies. I have also suggested that any identity narrative, being predicated on a specific identity strategy, may usefully be categorized in terms of two basic analytical distinctions between, on the one hand, *universalism and particularism*, and on the other hand, *extroversion and introversion*. Taken together, such a reductive systematization
of state identity narratives is warranted, I have claimed, insofar as it serves the purpose of differentiating between and specifying the narrative logics of identity in a way that has clear implications for state grand strategy. Yet, to be not only warranted but also analytically worthwhile, the ideal-typical categories need furthermore to be, at least to some extent, empirically discernible in the specific discursive formation of state identity.

It is against this backdrop, that I have theorized the logic of state identity as a motivational driver of state identity. Specifically, I have translated my overall argument into a single theoretical hypothesis on the relationship between state identity and state grand strategy: Any state’s prevailing narrative conception of state identity is predicated on a particular identity strategy – for framing the salient in-group/out-group distinction(s) and satisfying the basic dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem – which at the same time generates the grand strategy of the state in question.

I have argued that the proposed hypothesis posits a causal relationship between state identity and state grand strategy insofar as the underlying logic of social identity constitutes a universal, irreducible and independent motivational driver of social behavior. To be sure, one may also study state identity and grand strategy as a mutually constitutive relationship – many critical IR scholars have done so – but that would require a very different conceptualization and approach to social identities than the one pursued here. Furthermore, my overall theoretical argument has been phrased within the confines of mainstream IR constructivism even though many of its proponents would be hesitant to adopt a terminology of causality. Yet, following a number of scholars from different IR schools, I have grounded my explanatory ambitions in a critical realist philosophy of sci-
ence, which lays the foundation for adopting a so-called bounded constructivism that studies the constrained nature of social constructions. Indeed, by emphasizing the cognitive, structural and material constraints on social identity construction, one may treat it in a relatively objectified manner and attempt to derive from it what I have called the logic of social identity.

12.2 On the narrative logics of Chinese state identity
The dissertation has studied how the logic of social identity constitutes an important motivational driver of state grand strategy in the specific case of China’s rise in the 21st century. Although China is often portrayed as a country that is prone to pursue what I have referred to as the realist logic of power and security dynamics, I have conversely described China as a country that seems to be “fraught with identity logics”. I thus argued that, owing to its deep-seated historical awareness of itself as a state community, its recent century of humiliations, its rise from developing country to a (nearly?) fully-fledged great power and its pronounced sensitivity to questions of social status, China is “analytically ripe” for an identity perspective. Indeed, as shown by the past few decades of IR (as well as broader academic) literature on the rise of China, a great many scholars likewise consider China’s identity as a state community to be quite significant for how the country manages its rise and how it navigates on the international stage. This dissertation has conducted a comprehensive review of this literature in order to identify the range of identity categories ascribed to China. As has been pointed out, most scholars tend to focus on a single component of China’s state identity – such as its exceptionalist nature, its socialist ideology, its humiliating past, its Confucian history, its civilizational mentality, its adherence to
state sovereignty or its quest for rejuvenation – without much regard for alternative aspects or the overall picture. Other parts of the literature tend to conflate China’s identity with the different roles China may assume on the international stage, such as being a stakeholder of international society, a regional great power or a leader of the developing world.

Given the abundance of identity-related categories found in the academic literature, one might be tempted to jump to the conclusion that Chinese state identity is too amorphous and indeterminate to be of much analytical relevance as a motivational driver. Yet, I have contended that, rather than inductively exploring the various discursive currents of Chinese state identity or dismissing it altogether as a motivational driver, we may instead reduce and order its discursive complexity by virtue of the proposed theoretical framework. Accordingly, I have depicted China’s state identity as a three-layered, hierarchical formation of discursive structures that manifest the logic of Chinese identity. With the deepest layer reserved for the referent object of China as a state community, my mapping of this discursive formation has concentrated on establishing the main narrative categories of Chinese state identity and pinpointing how each narrative articulates the relationship between the Chinese in-group and its salient out-group states. To begin with, however, I identified the discursive building blocks, or collective memory, of Chinese state identity, which can be perceived as a set of rather entrenched discursive conceptions of Chineseness that constrain and enable the narrative construction of Chinese state identity.

Specifically, I have argued that at the beginning of the 21st century narrative construction of Chinese state identity has primarily been constrained and enabled by four relatively distinct discursive building blocks, all of which have a solid,
if somewhat selective, discursive-structural grounding in Chinese history. The four discursive building blocks of Chinese identity comprise `Sino-civilization´, featuring the distinctiveness, longevity, greatness and barbarian counter-image of dynastic China as “the Middle Kingdom”; `Confucianism´, highlighting the moral virtue, collectivism, social harmony and universalism of dynastic China as the empire of “all-under-heaven”; `the Century of Humiliation´, framing the inequality, trauma and weakness of China during its recent semi-colonialized past; and `the Communist March´, emphasizing the struggle for sovereignty, modernity and socialism with “Chinese characteristics” as part of a rising China’s quest for national rejuvenation. Although I have singled out these four building blocks of Chinese state identity on the basis of an extensive reading of the secondary literature, I have subsequently demonstrated how each of them can be identified in the official government discourse on Chinese state identity. In particular, I have shown how each of the main narratives derives much of its discursive content – i.e. is enabled – by drawing on a specific combination of these four building blocks. Moreover, I have pointed out how the specific configuration of building blocks in the 21st century, all of them rooted in particularistic conceptions of Chineseness, can explain – i.e. in a constraining sense – the absence of a proper “insider narrative” that conceives of China as a core member of international society (with the partial exception of the `Globalist China´ narrative).

In mapping the narratives at the third layer of the discursive formation of Chinese state identity, I have attempted to strike a balance between theoretical deduction (i.e. using theoretically derived ideal-typical categories) and empirical induction (i.e. using empirically grounded discursive categories). On the one hand, I have conducted an extensive analysis of official Chinese government discourse in the 21st century, comprising a wide range of primary sources such as
speeches, white papers and government reports, to identify and systematize the narrative categories of Chinese state identity. While there are several ways of studying China’s identity as a state community empirically – focusing on private or public, elite or lay conceptions – I have argued that public elite conceptions, as found in the official Chinese government discourse, constitute not only the most easily accessible, but also the most relevant perspective. On the other hand, this discourse analysis has been theoretically guided by ideal-typical narrative categories that were modeled on each of the five SIT-based identity strategies. At the intersection of deductive and inductive analysis, the dissertation has proposed five main narratives of Chinese state identity, namely ‘Globalist China’, ‘Sovereign China’, ‘Unified China’, ‘Sino-centric China’ and ‘Rising China’. Any such reductionist ordering of a complex identity discourse – arrived at from what I have termed an “outsider’s perspective” – is of course vulnerable to the validity-directed criticism that I have blinded myself beforehand to the way China’s state representatives construct their own irreducible (or “indigenous”) categories of Chinese identity. However, I have demonstrated that the five narratives do indeed constitute a set of valid, discrete and more or less exhaustive empirical categories that are useful for systematizing the multifaceted discourse on Chinese state identity in the 21st century.

The discourse analysis has identified the key discursive articulations of the five main narratives and thereby teased out a cluster of core terms that are reflective of the underlying identity strategy, or logic, of each narrative. In highly reductive terms, which aim to illustrate their distinct narrative logics, I have described the five main narratives as follows: The Globalist China narrative (based on an identity strategy of social affiliation) seeks to tone down China’s distinctiveness as a state community, instead positioning China as an active and responsible mem-
ber of international society, thereby earning outside respect and recognition from salient out-group states. The *Sovereign China* narrative (based on an identity strategy of moral high-grounding) strives to preserve China’s distinctiveness based on its inviolable right to political and territorial sovereignty, while castigating potential violators as morally depraved out-group states. The *Unified China* narrative (based on an identity strategy of downward retargeting) depicts China as a civilized, modern and harmonious state community of multi-ethnic unity, challenged only at the margins by radicalized out-groups of China’s ethnic minorities. The *Sino-centric China* narrative (based on an identity strategy of self-cultivation) celebrates China’s distinctiveness as a political and civilizational community in a self-absorbed manner, without directly rejecting the prevailing societal model of liberal democracy championed by salient Western out-group states. The *Rising China* narrative (based on an identity strategy of social competition) creates a powerful discursive linkage between China’s historic greatness, its recent humiliations and its present national rejuvenation whereby China re-asserts its great power status in the face of salient out-group states like the United States.

On the basis of the discourse analysis, I was furthermore able to provide a rough overview of how the five main narratives have evolved in the official government discourse in the 21st century so far. Yet, I argued that in order to rank the five narratives in terms of their relative discursive strength in a reliable manner, I needed a more homogenous dataset than what the primary sources of the discourse analysis offered. Thus, I have conducted a content analysis of the weekly editorials of the *Beijing Review* newsmagazine, a de facto mouthpiece of the official Chinese government line, to establish an evolutionary discursive ranking of the five narratives during the 2000-2014 period. From the content analysis, I
was able to discern a pattern of shifting discursive authority among the main narratives of Chinese state identity, three of which have held sway over the official discourse at different times in the examined period. Specifically, the `Globalist China´ narrative assumed a dominant position from the early to mid-2000s; it was replaced during the global financial crisis in 2007-2009 by the `Sino-Centric China´ narrative; and since 2009 `Rising China´ has emerged as the strongest narrative of Chinese identity. As such, the principal finding of the content analysis was that at any point in time the prevailing official conception of Chinese state identity has drawn primarily on one of three narratives, notably the `Globalist China´ and `Rising China´ narratives. This is a crucial finding, I have claimed, since it enables me to derive a relatively distinct narrative logic of Chinese state identity from the prevailing official discursive conception. After all, if I want to establish the identity of China as a significant motivational driver, then its narrative logic should be as clear-cut as possible.

Another important finding to emerge from the content analysis was that it enabled me to pinpoint the narrative shift to `Rising China´, which took place in the immediate aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2009-10 when the Chinese leadership started to use a more assertive language in several respects. Changing perceptions of the relative distribution of power in the international system – a key material constraint on the social logic of identity – seems to have played a role in provoking the shift, emboldening the Chinese leadership under Hu Jintao, and notably since Xi Jinping’s take-over of Zhongnanhai, to pursue an identity strategy of social competition rather than social affiliation (`Globalist China´) or social creativity (`Sino-centric China´). While this observation is fully in line with my theoretical framework, which recognizes the international material hierarchy as an important factor in determining the relative status of states,
I should at the same time stress that the dissertation has not so much attempted to explain the shifts from one narrative conception of Chinese identity to another as to establish how each narrative conception of Chinese identity function as a motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy.

By using my theoretical framework to reduce the discursive complexity of China’s state identity to an analytically manageable discursive formation, and by devising a research strategy for pinpointing a limited number of distinct narrative logics of Chinese identity, one of which periodically dominates official Chinese government discourse, I have proposed a novel approach to the study of Chinese identity – one that primarily serves the purpose of deriving the narrative logic of Chinese identity as a motivational driver.

12.3 On the relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy

One of the key concerns of IR scholars in recent years has been the question of what implications the rise of China has for the existing international order. As the answer hinges in no small part on the grand strategy that China will pursue, IR scholars have striven to identify the principle motivational drivers of Chinese grand strategy. The dissertation has proposed the logic of social identity as one such motivational driver and furthermore advanced a set of empirical hypotheses about how China’s identity generates its grand strategy. On this background, the dissertation has undertaken a plausibility probe designed to evaluate the posited relationship in a preliminary fashion. Specifically, I have put forward a three-stage plausibility probe, comprising first of all a systematic mapping of both the independent variable (the narrative logic of Chinese state identity) and
the dependent variable (the behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy) in order to determine the extent to which the two variables co-vary in line with the empirical hypotheses. Secondly, I have attempted to pinpoint the link between the two variables more directly by conducting some process tracing of the suggested relationship in a number of central official government documents. Finally, I have compared the explanatory power of the logic of social identity to the dominant IR realist account of power and security logics as different sets of motivational drivers for Chinese grand strategy.

In the first stage of the plausibility probe, I investigated whether the hypothesized effects of China's identity on its grand strategy were borne out in the first one and a half decades of the 21st century. To this end, I conducted a thorough examination of Chinese grand strategy to map its behavioral patterns and thereby determine whether they conform to the hypothesized effects of Chinese identity. I argued that I was best served by examining the behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy, rather than its officially stated aims and principles in government documents, not only to avoid conflating the two main variables by tapping into the same empirical sources, but also to forestall any criticism that the Chinese leadership's words are not followed by its deeds with respect to its grand strategy. Accordingly, I listed eight specific behavioral indicators, covering three different dimensions, in mapping the evolving pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century. Each of these behavioral indicators sought to measure the behavioral patterns in terms of a distinction between revisionism and status quo and another distinction between engagement and detachment. While Chinese grand strategy might be analyzed and categorized in terms of various types of strategic principles, I have argued that it is these two distinctions that are most relevant. Not merely because they cover most of the analytical varia-
tion found in the IR debate on the rise of China, but also because these distinctions, after all, aptly epitomize the central strategic dilemmas that a rising China itself faces: Should China accept the prevailing Liberal Order, conceived and still dominated by the West, or should China reject it in favor of an alternative international order more to China’s own liking? Also, should China involve itself actively in the making of international order, or should it rather stay aloof?

Based, on the one hand, on these distinctions between revisionism and status quo, engagement and detachment as a set of ideal-typical principles of Chinese grand strategy, and on the other hand, on the distinction between particularism and universalism, extroversion and introversion, as a set of ideal-typical narrative logics of Chinese state identity, I have suggested how, hypothetically, the two main variables may be related. Hence, I have posited that by shielding itself from salient out-groups an introvert identity narrative will generate a detached grand strategy that ignores the prevailing international order, whereas an extrovert identity narrative, which directly compares the in-group to salient out-groups, will generate an engaged grand strategy that seeks to involve the state actively in questions of international order. Furthermore, I have posited that by perceiving the in-group as fundamentally distinct from its salient out-groups a particularistic identity narrative will generate a potentially revisionist grand strategy that challenges central aspects of the prevailing international order, whereas a universalistic identity narrative, which sees the in-group as affiliated with its salient out-groups, will generate a status quo-oriented grand strategy that supports the existing international order.

In order to translate these relationships into specific empirical hypotheses, I have used the evolutionary mapping of the dominant Chinese identity narratives
in the 21st century. Accordingly, I have hypothesized the following *relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy in the 21st century*: Until 2007, when the prevailing narrative conception of China’s state identity was dominated by ‘Globalist China’ (an extrovert/universalistic narrative predicated on an identity strategy of social affiliation), we should expect to see a Chinese grand strategy of engaged status quo. Since 2009, when the prevailing narrative conception of China’s state identity has been dominated by ‘Rising China’ (an extrovert/particularistic narrative predicated on an identity strategy of social competition), we should expect to see a Chinese grand strategy of detached revisionism. I have further argued that the interim period of 2007-2009, marked by the global financial crisis, should be considered a critical juncture or transition phase, which was too brief and disruptive to witness any substantial generative effect of the dominant ‘Sino-centric China’ narrative on Chinese grand strategy. The examination of the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century has broadly confirmed my empirical hypotheses. Whereas Chinese grand strategy during most of the 2000s largely followed a pattern that in terms of the behavioral indicators can be categorized as engaged status quo, it has displayed sufficient change since around 2009-2010 to warrant categorizing it instead as engaged revisionism.

More specifically, the main findings of the examination of the behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century can be recapitulated as follows: In *the 2000s*, especially since 9/11 2001, Beijing pursued a grand strategy of *engaged status quo*. As demonstrated most unequivocally with respect to China’s institutional involvement in the Liberal Order, Beijing assumed a far more active and constructive role in international as well as regional multilateral organizations (notably in ASEAN-affiliated forums) and allowed itself to become
institutionally enmeshed and constrained in a way that differed fundamentally from the 1990s. While the PRC still basically adhered to a sovereignty-based international order, its prior absolutist stance was moderated considerably, thereby enabling Beijing to take part in handling some of the main challenges to the international order, chief among which were the PRC’s contribution to UN Peacekeeping Operations and its active participation in the UNSC-mandated efforts to curb weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, China’s status quo profile was clearly reflected in Beijing’s acquiescence in American unipolarity, its support for the U.S.-led Global War on Terror and notably its unwillingness to resort to coercive power or confrontational behavior in tackling China’s territorial disputes with neighboring countries. While certain aspects of China’s strategic behavior – such as its rapid military modernization and its normative distancing from the Liberal Order on, among other things, the human rights issue – indicated that China was maintaining some distance from the U.S.-centered Liberal Order, the overall impression of Chinese grand strategy in the 2000s was clearly one of engaged status quo.

In the 2010s, China’s grand strategy has taken a turn from one of engaged status quo to engaged revisionism. As an important indication of this shift, Beijing has actively promoted new international institutions such as the G20 and the BRICS forum and has even emerged as the leading institutional architect of the new international development bank, AIIB. In addition, under the aegis of the “Maritime Silk Road” and the “Silk Road Economic Belt” framework, China has recently proposed a range of ambitious infrastructural initiatives, which are supposed to position Beijing as an increasingly prominent actor in a revised regional Asian order. In the UNSC, China has demonstrated an increased willingness to directly oppose Western-backed resolutions for how to handle the conflict in Syria, de-
spite the costs of being internationally stigmatized on this question together with Russia. With respect to China’s military modernization, recent investments suggest that the PLA is seriously expanding its power projection capabilities, thus building up its capacity to be able to pursue its foreign policy interests, including its territorial claims, more assertively. Indeed, we have seen a markedly increase in the frequency as well as severity of such assertive incidents involving China, which taken together amounts to a new behavioral pattern even though in many cases China may reasonably claim that it is merely responding in kind. To be sure, China has maintained much the same membership profile of international organizations and treaties as in the 2000s, it still works in concert with the Western UNSC-members on many security issues, and it still largely refrains from confronting the United States directly on the international stage. Even so, the observed new aspects of China’s strategic behavior are sufficiently substantial to suggest a shifting pattern towards engaged revisionism.

Taken together, then, my empirical analyses of Chinese identity and grand strategy have established an overall pattern of co-variation between the independent and dependent variable in line with the empirical hypotheses. However, as the finding of such a pattern is not quite sufficient to render it plausible that the narrative logic of Chinese identity constitutes an important motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy, I have added two other stages to the plausibility probe.

In the second stage of the plausibility probe, I attempted to trace the hypothesized relationship more directly in order to pinpoint how the narrative logic of the dominant narrative conception of Chinese identity was a critical motivational driver in shaping the observed pattern of China’s grand strategy in the 21st century. I pointed out that, although such a process-tracing analysis would ideally be
the best way to tease out the relationship between the main variables, process-tracing is only practically feasible to a limited extent in this case study. The primary reason for this is the non-democratic, even secretive nature of Chinese politics, which limits our access to key aspects of the political process and thus our ability to trace how Chinese grand strategy is being motivated by the Chinese leadership. Nevertheless, I argued that it is possible to trace a link between Chinese identity and grand strategy in a few key official Chinese government documents that discuss the overall direction of Chinese foreign and security policy. These documents included the white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development” from 2005, the white paper on China’s Military Strategy from 2015 and an important speech on Chinese foreign policy in late 2014. As to, first, the white paper on “China’s Peaceful Development”, I showed that it is littered with references to the `Globalist China´ narrative in line with my expectations about the dominance of this narrative in 2005. Importantly, the white paper enabled me to trace a rather direct link between `Globalist China´ and an overall strategic path of engaged status quo, the elements of which are fleshed out in the white paper. Concerning, secondly, the speech from 2014 and the white from 2015, both documents contain several passages that firmly establish the dominance of the `Rising China´ narrative in line with my expectations. Again, I was able to trace a quite direct link from these narrative conceptions to a Chinese grand strategy of engaged revisionism in support of my underlying hypotheses.

Yet, I subsequently argued that since the process-tracing evidence was not as substantial as desired, I could further strengthen the overall plausibility of the proposed relationship by extending the scope of the empirical analysis somewhat in order to obtain additional variation on the main variables. Having already conducted a preliminary examination of Chinese grand strategy in the
1990s – as a frame of reference for examination of the 21st century – I undertook a tentative study of Chinese identity in the late 1990s. On this background, the pattern of co-variation between the two variables was further corroborated: The dominant conception of Chinese identity in the late 1990s was articulated by ‘Sovereign China’ (an introvert/universalistic narrative based on an identity strategy of moral high-grounding), and the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy during this period was one of detached status quo in line with the empirical hypotheses. More specifically, I showed that the ‘Sovereign China’ narrative, by referring to universalistic principles as the UN charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, not only champions China’s right to political as well as territorial sovereignty, but also claims the moral high-ground in the face of potential encroachments by in particular the United States. This identity conception was clearly reflected “on the ground” as Beijing maintained Deng’s dictum of “keeping a low (but self-righteous) profile” in international society. That is, Chinese grand strategy demonstrated, on the one side, a basic acceptance of the prevailing unipolar international order (status quo) and, on the other, a basic reservation of becoming actively involved in the Western-dominated Liberal Order (detachment) despite China’s growing nominal participation in its institutional framework during the 1990s.

Furthermore, I also addressed another problem of causality that was not solved by the process-tracing analysis, namely that it did not allow me to rule out the possibility that the proposed relationship could be “turned on its head”. In other words, it might be that the dominant narrative conception of Chinese identity is itself shaped by the prevailing grand strategy, which in turn is caused by other motivational drivers than the logic of social identity. While I pointed out that the available sources did not allow me to settle this issue – and that one may ulti-
mately approach the relationship as one of coconstitution with a different set of theoretical lenses – I sought to bolster the plausibility of my own argument by providing a comprehensive account of the generative effect of Chinese identity on Chinese grand strategy during the entire examined period. I thus went through the shifting patterns of Chinese identity and grand strategy since the 1990s, punctuated by the critical junctures of 9/11 in 2001 and the global financial crisis in 2007-09, in order to specify in each case how the narrative logic of Chinese identity was being a critical motivational factor of the observed behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy.

Finally, in the third stage of the plausibility probe, I compared my “bounded constructivist” approach to explaining Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century to the dominant approach in the IR debate about the rise of China, namely realism. Or more accurately, I have concentrated on a specific variant of it, structural realism, since it grounds its motivational drivers of state grand strategy most clearly in a set of systemic power and security dynamics, traditionally perceived to be the core logic of realism. Moreover, as the observed pattern of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century does not really run counter to structural realist expectations, I have had to find other ways demonstrate that structural realism cannot fully account for Chinese grand strategy. To this end, I have provided three critical examples of how China in its strategic behavior has been driven by identity-generated logics in ways that make little sense from a realist perspective of power and security dynamics.

The first example goes all the way back to the Sino-Soviet Split during the Cold War, which separated China from its most important ally, thereby leaving it in a very vulnerable position surrounded by enemies and with no one to assist its
much-needed modernization. I pointed out that while the split is hard to explain from a structural realist perspective, it can be well accounted for in terms of the logic of social identity. Thus, as Maoist China grew increasingly tired of playing second fiddle to the Soviets, the Chinese leadership began building up a rivaling communist identity as the true avant-garde of international communism, in effect satisfying not only the need for positive self-esteem but also the need for social distinctiveness. The second and third examples concern the Sino-Japanese and Sino-American relationships respectively, thus involving China’s strategic relations with its two most salient out-group states. In both cases, we have seen bilateral relations periodically spin out of control, accompanied by strong nationalist demonstrations in China, despite the presence of fruitful economic interdependence and, more importantly here, the lack of any direct power- or security-related dynamics to set off the melt-down of political relations. Indeed, I have argued that, in the case of the Sino-Japanese relationship at least, power and security dynamics actually provided a moderating effect on the relationship. Instead, I have pointed out how identity dynamics are largely to blame for allowing a number of episodes – including the recurrent the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, the Hainan mid-air plane collision in 2001 and the recurrent Senkaku/Diaoyu clashes in the 2010s – to escalate to a point where they have seriously threatened to disrupt bilateral relations altogether.

Against the backdrop of this three-stage plausibility probe, I find it reasonable to conclude that the narrative logic of Chinese identity constitutes an critical motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy. Thus, the underlying principal argument of this dissertation – that the relationship between the in-group state and its salient-out groups can be framed according to a limited number of social identity logics that at the same time generate the overall strategic outlook of the
in-group state – is largely supported by the case study of China’s rise in the 21st century. Admittedly, I would have preferred to phrase the conclusion in stronger terms, stating for instance that “the logic of social identity is indispensable to any attempt to explain Chinese grand strategy” or that “the logic of social identity is stronger than the realist logic of power and security dynamics as a motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy”. Such conclusions are not warranted, however. Rather, my objective has been to argue and demonstrate that the logic of social identity is a necessary, if insufficient motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy (as several causal factors co-exist to explain the direction of Chinese grand strategy). Still, this dissertation is the first to have theorized the logic of social identity in IR as a motivational driver of state grand strategy and the first have demonstrated its explanatory power in one of the most crucial cases in the study of International Relations, namely the rise of China in the 21st century.
APPENDIX A:  
Coding list guiding the analysis of the official Chinese identity discourse

‘Globalist China´

Discursive logic:
➢ China as an integral part of a global society  
➢ No salient out-group in the society of states  
➢ Toning down Chinese distinctiveness  
➢ Seeking outside recognition of China as responsible member of international society  
➢ The embrace of globalism to further development and modernization  
➢ Universalism and extroversion

Key terms (prior to the discourse analysis):
Peaceful development, opening-up, globalization, modernization, interdependence, mankind, win-win cooperation, common prosperity, harmonious world, collective security, international obligations, responsible member, international society.

Frequency map after the discourse analysis (i.e., graphic illustration of term frequency [terms of 6 characters or more] based on all the discursive statements actually coded as ‘Globalist China´ in the analyzed official government discourse)
`Sovereign China´

**Discursive logic:**
- China as a sovereign state community
- Salient out-groups constituted by potential violators of Chinese sovereignty
- Chinese distinctiveness based on political and territorial sovereignty
- Claiming moral authority by upholding and defending universalist principles of sovereignty
- The unswerving will to counter threats to China’s external sovereignty
- Introversion and universalism

**Key terms** (prior to the discourse analysis):
Sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, equal members of international society, mutual respect, international diversity, “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”, internal affairs, non-interference, hegemonism, power politics, reunification, “One China”.

**Frequency map** after the discourse analysis (i.e., graphic illustration of term frequency [terms of 6 characters or more] based on all the discursive statements actually coded as `Sovereign China´ in the analyzed official government discourse)
`Unified China´

Discursive logic:
- China as a unified multi-ethnic state community
- Salient out-group constituted by radicalized intra-state minorities
- Chinese distinctiveness associated with its civilized and harmonious domestic order
- Boasting socialist modernization in the face of backward radicalized minorities
- The need for development and progress to safeguard domestic societal unity
- Introversion and universalism

Key terms (prior to the discourse analysis)
Unity, multi-ethnic nation, ethnic minorities, peaceful coexistence, social harmony, civilization, development and progress, common struggle, central government, socialist modernization, “Three Evils”, terrorism, separatism, extremism, radicalization, Xinjiang, Tibet.

Frequency map after the discourse analysis (i.e., graphic illustration of term frequency [terms of 6 characters or more] based on all the discursive statements actually coded as `Unified China´ in the analyzed official government discourse)
`Sino-centric China´

**Discursive logic**
- China as a distinctive civilizational community
- Salient out-group constituted by Western liberal democracy
- Chinese distinctiveness based on its unique civilizational heritage
- Taking pride in China’s civilizational roots and its historical greatness
- The active cultivation of China’s traditional culture to promote distinctiveness
- Introversion and particularism

**Key terms** (prior to the discourse analysis)

*5000 years of civilization, rich culture heritage, ancient China, civilizational greatness, historical roots, distinctiveness, Confucianism, “with Chinese characteristics”, unique development path, civilizational diversity, equality, mutual learning, peaceful coexistence, Westernization.*

**Frequency map** after the discourse analysis (i.e., graphic illustration of term frequency [terms of 6 characters or more] based on all the discursive statements actually coded as `Sino-centric China´ in the analyzed official government discourse)
Rising China

Discursive logic
- China as a community dreaming of national rejuvenation
- Salient out-group constituted by the United States
- Chinese distinctiveness based on historic and emerging greatness
- Asserting China’s status as (emerging) great power
- The ongoing struggle to modernize to achieve national rejuvenation
- Extroversion and particularism

Key terms (prior to the discourse analysis)
Chinese Dream, National rejuvenation, great revival, 5000 years of civilization, foreign aggression, historic struggle, New China, prosperity, great power, core interests, strong country, confidence, major-country relationship, mutual respect, United States.

Frequency map after the discourse analysis (i.e., graphic illustration of term frequency [terms of 6 characters or more] based on all the discursive statements actually coded as `Rising China´ in the analyzed official government discourse)
### APPENDIX B:

**Overview of primary sources taken from official government discourse**

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1225 *Number of coding references* refers to the number of times some part of the specific primary source was being coded as a specific narrative (i.e. it was created as a node in the terminology of NVivo).

1226 *Number of nodes coding* refers to the number of different narratives (i.e. nodes) that were identified in the specific primary source.

1227 Some sources were derived from photocopied material, which prevented NVivo from counting the number of words.
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APPENDIX B+

Bibliographical overview of primary sources


Xi, Jinping (2012a), speech by CPC general secretary Xi Jinping at the Politburo Standing Committee Members Meeting with the Press at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, downloaded from the homepage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ [accessed 23.08.2014].


Xi, Jinping (2014e), speech by President of the PRC, Xi Jinping, at the College of Europe, Bruges, April 1, 2014, downloaded from the homepage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ [accessed 23.08.2014].


APPENDIX C:

Distribution of Chinese identity narratives on discursive sources and specific text references (coded text)

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1228 The number of discursive sources, in which the specific narrative (node) is found (coded) at least once.

1229 The number of references made to a specific narrative (node) throughout all the coded texts.
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## APPENDIX E: Overview of coded text in Beijing Review 2008-09

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<td>BR_2008_01</td>
<td>Globalist China</td>
<td>China’s opening-up policy is a long-term one, as Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said during his visit to the National University of Singapore in November 2007. At the beginning of its opening-up drive, China assured the world that its policy would remain unchanged in the 20th century and the first half of the 21st century. But, after the mid-21st century, China will have more frequent economic interactions with the rest of the world, and the two will become even more interdependent and indivisible. This will make it even less likely for the country to reverse its opening-up policy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR_2008_03</td>
<td>Salient out-group</td>
<td>Just like a coin has two sides, the coexistence of those positive and negative aspects of the bilateral relations between China and the United States is natural. Maintaining stability and their growing interdependence still dominated the theme of the bilateral ties in the past year. The trend will continue in 2008.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR_2008_05</td>
<td>Sinocentric China</td>
<td>At that time, Brown, as well as his people from the UK, may find the charm of the Middle Kingdom is not only represented by the terracotta warriors and their horses, but also the present and future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR_2008_06</td>
<td>Sinocentric China</td>
<td>There is growing concern that the traditional culture will be forgotten if people no longer celebrate the festival at home. Mainstream media urge people to cherish the chance to have the most important meal of the year at home with family members. After all, family value is important for retaining the</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR_2008_08</td>
<td>Sinocentric China</td>
<td>It’s said that China has three most internationally recognized cities—Beijing, the political center; Shanghai, the financial hub; and Xi’an, the showcase of brilliant history and culture. In China, there is no other city so closely connected with the country’s history as Xi’an, capital of northwestern Shaanxi Province. Remains of ancient sites and structures can be found everywhere within the borders of today’s Xi’an. Among them, the Terracotta Army found in the Mausoleum of Qinshihuang, founding emperor of the Qin Dynasty who united China for the time in history, is now recognized as “the Eighth Wonder of the World” and was listed as a World Cultural</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR_2008_14</td>
<td>Unified China</td>
<td>The Dalai Lama clique’s secessionist activities are doomed to fail. This is not only because Tibet has been an inalienable part of China since ancient times, but also because a majority of the Tibetan people firmly believe that “Tibet independence” will only ruin their peaceful life. Moreover, the many Western media critical of China should also not sidestep the question: How would your government respond when its people are suffering from killings, beatings, lootings and arson as what took place in Lhasa?</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR_2008_14</td>
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<td>BR_2008_15</td>
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<td>After six days of traveling across Greece, March 31 saw the Olympic flame finally land on Chinese soil, symbolizing the successful handover of the holy flame from one ancient civilization to another.</td>
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China had some respite from the tragic events surrounding the Sichuan earthquake, when the nation celebrated the Dragon Boat Festival on June 8. With a long history of 2,500 years, this ancient tradition brought a time of much needed joy to many, but also served as a reminder of lost family members in the aftermath.

The robust development of the translation industry may well be attributed to China’s reform and opening-up program, which spurs faster economic and social progress, and more importantly, integrates China into the global community. As global contacts and exchanges increase daily, so does a growing market demand for translation services. On the other hand, the booming industry also complements China’s opening-up process because it allows two-way understanding between the Chinese people and the international community.

When China’s ancient scientific and technological achievements are mentioned, the nation will generally refer to the Four Great Inventions. The four symbolic creations—compass, papermaking, printing and gunpowder—are the pride of China’s 5,000-year-old culture, because of their recognized role in the development of human civilization.

The process of collecting requires deep research into a certain period of history or certain kind of culture and this far outweighs any material value a piece may have. Collectors like Ma Weidu and Lu Dongzhi collect classical furniture and porcelain from the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911). Theirs are all invaluable collections and will be displayed in museums so that more people can enjoy them. As far as a real collector is concerned, although the market value of certain products is important, far more importance is the cultural and historical significance of the collection.

With the successful completion of Shenzhou 7’s missions and the crew’s safe return to the embrace of the Earth, China has once again demonstrated to the world its capability to explore the universe. Such a capability conforms to China’s rising status in the world today, and should also help the country further pursue its space program in the days ahead. After all, space exploration has long been the cherished dream of our human race, and as a country with one fifth of the world population, China ought to make better use of its space technologies for peaceful purposes. It should also strive to contribute more to the progress and civilization of mankind, just as the forefathers of the Chinese nation did in ancient times.

A news release also disclosed that China, along with Japan and South Korea, are working on an $80-billion reserve fund to counteract any potential threats posed by the crisis.
China’s voice and deeds do ring a bell—reminding the world of its responsible action during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, when the country persisted in maintaining the value of its currency and in the process kept its neighbors afloat. The current financial upheaval may once

BR_2008_48  Sinocentric China
On the 2,400-year-old bamboo strips now preserved in Tsinghua are inscribed several Confucian classics and historical works, which are very important for the exploration of China’s ancient history and traditional culture.

BR_2008_49  Unified China
Hence, it was in March 1958 that Guangxi was made a special administrative region where ethnic minority inhabitants could exercise great autonomy in their local economic, cultural and social development initiatives. This current situation of different nationalities sharing the same habitat is an important reason why Guangxi became an autonomous region. In fact, this is typical for areas where many minority nationalities have lived together with the predominant Han nationality for perhaps hundreds of years. Such a state of coexistence has brought about mutual recognition, respect and understanding as well as great harmony between localities, between the Han and other ethnic groups, and

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<td>This commemoration came in the wake of another major event on the nation’s calendar, which was still being remembered with much pomp and ceremony—namely the 30th anniversary of the reform and opening-up policy. The two anniversaries were not coincidental, if we place the normalization of diplomatic ties between China and the United States against the backdrop of China’s reform and opening-up policy. The diplomatic move definitely helped to shape a favorable international environment for China’s modernization drive and vice versa.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR_2009_03</td>
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<td>Over the past three decades, China and the United States have made historic achievements. Cooperation has borne fruit in a wide range of areas. Mutual understanding between the two peoples has increased. Bilateral trade has blossomed. The strategic significance and global implications of China-U.S. relations have become all the more evident. Most serious Sino-American observers believe that the relationship</td>
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<td>BR_2009_05</td>
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<td>Spring Festival, or China’s lunar New Year, has traditionally been an auspicious and jubilant occasion for the Chinese people all over the world. Roughly a month or so behind the calendar New Year, it is not only a time to bid farewell to the old days and ring in a new life with renewed hope and expectations, but also a time to break from a year of hard work, for long-awaited family reunions, sumptuous feasts, fun outings, as well as for the observance of various folk</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR_2009_06</td>
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<td>The 14th Dalai Lama and his followers’ clamor for “cultural autonomy” for the Tibetan people is essentially for the purpose</td>
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of restoring the theocratic rule over the culture of Tibet and other Tibetan-inhabited regions, and thus realizing their aim of the "independence of Greater Tibet." Such a scheme has never

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<td>China’s 5,000-year-old civilization has left a huge cultural legacy. The Beijing-based Palace Museum, which was established in 1925, has collected a large amount of precious cultural relics. These are integral symbols of the Chinese civilization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR_2009_18 Rising China</td>
<td>Because of its geographic location, China must have a powerful naval force to safeguard its national interests. The country has more than 3 million square km of territorial sea area abundant in mineral, energy and other resources. In 2008, China’s gross ocean product approached 3 trillion yuan ($430 billion), up 11 percent year on year and accounting for 9.87 percent of the national gross domestic product. Defending maritime interests and security is of vital importance to the</td>
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<td>BR_2009_21 Salient out-group</td>
<td>However, mainstream Japanese society is still reluctant to admit and face their nation’s involvement in this tragic event. Even worse, some Japanese educational institutions have altered their school textbooks on many occasions in an attempt to whitewash the brutal behavior their troops had been responsible for. The Japanese attitude further aggravates the painful memories of the Chinese people, who remember the massacre more vividly with each passing</td>
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<td>BR_2009_23 Unified China</td>
<td>A more fundamental reason for Xinjiang’s rapid development lies perhaps in the peaceful coexistence among different ethnic minorities there. A region inhabited by 13 major ethnic groups, including Uygur, Kazak, Tajik, Xibo, Uzbek and the Han people, Xinjiang has for centuries been a melting pot of eclectic lifestyles living harmoniously. This state of harmony in Xinjiang seems to have formed the cornerstone for Xinjiang’s development and prosperity in the past and will hopefully</td>
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Those uneasy feelings may be natural, from the perspective of international relations. None of the BRIC members is a Western power, but developing countries and emerging economies. They demand reform of the existing international system, which mainly

Those uneasy feelings may be natural, from the perspective of international relations. None of the BRIC members is a Western power, but developing countries and emerging economies. They demand reform of the existing international system, which mainly

More important, with the development and application of Beidou, China has continued to rely on its own resources to develop strategic technologies like this in the face of today’s highly competitive world. Such a strategy not only complies with the rising needs and status of China and conforms to its goal of becoming scientifically and technologically
more innovative, but ought to be the basis for any nation wishing to grow stronger.

Some Western powers said Beidou will threaten their military superiority or possibly encroach upon their commercial interests. This is a lopsided and narrow-minded perspective. In a world where competition dominates and leads to greater human progress, all countries have to compete to build their own strengths and develop for the benefit of the people and the world at large.

In fact, Beidou has become so mature and useful that the United Nations has identified it as one of the four core technologies of its kind in the world, alongside the Global Positioning System of the United States, Glonass of Russia and Galileo of the European Union. More important, with the development and application of Beidou, China has continued to rely on its own resources to develop strategic

Their goal, some Chinese political analysts say, was to sabotage social stability, disrupt the state of unity and harmony, and solicit international support for the “independence” of Xinjiang. Such violent behavior for a political end shows complete disregard for even the most basic human rights and is doomed to failure, as no Chinese citizens will ever sympathize or take sides with anti-China elements that commit crimes and threaten human lives in broad daylight. Neither will they allow their country to become split, for this is the fundamental principle as well as the common wish of any government and people of a sovereign state.

As a country with a long history, China boasts myriad ancient sites. However, some spots have been excessively commercialized and developed for moneymaking purposes at the cost of the sites’ original looks and cultural value. Thus Wutai Mountain’s strenuous journey of entering the World Heritage List can teach the Chinese Government and cultural heritage preservation authorities an important lesson—natural and cultural landscapes should be protected and their development should be supervised. Only by doing

Sixty years is not a long time in the context of history. However, when looking back, every decade in the PRC’s history has turned into a milestone of the Chinese people’s unremitting struggles for a great national revival.

Together with the People’s Republic of China as a whole, Chinese athletes have undergone an extraordinary process of development in the past 60 years, from being almost nonexistent to becoming highly accomplished and influential on the international stage. China has shed its image as the “sick man

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| BR_2009_27 | Salient out-group                                                                     | In fact, Beidou has become so mature and useful that the United Nations has identified it as one of the four core technologies of its kind in the world, alongside the Global Positioning System of the United States, Glonass of Russia and Galileo of the European Union. More important, with the development and application of Beidou, China has continued to rely on its own resources to develop strategic

| BR_2009_28 | Unified China                                                                         | Their goal, some Chinese political analysts say, was to sabotage social stability, disrupt the state of unity and harmony, and solicit international support for the “independence” of Xinjiang. Such violent behavior for a political end shows complete disregard for even the most basic human rights and is doomed to failure, as no Chinese citizens will ever sympathize or take sides with anti-China elements that commit crimes and threaten human lives in broad daylight. Neither will they allow their country to become split, for this is the fundamental principle as well as the common wish of any government and people of a sovereign state.

| BR_2009_30 | Sinocentric China                                                                    | As a country with a long history, China boasts myriad ancient sites. However, some spots have been excessively commercialized and developed for moneymaking purposes at the cost of the sites’ original looks and cultural value. Thus Wutai Mountain’s strenuous journey of entering the World Heritage List can teach the Chinese Government and cultural heritage preservation authorities an important lesson—natural and cultural landscapes should be protected and their development should be supervised. Only by doing

| BR_2009_40 | Rising China                                                                         | Sixty years is not a long time in the context of history. However, when looking back, every decade in the PRC’s history has turned into a milestone of the Chinese people’s unremitting struggles for a great national revival.

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As a multiethnic country with a rich culture, China is uniquely endowed with intangible cultural heritage. However, when the country first submitted an application to UNESCO in 2001, many Chinese did not even know what intangible cultural heritage was. Their understanding of the concept has grown deeper with the inclusion of more Chinese intangible cultural heritage items on the UNESCO list.

A tour of the Forbidden City and the Great Wall in Beijing, symbols of China’s long history and rich culture, and a meeting with young Chinese in the coastal city of Shanghai, the country’s most modernized metropolis, certainly provided President Obama rare opportunities to gain first-hand impressions of China’s past and present.

The United States welcomes China as a strong, prosperous and successful country, and recognizes its increasingly important role in regional and world affairs. The relationship between the two countries has never been as comprehensive and substantial as it is now. If all the listed measures are implemented, it will certainly reach new heights.

China and the United States now share more common interests and a broader basis for cooperation on numerous critical issues relating to global stability and prosperity, and shoulder more important common responsibilities. The two sides also have realized the nurturing and deepening of bilateral strategic trust are essential to China-U.S. relations, and promised to respect each other’s core interests in developing the relationship.

All these demonstrate the outcome of the summit meeting was fruitful and positive and President Obama’s visit successful.
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<td>BR_2009_51</td>
<td>Not surprisingly, 2009 is viewed by many as a big year for Chinese diplomacy, as it has shown how China has handled global concerns in a responsible way and how it has actively sought closer cooperative ties with other countries. With the world further developing toward multi-polarity, as it is now, it is widely thought that China will become more involved and engaged in world affairs in the future. In the meantime, China will remain committed to peace, development and cooperation, the three key words forming the cornerstone of its diplomacy. This means the country will always pursue peace and economic and social development while seeking closer cooperation with all other countries, in order to help build a mutually beneficial</td>
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Overview of coded text in Beijing Review 2013-14

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<td>BR_2013_07</td>
<td>Sovereign China</td>
<td>It should be noted that China was not the one that changed the status quo. China has long held the position that the dispute can be shelved when conditions are not ripe to resolve it. The current round of tensions flared up in September 2012 following the Japanese Government's &quot;nationalization&quot; of some of these islands, a unilateral move that forced China, the islands' legitimate owner, to react. China is not the instigator of trouble; rather, its actions aim to cope with provocation from Japan. Encouragingly, anti-Japanese nationalistic sentiments that saw the outbreak of massive protests at the outset are ebbing away, with rational discussions dominating public opinion in China.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_07</td>
<td>Salient out-group</td>
<td>What complicates matters is that the United States, which helped sow discord out of Cold War mentality, has weighed in with statements that most Chinese observers believe are vague and biased. Then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently expressed opposition to &quot;any unilateral actions that would seek to undermine Japanese administration,&quot; implicitly putting the blame on China.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_08</td>
<td>Sino-centric China</td>
<td>For centuries, it has been held that there exists a special relationship between human beings and their zodiac animals, similar to Western astrology in relation to personal character. Today, some people still believe to some degree that the zodiac animal affects the disposition of those born in the corresponding year. In turn, the zodiac symbols have their own unique connotations, and are often endowed with positive personality attributes. Now the Year of the Snake takes prominence, ranking sixth in the zodiac sequence as one of the earliest totems in Chinese history. Contrary to the prevailing concept of the animal in some countries, where it is regarded as a phantom of evil and treachery, the snake has long been associated with good luck and sacredness in China, where it is often described with affectionate sentiment in mythological classics and popular folktales.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_12</td>
<td>Rising China</td>
<td>As the four new top leaders shook hands with their predecessors upon their election or appointment, the smooth transition of China’s state power reached completion. The ambitious yet formidable missions of building a stronger and better-off country were also formally handed over to this new and younger generation of Chinese leaders. The nation’s people eagerly expect this historic handover to lead China to march forward toward an even brighter future.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_13</td>
<td>Rising China</td>
<td>Both Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed their commitment to a strong political bond. After experiencing ups and downs over the past six decades, the Sino-Russian relationship has moved into an unprecedented stage in which the two countries share common aspirations for development as well as for a fairer and more equitable international order, concepts that feature prominently in their respective foreign policies.</td>
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The BRICS efforts to jointly establish an international development agenda and create a more balanced global development will surely contribute to their integration and industrialization, as well as world economic governance at large. BRICS cooperation not only benefits the people of the five countries, but also contributes to promoting democracy in international relations.

Making his debut at the summit, which was held for the first time on the African continent since the establishment of the organization five years ago, newly elected Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed confidence with the other state leaders that the group will play a bigger role on the world stage.

At the forum, Xi reiterated China’s commitment to pursuing peace and development and carrying out equal and mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries. Efforts are currently being made toward the recovery of the global economy, with countries more closely connected and interdependent.

History has taught us many lessons. The injury inflicted by World War II has not yet been healed and the wars and upheavals in China since 1840 have caused deep pain. In order to avoid history repeating itself, the Chinese Government and people are actively striving for a peaceful international environment for its own development. Facing provocation, China will never give up its pursuit of peace, national sovereignty, safety and territorial integrity.

Xi pointed out in his speech that the global village should be turned into a big stage for common development, rather than a venue where gladiator states are allowed to throw a region or the world into chaos for selfish gains.

As China gains more prominence on the world stage, momentum has built for the two nations to further their relationship.

Bilateral ties between China and France have not always been a matter of plain sailing, however. The French Government’s decisions to sell military equipment to Taiwan in the late 1990s and its support for Tibetan separatist activities in 2008, for instance, were seen as interventions into China’s internal affairs, escalating relations to a chilly point. Such unpleasant episodes apart, Sino-French relations have always developed on a sound footing whenever core interests have been considered by either side.

Abe’s attempt has not only met with opposition at home, but also been denounced worldwide. Countries that fought against Japanese militarism, including China, have all voiced concerns. In their view, the ongoing campaign to change the pacifist nature of the Constitution signals the rise of right-wing political forces and a possible return to militarism in Japan, a trend that may eventually destabilize the region. In recent weeks, the Japanese prime minister has caused alarm by taking a series of controversial moves. He donated to the Yasukuni Shrine, where war criminals are honored along with Japanese war dead. He also cast doubt on the term “aggression” in an apparent bid to whitewash Japan’s wartime history. Moreover, he created
Indeed, the leaders met at a time when the U.S.-dominated international system faces unprecedented challenges posed, among other things, by the emergence of major developing countries, including China. On bilateral and global issues alike, Beijing is seeking a voice commensurate with its rising status, a trend that will inevitably result in clashes with Washington's vested interests. Their contentions over rulemaking in a wide array of areas are a strong testament to the ongoing shift of the center of gravity from the West to the East.

One must ask why these criminal acts befell upon Xinjiang in such a rapid sequence. Growing evidence suggests the involvement of religious extremist forces inside and outside the country, including the World Uygur Congress and the East Turkestan National Congress, whose ulterior motives comprise fomenting social unrest in Xinjiang and sowing dissent among ethnic groups in order to divide the country. With a total area of 1.66 million square km, Xinjiang is located in the central part of the Eurasian continent. Its population of 21.8 million consists of 47 ethnic groups, including Uygur, Han, Kazak, Kirgiz, as well as Hui, another Muslim ethnic group. Naturally, it has been a great challenge for authorities to govern the expansive and relatively less-developed land with such complexity and diversity. However, Xinjiang has made remarkable progress over the decades, and maintaining harmony among all ethnic groups and pursuing common prosperity in the region have always been the fundamental goals of the Chinese Government.

Alongside expectations of an economic recovery are concerns that Abe may take advantage of bicameral support to pursue a nationalist agenda. Since taking office late last year, Abe has added fuel to territorial disputes with China, gone out of his way to whitewash Japan's wartime history and vowed to amend the country's pacifist Constitution.

Some local industry insiders argue that although WeChat may in fact be a superior product, the battle to acquire more users, particularly in Western countries, won't be easy because governments may see WeChat as a threat to their national security, an accusation some Chinese companies are all too familiar with.

China's new leadership made a crucial step in further reform and opening up, with the State Council approving the establishment of a pilot free trade zone in Shanghai. Covering less than 30 square km and built on four existing bonded areas, the zone will be a breakthrough in the deepening of China's opening-up strategy, which began more than 30 years ago.
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<tr>
<td>BR_2013_40</td>
<td>Rising China</td>
<td>China’s rapid rise has been a gratifying phenomenon for Chinese all over the world. People in China have been striving for generations to create a better life for themselves and build a strong and prosperous country, a lofty objective that has been pursued through reforms since the late 1970s, most recently and also embodied in the Chinese Dream initiated by the nation’s new leadership late last year. China now appears poised to fulfill the yearning desire to build/ a strong nation. This is a more meaningful goal that has never been so closely within reach.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_41</td>
<td>Sino-centric China</td>
<td>As one of the oldest existent languages, Chinese is used by the largest population in the world today. Chinese characters, or hanzi, were first invented 6,000 years ago, according to current archaeological discoveries. Until the Shang Dynasty (about 16th-11th century B.C.), they were found mostly inscribed on tortoise shells and animal bones. Over thousands of years, generations of Chinese have developed handwritten hanzi into a calligraphic art and means by which to spread ancient wisdom. An old Chinese saying states that a man’s personality is like his or her handwriting. It is believed in China that a person’s attitude and spirit are reflected in calligraphy, which embodies traditional Chinese esthetics.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_42</td>
<td>_Salient out-group</td>
<td>The United States, for instance, has thrust developing APEC members into a disadvantageous position by failing to fulfill its own commitments to the organization, instead putting forward the Trans-Pacific Partnership to boost its domestic economy.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_44</td>
<td>Rising China</td>
<td>As the world’s most important emerging economies, they now share identical or similar stands on a wide range of global and regional issues. Closer ties between China and India will surely help fulfill the common goal of rejuvenating the two ancient Asian neighbors.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_44</td>
<td>_Salient out-group</td>
<td>Some Western media outlets have also sensationalized or misinterpreted the status quo of Sino-Indian relations as if the two countries remain confrontational even to this day.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_45</td>
<td>_Salient out-group</td>
<td>For one thing, as China is faced with tensions over territorial rows with some neighbors, as well as the so-called &quot;pivot to Asia&quot; targeted against it, the country wishes to create a more favorable environment for pursuing domestic economic and social development.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_48</td>
<td>Globalist China</td>
<td>Today, the reform goes even wider and deeper, concerning economic, political, social, cultural, ecological, legal and national defense circles. Reform and opening up was the key choice that decided the fate of China and ushered it onto the path of modernization. Now comprehensively deepening the reform will help the country become a well-off society in an all-around way and fulfill national revitalization. The decision demonstrates that the CPC views the reform as a systematic, overall cause that demands coordination. In addition to sustained, steady economic development, Chinese society will embrace a more open attitude to seek progress in politics, democracy and rule by law, improved livelihood of the people, and a more harmonious relationship between ecological protection and economic development.</td>
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Japan has long tracked and monitored Chinese military planes conducting exercises and patrols above the East China Sea. In future, China and Japan are expected to inform each other of activities in the area and work out rules on the basis of negotiation to jointly manage and control overlapping zones and avoid conflict. Japan, as well as other countries, should stop infringing on China’s territorial integrity to safeguard peace in East Asian Region.

Every country keeps core interests that must be respected by others, especially when it comes to sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security. Britain, for instance, has for decades flatly denied the separation of Northern Ireland from its territories in an effort to defend national unity, despite raging protests and violent armed rebellion by local Irish citizens that lasted for 30 years. In the case of China, the Dalai Lama has tried in vain to split the country by seeking “Tibetan independence,” earning him a reputation as an exiled separatist bent on harming one of China’s core interests. China, like all other countries, seeks to ensure national security by opposing separatist movements. Hence, a foreign leader’s choice to meet with him is rightfully viewed as hurting the sentiment of the nation and interfering with its internal affairs.

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<td>Every country keeps core interests that must be respected by others, especially when it comes to sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security. Britain, for instance, has for decades flatly denied the separation of Northern Ireland from its territories in an effort to defend national unity, despite raging protests and violent armed rebellion by local Irish citizens that lasted for 30 years. In the case of China, the Dalai Lama has tried in vain to split the country by seeking “Tibetan independence,” earning him a reputation as an exiled separatist bent on harming one of China’s core interests. China, like all other countries, seeks to ensure national security by opposing separatist movements. Hence, a foreign leader’s choice to meet with him is rightfully viewed as hurting the sentiment of the nation and interfering with its internal affairs.</td>
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<td>BR_2013_52</td>
<td>Rising China</td>
<td>On December 14, China’s lunar probe Chang’e-3 successfully landed on the moon. Later, the lunar rover Yutu, meaning jade rabbit, separated from the lander and set out on its adventure across the moon’s surface. The monumental event makes China the third country to successfully soft land a probe on the moon after the United States and the former Soviet Union.</td>
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For any sovereign state, diplomacy is an important part of international relations, and one of the principal goals of diplomacy today is for a country to carry out its foreign policies, protect its core national interests, develop friendly and cooperative ties with other states, and to try to enhance its influence in the international community.

Since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, China has pursued independent foreign policies that are focused on peace and development as well as mutual benefits for itself and the world at large. Along with the country's peaceful rise during the past 35 years, thanks largely to the reform and opening up, China has begun to play a growing role on the world stage. This, of course, calls for China to bring its diplomatic wisdom to the table.

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Before making his decision to pay homage to the shrine, Abe must have been aware of the consequences. Previous shrine visits by elected officials invariably drew international condemnation. They were deemed as attempts to whitewash history and as appeals to right-wing conservatives who refuse to show remorse for Japan's aggressive past.

The fact that Abe disregarded international opposition shows that the Japanese prime minister pays little concern toward the feelings of China or other nations. The visit aggravated tensions caused by Abe's hard-line stance toward the China-Japan row over the sovereignty of the Diaoyu Islands and his vows to amend Japan's pacifist Constitution. This has given the international community cause for concern about a possible resurrection of Japan's right wing, a dangerous trend that may destabilize the country and the region.

All-round interactions between China and France show that it is possible for countries with different cultural traditions and political systems to develop productive relations. They exemplify China's vision for a "harmonious world," in which nations following diverse development paths work together for common prosperity. Harmony, however, is not necessarily a state of affairs where no disputes exist. Instead, the new thinking calls on parties to resolve disputes by consulting with others on an equal footing and accommodating their legitimate concerns. It will enable the Sino-French ties to make continuous strides and at the same time exert a positive impact on the world at large.

For both China and Central Asia, the Silk Road played an important role in creating marvelous civilizations and economic prosperity in ancient times. Around 2,000
years ago, a Chinese emperor of the Han Dynasty sent his envoy, Zhang Qian, to the unknown west in search of allies to resist the threat of northern nomads. Unexpectedly, Zhang's journey pioneered a significant bond between China and Central Asia. Since then, a trade road linking China and Central Asia—even stretching as far as Europe—formed and countries along the road thrived. The historic Silk Road was the world's longest trade route on land.

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The long-standing friendship established by the previous generations of Chinese and Vietnamese leadership faces the possibility of turning sour. Recently, Viet Nam infringed on China’s sovereignty over the Xisha Islands and their surrounding waters and allowed violent riots against Chinese people and factories in their country to erupt, bringing injury and death to a number of Chinese citizens.

The Philippines were the first to make an offensive move against China’s sovereignty in the South China Sea, but gained little from the incident aside from becoming a client state for the U.S. military.

The principles were first proposed by China at the height of the post-WWII decolonization movement. They quickly gained the recognition of newly independent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America that yearned for equality in international relations. Today, while globalization has transformed the world into a community of nations with interwoven interests, the core values embodied in the five principles remain pertinent.

One of these values is sovereign equality, which means that a country should be allowed to handle its domestic affairs free from foreign intervention, and international issues should be addressed through consultations by all countries concerned.

China’s sincerity in honoring the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is genuine. Notably, the principles are consistent with Chinese cultural traditions. People in China, which remained predominately an agrarian society for thousands of years, are traditionally risk-averse, unaggressive and long for care-free, peaceful lives. They also prefer harmony and moderation, as advocated by the Confucian Doctrine of the Mean, over playing up differences and engaging in confrontation. These inherent traits have been embedded in the cultural genetic makeup of the nation.

Though unfamiliar to most Westerners, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are highly acclaimed diplomatic tenets in China and many other developing countries.

Against the backdrop of the U.S. pivot to Asia, the question of how to deal with growing U.S. influence in China’s neighborhood has become a pressing issue. Rejecting uni-polar and bi-polar perspectives in quest of win-win results—a principle that is central to the China-ROK relationship—may provide a solution to the dilemmas of traditional power politics.

The lessons of defeat drawn from the Jiawu War are still relevant today. At present, right-wing activists in Japan regard China’s growth as a threat, attempting to dismantle Japan’s post-World War II pacifist Constitution and use the United States’ “pivot-to-Asia” strategy to contain China. Territorial disputes between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea remain unsettled.
| BR_2014_34 | Rising China | Under such circumstances, China should remind itself of the scars left from the Jiawu War and improve its national strength in order to maintain peace. Reflecting on the war is vital—not as a means to seek revenge, but to stop the revival of militarism as promoted by right-wing Japanese politicians. The Chinese nation must prevent history from repeating itself. |
| BR_2014_34 | Salient out-group | The defeat brought unprecedented chaos to the nation and accelerated its degradation into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Even today, the trauma of this war lingers in China. Fifty-four years prior to the conflict, in 1840, the First Opium War broke out between China and Britain, after which China’s closed-door policy came to an end and several treaty ports were opened to foreign trade. Following that war, China embarked on a road toward industrialization. |
| BR_2014_35 | Globalist China | President Xi Jinping said at the opening ceremony that the Youth Olympics has not only given athletes an opportunity to demonstrate their talent, but also provided an important platform for cultural communications. Every teenager participating in the Games is a potential goodwill ambassador who can help improve understanding and friendship and promote cooperation between nations through the event, contributing to the realization of a harmonious world marked by lasting peace and shared prosperity. |
| BR_2014_36 | Sovereign China | At present, however, Japanese right-wing politicians are seeking to deny the country’s dark past and amend its post-WWII pacifist constitution, moves that have shocked observers the world over. Under such circumstances, China’s commemoration of the victory of the war serves to remind right-wing Japanese politicians and the international forces backing them that China has not relaxed its guard against Japanese militarism. During WWII, Chinese soldiers and civilians bravely resisted Japanese invaders, containing Japanese forces in China and thus reducing Japan’s ability to make further military advances. China as a nation paid the highest cost in the war and destroyed the largest number of Japanese troops. During the eight-year period from 1937–45, China fought against two thirds of all Japanese land forces and killed 1.5 million Japanese soldiers, accounting for 70 percent of all Japanese casualties. |
| BR_2014_36 | Salient out-group | unconditional surrender on May 8 and September 2, 1945, respectively. At present, however, Japanese right-wing politicians are seeking to deny the country’s dark past and amend its post-WWII pacifist constitution, moves that have shocked observers the world over. Under such circumstances, China’s commemoration of the victory of the war serves to remind right-wing Japanese politicians and the international forces backing them that China has not relaxed its guard against Japanese militarism. During WWII, Chinese soldiers and civilians bravely resisted Japanese invaders, containing Japanese forces in China and thus reducing Japan’s ability to make further military advances. China as a nation paid the highest cost in the war and destroyed the largest number of Japanese troops. During the eight-year period from 1937–45, China fought against two thirds of all Japanese land forces and killed 1.5 million Japanese soldiers, accounting for 70 percent of all Japanese casualties. |
| BR_2014_38 | Salient out-group | China has already recognized the importance of further reforming its governance system. At a conference celebrating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the NPC on September 5, President Xi Jinping cautioned against putting forth the appearance of power in lieu of its absence, speaking to the Western criticism of people’s congresses as “rubber stamps.” In addition, those taking part in people’s congresses should avoid making empty promises during elections, a phenomenon that also plagues Western elections. |
| BR_2014_40 | Rising China | Increasingly, it is becoming an active participant in international relations, moving to the center of the world stage from its former role at the margins. Meanwhile, China has also made progress toward peaceful reunification, as evidenced by its resumption of the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macao. |
Globalist China

To this end, China has always played an active role in pushing forward future-minded regional cooperation, as evidenced through the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and talks on a China-Japan-South Korea free trade area. China is also committed to supporting multilateral trade, opposing trade protectionism, connecting global value and supply chains and promoting regional economic and technological cooperation.

Rising China

As the world economy moves toward the post-financial crisis era, with the Asia-Pacific region being the most economically active, it is thus expected to take on the responsibility of becoming the driving force behind the international economy. Asia-Pacific partnerships will be crucial to world peace and development; as such, these partnerships must feature mutual political trust, close economic ties and harmonious growth. To this end, China has always played an active role in pushing forward future-minded regional cooperation, as evidenced through the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and talks on a China-Japan-South Korea free trade area.

Salient out-group

Twenty-five years since its founding, APEC has evolved into the highest-level economic cooperative mechanism in the region. The future development of the Asia-Pacific region will depend on the level of cooperation among APEC members, especially as it faces challenges from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

Sino-centric China

The Confucius Institute ushered in its second decade this year. Since the first Confucius Institute was established in Uzbekistan in 2004, 472 such institutes and 730 Confucius Classrooms have been established in universities, as well as elementary and secondary schools, in 123 countries and regions. Some 50,000 teachers and volunteers have been dispatched abroad, educating a combined total of approximately 850,000 students around the world. By teaching the Chinese language and introducing Chinese culture, the Confucius Institute has played an important role in promoting communication between Chinese and other cultures.

Rising China

During this round of APEC meetings, China proposed a Silk Road Fund. Previously, it proposed the building of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the Silk Road Economic Belt, the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
According to the predictions of the World Bank, China's contribution to the world economy this year will be around 27 percent, the highest in the world. However, China and other emerging countries have a relatively weak power of discourse in international economic development. Although the international economic order has undergone dramatic changes, represented by the shift of the global economic center to the East, the management system of the world economy is still dominated by the West. Reform of the international economic order is urgently needed. G20 members should be dedicated to building a fair, equitable, inclusive and orderly international financial system, increasing the voice of emerging economies and developing countries, and ensuring countries have equal rights and opportunities. Only in this way can the G20 play its role in stabilizing global economy, promoting global growth and improving global economic governance.

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Notably, China's hosting of the Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia and the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting intimated that the country has assumed a new international role. China proposed to build an Asian security concept based on common security concerns and a forward-looking Asia-Pacific partnership during the meetings. Along with its partners, it came up with the vision of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific and outlined steps for its realization. All of the above demonstrates the systemic part China now plays in safeguarding regional stability and promoting cooperative development in the Asia-Pacific. The two gatherings testified to the nation's ongoing transformation to a global trendsetter.
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597


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Summary in English

This dissertation studies the logic of social identity in IR in order to show how state identity is a critical motivational driver of state grand strategy. Using the specific case of China’s rise in the 21st century, the dissertation demonstrates how China’s identity as a state community generates its grand strategy on the international stage. While some IR scholars have already pointed to the central role of state identity in shaping the overall foreign and security policy of the state in question, few have suggested such a link in the case of China, let alone examined it thoroughly. This dissertation not only offers a novel way of theorizing the relationship between state identity and grand strategy, it also provides a comprehensive and systematic examination of China’s identity and grand strategy in the 21st century to “test” the proposed relationship.

The following research question guides the dissertation: How can we theorize the logic of social identity in IR, and to what extent does the logic of Chinese identity constitute a motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century? In answering the question, the dissertation proceeds in three main parts focusing respectively on the logic of social identity in IR, China’s identity as a state community in the 21st century and China’s grand strategy in the 21st century.

Taking its point of departure in Social Identity Theory (SIT), Part I of the dissertation develops an IR constructivist framework for theorizing the logic of social identity as a motivational driver of state grand strategy. More specifically, I draw upon SIT to identify two fundamental social identity needs, which stems from the cognitive predisposition of the human mind to divide the social world into in-groups and out-groups: the need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem. From SIT, I also derive five distinct identity strategies that a social group
may adopt to satisfy its dual need for social distinctiveness and a positive self-esteem by framing the relationship between the in-group and its salient out-groups in a specific way: social affiliation, social competition, moral high-grounding, downward retargeting and self-cultivation. Importantly, the introduction of SIT into the state-centric realm of international relations provides fertile ground for theorizing the identity constitution of the state and for linking state identity to state grand strategy.

In order to further develop a theoretical framework, I combine the SIT-based insights with a so-called “bounded constructivist” approach, which depicts the constitution of state identity as a set of narrative-centered, discursively structured articulations that define the social categories for distinguishing between the in-group state and its salient out-group states. What is critical here is that different narratives of state identity can be analytically separated from each other in terms of how they discursively frame the logic of social identity in a specific way (in line with a given identity strategy for satisfying the dual identity need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem). It is against this theoretical backdrop that I finally propose how the logic of state identity constitutes a critical motivational driver of state grand strategy. Any state’s prevailing narrative conception of state identity is predicated on a particular identity strategy – for framing the salient in-group/out-group distinction(s) and satisfying the basic dual need for social distinctiveness and positive self-esteem – which has wider strategic implications for how the in-group state positions itself on the international stage in relation to its salient out-group states and, in effect, how the in-group state perceives the existing international order (acceptance or rejection, engagement or detachment). Based on the theoretical framework, the rest of the dissertation studies the rise of China in the 21st century in order to
demonstrate the plausibility of the proposed relationship between state identity and state grand strategy.

In Part II of the dissertation, I conduct a systematic analysis of China’s identity as a state community in the 21st century to tease out its different narratives, using a wide range of primary sources such as speeches, white papers and government reports that reflect the official government discourse. Specifically, I suggest that the heterogeneous discourse on China’s state identity can be ordered and analyzed according to the ideal-typical categories from the theoretical framework. To begin with, I identify four main building blocks, or discursive structures, of Chinese state identity – ‘Sino-civilization’, ‘Confucianism’, ‘the Century of Humiliation’ and ‘the Communist March’ – that enable and constrain the specific narrative construction of Chinese state identity. Subsequently, I pinpoint five main narratives of Chinese state identity that constitute a set of distinct, coherent and relatively exhaustive empirical categories that are discernible in the official government discourse:

- The ‘Globalist China’ narrative (based on an identity strategy of social affiliation) seeks to tone down China’s distinctiveness as a state community, instead positioning China as an active and responsible member of international society, thereby earning outside respect and recognition from salient out-group states.
- The ‘Sovereign China’ narrative (based on an identity strategy of moral high-grounding) defensively associates China’s distinctiveness as a state community with its inviolable right to political and territorial sovereignty, in effect castigating salient out-group states as morally depraved insofar as they challenge Chinese sovereignty.
• The `Unified China´ narrative (based on an identity strategy of downward re-targeting) depicts China as a civilized, modern and harmonious state community of multi-ethnic unity, challenged only at the margins by radicalized out-groups of ethnic minorities.

• The `Sino-centric China´ narrative (based on an identity strategy of self-cultivation) celebrates China’s distinctiveness as a political and civilizational community in a self-absorbed manner, without directly challenging salient out-group states and their favored societal model of liberal democracy.

• The `Rising China´ narrative (based on an identity strategy of social competition) creates a powerful discursive linkage between China’s historic greatness, its recent humiliations and its present national rejuvenation whereby China reasserts its great power status in the face of salient out-group states such as the United States.

Using another set of discursive data, collected from the government-affiliated newsmagazine, the Beijing Review, I subsequently trace the evolution of the five main narratives in terms of their relative discursive strength over the course of the 21st century. The evolutionary mapping shows that three of the five main narratives of Chinese state identity have been particularly prominent, each holding periodic sway over the official government discourse: `Globalist China´ until the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2007, `Sino-centric China´ during 2007-09 and `Rising China´ since 2009. Hence, at any point in time during the 21st century, we may derive a rather distinct narrative logic from the prevailing conception of Chinese state identity, which in turn constitutes a critical motivational driver, I claim, for China’s grand strategy.
In Part III of the dissertation, I undertake a systematic examination of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century in order to assess to what extent it is generated by the logic of Chinese identity. To avoid the risk of conflating the main variables, I focus only on the behavioral patterns of Chinese grand strategy using eight specific behavioral indicators that together cover the institutional, normative and power dimensions of its grand strategy. Each behavioral indicator measures Chinese grand strategy in terms of an analytical distinction between revisionism and status quo and another one between engagement and detachment. On this background, my examination of Chinese grand strategy demonstrates that the 21st century can be divided into two relatively distinct periods – respectively the 2000s and the 2010s – which differ markedly from each other (and the 1990s) on most of the behavioral indicators.

Chinese grand strategy in the 2000s can be categorized as engaged status quo as Beijing assumed a far more constructive role in international society, became more deeply involved in existing multilateral cooperation and took a more active part in the handling of international security issues in the UN Security Council. Moreover, China refrained from using coercive power or confrontational behavior in its disputes with neighboring states, it avoided challenging U.S. unipolarity or the Liberal Order in any direct way and it even supported the U.S.-led Global War on Terror. However, in the wake of the global financial crisis (2007-09), Chinese grand strategy took a turn towards engaged revisionism. This new behavioral pattern has primarily been reflected in China’s active role in promoting new institutional platforms such as the BRICS forum, the G20 and the AIIB, as well as its ambitious OBOR (or Silk Road) framework of infrastructural investments in Asia and beyond, which seems designed to make China the hub of new regional order. In addition, China has since 2010 demonstrated an increased
willingness to confront the Western powers, notably in the UNSC, and not least to take assertive measures in its territorial disputes with neighboring countries.

I show that these patterns of Chinese grand strategy in the 21st century are broadly in line with the narrative logic of `Globalist China` and `Rising China`, respectively the two most prominent conceptions of Chinese state identity in the examined period. Hence, the quite distinct ways these two narratives articulate and frame the relationship between the Chinese in-group and its salient out-group states are well reflected in the equally different patterns of China’s strategic behavior on the international stage in the 21st century. Yet, as this finding of a pattern of co-variation is in itself not enough to fully corroborate the existence of a relationship between Chinese identity and grand strategy, I employ three other methods to strengthen the plausibility of the proposed relationship. First, I extend the analysis into the late 1990s to obtain more variation on the two main variables. Second and more importantly, I conduct some process-tracing of a number of key discursive sources to trace the link more directly between the narrative logic of Chinese identity and the behavioral pattern of Chinese grand strategy. Finally, I compare the explanatory power of my constructivist approach to that of structural realism, the dominant approach in the IR debate on the rise of China, in order to demonstrate that the logic of social identity constitutes a critical motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy.

Against this backdrop, I conclude that the logic of social identity holds significant explanatory potential in the study of IR and that the proposed relationship between state identity and state grand strategy is largely supported by the case study of China’s rise in the 21st century. The narrative logic of Chinese identity
does indeed constitute a necessary, if insufficient motivational driver of Chinese grand strategy.
Summary in Danish


Afhandlingen kredser om følgende hovedspørgsmål: Hvordan kan vi teoretisere social identitetslogik inden for en IP-kontekst, og i hvilken udstrækning udgør Kinas identitetslogik en afgørende drivkraft for landets grand strategy i det 21. århundrede? Afhandlingen søger at besvare spørgsmålet i tre hoveddele:


I Part II af afhandlingen foretages en systematisk analyse af Kinas identitet som et statsfællesskab i det 21. århundrede baseret på en lang række primærkilder såsom officielle hvidbøger, taler og regeringsrapporter, der giver indblik i den officielle kinesiske regeringsdiskurs. Hensigten er at benytte de idealtypiske begrebskategorier fra teorirammen til at systematisere og analysere den ellers
meget komplekse kinesiske identitetsdiskurs. Til at begynde med identificeres fire grundlæggende strukturer for Kinas statslige identitetsdiskurs – `Sino-civilisation´, `Konfucianisme´, `Ydmygelsens århundrede´ samt `Den kommunistiske march´ – som udstikker de diskursive rammer for selve konstruktionen af identitetsnarrativer. Herefter kortlægges de fem væsentligste statslige identitetsnarrativer, som tilsammen udgør et sæt relativt distinkte, sammenhængende og udtømmende identitetskategorier i den officielle kinesiske regeringsdiskurs:

- `Globale Kina´ narrativet (baseret på identitetsstrategien *social tilslutning*), som søger at nedtone Kinas særskilthed som statsfællesskab for i stedet at positionere Kina som et aktivt og ansvarligt medlem af det internationale samfund med henblik på at opnå respekt og anerkendelse fra fremtrædende `dem´-stater.
- `Suveræne Kina´ narrativet (baseret på identitetsstrategien *moralsk ophøjethed*), som søger at værne om Kinas territorielle og politiske suverænitet ved at stigma- tisere potentielle ”krænkere” heraf som moralsk depraverede `dem´-stater.
- `Forenede Kina´ narrativet (baseret på identitetsstrategien *selektiv sammenligning*), som søger at fremstille Kina som et moderne, civiliseret og harmonisk statsfællesskab af forskellige etniske grupperinger, der kun udfordres i fællesskabets periferi af `dem´ i form af radikaliserede etniske minoritetsgrupper.
- `Sinocentriske Kina´ narrativet (baseret på identitetsstrategien *selv-kultivering*), som søger at dyrke og fremme Kinas civilisatoriske og politiske særskilthed på en indad skuende facon uden således direkte at udfordre den herskende liberal-demokratiske samfundsmodel, som Kinas vestlige `dem´-stater hylder.
- `Opstigende Kina´ narrativet (baseret på identitetsstrategien *social konkurrence*), som søger at skabe en magtfuld diskursiv sammenhæng mellem Kinas stolte historie som Riget i midten, den nylige fortid som offer for imperialisme og den nuvæ-
rende nationale genopblomstring, hvor Kina på ny hævder sig selv som stormagt over for de vestlige `dem´-stater, og i særlighed USA.


Kortlægningen af Kinas grand strategy i det 21. århunde understøtter den grundlæggende hypotese om, at Kinas identitet driver landets grand strategy. Således er de vidt forskellige narrative logikker, som kendtegner de to dominerende kinesiske identitetsforestillinger i det 21. århunde – ’Globale Kina’ og ’Opstigende Kina’ – og som indrammer forholdet mellem det kinesiske ’os´ og fremtrædende ’dem´-stater, tydeligt reflekteret i de ligeså vidt forskellige kinesi-
ske grand strategy mønstre i det 21. århundrede. Eftersom den påviste sammenhæng mellem kinesisk identitet og grand strategy imidlertid hviler på et langt fra udtømmende empirisk grundlag, benytter jeg yderligere tre metoder til at styrke plausibiliteten af den undersøgte sammenhæng. Først udvider jeg selve analyseperioden til også at omfatte 1990erne for herigennem at opnå yderligere variation i de to hovedvariable. Dernæst, og endnu vigtigere, foretager jeg en "processporingsanalyse" af en række diskursive nøgletekster for således mere direkte at kunne sammenkæde de narrative logikker i Kinas dominerende identitetsforestillinger med de overordnede adfærdsmønstre i landets grand strategy. Endelig foretager jeg en sammenligning af forklaringskraften i min konstruktivistiske identitetstilgang med den dominerende ”realistiske” tilgang i IP-debatten om Kinas opstigning med henblik på at demonstrere, at social identitetslogik udgør en nødvendig (omend utilstrækkelig) drivkraft for Kinas grand strategy.

På denne baggrund konkluderes det, at case studiet af Kinas opstigning i det 21. århundrede overordnet set styrker antagelsen om en sammenhæng mellem staters identitet og deres grand strategy. Kinas narrative identitetslogikker synes i hvert fald at udgøre en vigtig drivkraft for landets grand strategy.